Studies in Puritanism and Piety Journal

Volume 4 ✦ Spring 2023

CONTENTS

BOOK REVIEWS

FROM THE EDITORS

In this fourth installment of *Studies in Puritanism and Piety Journal,* we have two articles on John Owen (1616–1683), one on Stephen Charnock (1628–1680), and another on Isaac Ambrose (1604–1664). All these essays center on English Puritans around the time of the English Civil Wars (1642–1651), and the Westminster Assembly (1643–1653). These compositions devote detailed attention to the spirituality, doctrinal, and pietistical movements of the seventeenth century.

Dr. Willem Van Vlastuin, professor at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, contributes the first essay entitled, "Isaac Ambrose's *Looking unto Jesus* in its Westminster Context." Ambrose's devotional classic is compared and analyzed with the Westminster Confession and yields surprising results of similarities, differences, and distinctions. The second article is from Helio Carneiro (ThM student at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary), on "Owen's Christological Use of Acts 20:28—A Foundational Text in His Apologetic for the Intrinsic Sufficiency and Limited Extent of Christ's Satisfaction." In this article, Carneiro studies Owen's comments on Acts 20:28. This is the classic text for the *communicatio idomatum* (i.e., "the communication of natures"). Carnerio studies this text in chronological fashion beginning in 1642. The third contributor to the journal is John Woodlard, (ThM student at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary), entitled: "Infused by the Divine Life: Stephen Charnock and the Doctrine of Regeneration." In this article, Woodlard analyzes the necessity, nature, efficiency, and instrument of regeneration and applies these conclusions to the Christian life. The fourth and final essay is from Simon Hitchings (MA Oxford University), "John Owen's Use of Athanasius: Finding the Pedigree of Puritan Theology in the Early Church Fathers." Owen, according to Hitchings, uses caution when using extrabiblical material such as the Church Fathers so as not to give the wrong impression as to *Sola Scriptura*. However, as Hitchings shows, Owen used Athanasius in his writings because they had similar opponents on various Christological and Trinitarian matters.

In this edition, we have several scholarly book reviews including Cameron Schweitzer reviewing Gilsun Ryu, *The Federal Theology of Jonathan Edwards: An Exegetical Perspective*. Studies in Historical and Systematic Theology (Bellingham, Wash.: Lexham Academic, 2021); Dr. Harrison Perkins reviewing Stephen Hampton, *Grace and Conformity: The Reformed Conformist Tradition and the Early Stuart Church of England*. Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021); Tony A. Rogers reviewing Michael J. Lynch *John Davenant's Hypothetical Universalism*: *A Defense of Catholic and Reformed Orthodoxy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021); J. V. Fesko (professor at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson), reviewing Anthony Milton's work *England's Second Reformation: The Battle for the Church of England 1625–1662* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021); Mark Koller (PhD graduate at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary) reviewing David Como, *Radical Parliamentarians and the English Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). Finally, Adam Quinell, PhD candidate Queen's University, reviews Elliot Vernon, *London Presbyterians and the British Revolutions, 1638–1664* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021).

Isaac Ambrose's *Looking unto Jesus* in its Westminster Context

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Isaac Ambrose's *Looking unto Jesus* can be defined as a spiritual classic.[1] Ambrose wrote his classic devotional book after recovering from a serious illness. Many believers have been spiritually nourished by the warm words Ambrose wrote about Jesus. Through Ambrose's classic, they have found words to make sense of their own dealings with Jesus, and more importantly, through Ambrose, they have personally exercised spiritual communion with Jesus Christ.

Tom Schwanda has done an excellent job of investigating, analyzing, and describing the contemplative-mystical piety of Puritanism in general and of Ambrose in particular.[2] His research has revealed that the reality of the mystical union in the metaphor of spiritual marriage is an important framework for the interpretation of the contemplative-mystical piety of Ambrose's work.

1. Isaac Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus, or the Soul's Eyeing of Jesus as Carrying on the great work of Man's Salvation* (originally published 1658). I used the translation by Johannes Lampe in Dutch, Sneek: J. W. Boeijenga, 1925 (eleventh reprint). The Dutch publisher Den Hertog mentions nineteen reprints of this work in Dutch in 2007, https://uitgeverijdenhertog.nl/volwassen/flash/9789033117565/2/ (accessed January 13, 2022). Because there are several editions of *Looking unto Jesus*, I refer to the division in chapters and (sub)paragraphs that can be applied to every edition. For biographical information, see Joel R. Beeke and Randall J. Pederson, *Meet the Puritans: With a Guide to Modern Reprints* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2006), 33–37. Beeke and Pederson write about a "classic." In this context it is remarkable that a treatment of Ambrose is missing in Kelly M. Kapic and Randall C. Gleason, eds., *The Devoted Life: An Invitation to the Puritan Classics* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

2. Tom Schwanda, *Soul Recreation: The Contemplative-Mystical Piety of Puritanism* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2012).

The great value of his research can also be seen in the fact that he placed his interpretation of Ambrose into the context of the spiritual Christian tradition. He clarified how Ambrose is related to Bernard. Although there is a different interpretation of the *unio mystica* (mystical union), there are nevertheless several similarities. The accent of affective love is characteristic for both theologians. Also, the reciprocal character of the relationship between Jesus and His people in Bernard's work is to be found in the Puritan Ambrose as well as in Bernard's interpretation of the Song of Solomon.

Schwanda also discerned a relationship with Calvin. While Calvin applied the spiritual marriage especially to the ecclesiastical liturgy of the Lord's Supper, Ambrose was open to the individual relationship with the heavenly Bridegroom. Calvin was a theologian of faith, not without love, while Ambrose can be characterized from the opposite framework.

This historical sensitivity in Schwanda's research raises the question of how Ambrose should be related to his own confessional context. This brought me to the proposal to interpret Isaac Ambrose's spirituality in *Looking unto Jesus* theologically. I will use the Westminster Confession as an interpretative framework to understand the spiritual-theological concepts in Isaac Ambrose's *Looking unto Jesus*.

I use the methods of comparison and analysis of spiritual-theological concepts in order to come to a deeper interpretation of Ambrose's work. Although Ambrose's *Looking unto Jesus* can be considered as a devotional book and the Westminster Confession as a confessional document, comparison is not impossible for three reasons. First, Ambrose's spirituality is embedded in spiritual-theological concepts, which makes a comparison with a theological document possible. Second, Ambrose accepted the Westminster Confession and belonged to its theological and spiritual tradition.[3] Third, although the Westminster Confession is in itself a confessional document, it is not without its own spirituality.

In order to study the relationship between the concepts in Ambrose and in the Westminster Confession, I have divided Ambrose's concepts into five categories in this article, namely, spiritual marriage, happiness, the person of Jesus, the heavenly Christ, and *visio beatifica* (beatific vision). So, we start with the treatment of the concepts in *Looking unto Jesus* and next

3. This appears clearly from Ambrose's book *Prima, Media et Ultima, or The First, Middle and the Last Things* (Glasgow: John Knox, 1757), his (somewhat speculative) book *War with devils: ministration of, and communion with angels* (Glasgow: Joseph Galbraith, 1769), and also his book about family life, *The Well-ordered Family* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1762).

we relate them to the theology and spirituality of the Westminster Confession. After this research, some conclusions and further considerations may be drawn.

Spiritual Marriage

One of the most important results of Schwanda's research was the concept of spiritual marriage in Ambrose's work. This is clearly a leading theological concept in Isaac Ambrose's spirituality. From this concept, the affective love in *Looking unto Jesus* can be easily accounted for. Also, the reciprocity in the relationship between Christ and His bride is understandable in the context of this concept. Although Ambrose does not use erotic language to find words for the intimate relationship between the heavenly Bridegroom and the earthly bride, the lyrical language of passion and enthusiasm is to be found on almost every page.[4]

> O love more deep than hell! O love more high than heaven! The brightest seraphims that burn in love, are but as sparkles to that mighty flame of love in the heart of Jesus.[5]

The sources of the concept of spiritual marriage can not only be found in the Pauline words of Ephesians 5:30–32, but also in the Old Testament.[6] The only reason that Song of Solomon is included in the Old Testament is because of its reference to God's marital relationship with His people. In this context, the research of Karl Shuve is of interest. He found that in the patristical and medieval church, the Song of Solomon was used to interpret difficult texts.[7] In other words, Song of Solomon was a sort of interpretative framework to understand biblical truth. This means that God's truth was interpreted in relational terms.

During the time of the Reformation, something changed. The Reformation can be seen as a movement that rediscovered the Letter to the Romans. The doctrine of justification in this way was the sun, the day, the

4. In Ambrose, *Prima, Media et Ultima*, 79–85, in the meditations on the soul's love of Jesus, we find some expressions that touch the erotic.

5. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 4 (third part) 3.6.

6. According to Hermann Friedrich Kohlbrugge, there are at least six hundred references to spiritual marriage in the Old Testament. *Een commentaar op Psalm 45* (Utrecht: De Banier, 1995), 149. Joel Beeke and Mark Jones relate the allegorical explanation of the Song of Solomon to the motive of highlighting communion with Christ. Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 32.

7. Karl Shuve, *The Song of Songs and the Fashioning of Identity in Early Latin Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 3.

light of the church, the master, and the king that preserved all ecclesiological doctrines.[8] This was also true for Calvin. According to Calvin, this doctrine was the main pillar of religion and the foundation of piety.[9] This was, for the reformer of Geneva, related to the importance of Romans, which he called in a letter to Simon Gryneüs, the opening to the whole of Scripture.[10]

The fact that Zanchi (1516–1590) wrote a treatise about spiritual marriage indicates this medieval approach did not disappear entirely in the Reformed tradition.[11] Also, Calvin — as we saw above — could use the concept of spiritual marriage to interpret theological and spiritual realities. At the same time, the Song of Solomon lost its central place in Bible interpretation. This position was assumed by the book of Romans. It is understandable that this change influenced spirituality. The more juridical language of Romans relates to another spirituality than the more relational Song of Solomon. The more legal approach meant that the question of legal position became important, so that the personal relationship and intimacy with Jesus disappeared from view. We can also imagine that the language of faith replaced the language of love.

How does this relate to the Westminster Confession? It can be easily seen that the theological inventions of Reformed theology in the seventeenth century are applied in the Westminster Confession. This theological renewal concerned the covenant.[12] The covenant is not only a substantial theme in the Westminster Confession; it also determines the structure of

8. Martin Luther, WA (= D. Martin Luthers Werke Kritische Gesamtausgabe Weimarer Ausgabe, Weimar 1883–1929,) 48, 10. Luther said of the doctrine of justification, "Stante enim hac doctrina stat Ecclesia, ruente autem ruit ipsa quoque," (For by standing on this doctrine the church stands, by rushing she also rushes) WA 40. III: 351, 34–35.

9. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 3.11.1, translated by Henry Beveridge (https://ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes/institutes.i.html, accesses October 31, 2022).

10. CO (= Joannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia, eds. E. Cunitz, J. W. Baum and E. W. E. Reuss (Brunsvigae: C.A. Schwetschke, 1863)) 10,403.

11. Girolamo Zanchi, *The Spiritual Marriage between Christ and His Church and Every One of the Faithful*, trans. Patrick J. O'Banion (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2021).

12. John H. Leith, *Assembly at Westminster: Reformed Theology in the Making* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1973), 91. Leith judges this as a positive development, 94. Also, Sinclair B. Ferguson understood this turn to the covenant as a turn to Scripture. "The Teaching of the Confession," in *The Westminster Confession in the Church Today*, ed. Alasdair I. C. Heron (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1982), 36–37. James B. Torrance was negative, because he interpreted this turn as juridical contract-thinking. "Strength and Weaknesses of the Westminster Theology," in Heron, *The Westminster Confession in the Church Today*, 44–48. Thomas F. Torrance understood the covenant as part of a

this confession. The covenant can be called—as B.B. Warfield styled it—"the architectonic principle" of the Westminster Confession.[13]

We see the covenant structure in the chapters of the Confession. Chapter 7 confesses God's original covenant, the breaking of it by Adam, and God's invention of "a second covenant, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein He freely offered unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved". Chapter 8 treats Christology, namely incarnation, Christ's offices, the accomplishment of redemption, Christ's resurrection, and the effectivity of redemption. Chapters 9–10 treat the acceptance of the covenant, while chapters 11–13 unfold the benefits of the covenant. In the next five chapters, we read about the life of the covenant, while chapters 19–24 explain obedience within the covenant.

It is not difficult to interpret the covenant of grace as a marriage covenant.[14] But this is not made explicit in the Westminster Confession. So, here we see a difference between the Westminster Confession and Isaac Ambrose's approach. While Ambrose thought from the marriage covenant, his Puritan environment confessed the covenant of grace. Although these concepts do not exclude each other, it is clear that the use of a different concept implies a difference in spirituality. Ambrose is focused on the personal relationship and the intimacy with the heavenly Bridegroom, while the Westminster Confession speaks more objectively about the covenant, purchased redemption in the framework of the covenant, the responsibility of the human being in the covenant, and the benefits of the covenant for the believer.

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logical-causal structure to execute God's eternal decrees. *Scottish Theology: From John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 136–44.

13. B. B. Warfield, *The Works of Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2003), 6:56. See also Jeong Koo Jeon, *Covenant Theology: John Murray's and Meredith G. Kline's Response to the Historical Development of Federal Theology in Reformed Thought* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1999), 40.

14. Jonathan Edwards did do that. Willem van Vlastuin, "Federalism and Reformed Scholasticism: Jonathan Edwards's Doctrine of the Covenant in its Reformed Context," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jonathan Edwards Online*, ed. Douglas A. Sweeney and Jan Stievermann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 183–98, here 192–93. See also Willem van Vlastuin, "Spiritual marriage: A Key to the Theology and Spirituality of Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635–1711)," *Journal for the History of Reformed Pietism* 2, no. 2 (2016), 27–53; Willem van Vlastuin, "The Fruitfulness of a Paradox: The Doctrine of the Covenant in Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635–1711) Reapplied," in *Covenant: A Vital Element of Reformed Theology—Biblical, Historical and Systematic-Theological Perspectives*, ed. Hans Burger, Gert Kwakkel, and Michael Mulder (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 283–98.

Happiness

Augustine's *Confessions* is the first, the most well-known, and the most influential Christian autobiography that consists of a diverse blend of philosophy, theology, and exegesis of the Bible. Its solid commencement is telling and revealing:

> Great are You, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is Your power, and of Your wisdom there is no end. And man, being a part of Your creation, desires to praise You—man, who bears about with him his mortality, the witness of his sin, even the witness that You resist the proud,—yet man, this part of Your creation, desires to praise You. You move us to delight in praising You; for You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.[15]

In the context of this research, we hear in this confession God's greatness, the purpose of man in God, the delight in God's praise, the weakness and sinfulness of man, and the inner unrest in the heart of man until we find our deepest rest in God. We can summarize these words with the insight that finding God as our ultimate goal makes us happy.

This focus on human flourishing and eudaimonism is also explored by the Puritans.[16] We find this aspect also in Isaac Ambrose. Mystical contemplation is "soul recreation,"[17] which means that the soul never becomes weary of it, while the spiritual eyeing of Jesus gives continual energy to the soul. Ambrose does not understand mystical contemplation in an ontological sense, but as relational affection. Although it is a moral duty, it is not a heavy burden, because the human soul comes to its ultimate purpose in looking unto Jesus. The book begins with the reality of satisfying of all our longings in Jesus:

> Because all other things can never satisfy the eye. "All things are full of labour," saith Solomon, "man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing": it is but wearied with looking on divers objects, and yet still desires new ones; but once admit it to that glorious sight of Christ, and then it rests fully satisfied.[18]

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15. Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.1.1 (https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/110101.htm, accessed October 31, 2022).

16. Nathaniel A. Warne, *Call to Happiness: Eudaimonism in English Puritan Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress Academic, 2019).

17. According to the main title of Schwanda's research, *Soul Recreation*. See also p. 150.

18. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 1.2.3.6. See also 5.1.10.

Significant also is the reference to Bernard:

> As whatsoever we give unto thee, Lord, unless we give ourselves, cannot satisfy thee; so whatsoever thou givest unto us, Lord, unless thou givest thyself, it cannot satisfy us.[19]

This concept of spiritual satisfaction is clearly illustrated in the description of Jesus's appearing to Mary Magdalene, on which Ambrose comments, "When nothing else would satisfy, Jesus himself appears."[20] Ambrose closes his long treatment about looking unto Jesus with the satisfaction of our needs and longings:

> Surely Christ is enough to fill all our thoughts, desires, hopes, loves, joys, or whatever is within us, or without us. Christ alone comprehends all the circumference of all our happiness. O the worth of Christ! Compare we other things with him, and they will bear no weight at all; cast into the balance with him angels, they are wise, but he is wisdom; cast into the balance with him men, they are liars, lighter than vanity, but Christ is "the amen, the faithful witness"; cast into the scales kings, and all kings, and all their glory; cast in two worlds, and add to the weight millions of heavens of heavens, and the balance cannot down, the scales are unequal; Christ outweighs all. Shall I yet come nearer home?

We see that Ambrose unites the filling of our thoughts, desires, hopes, loves, and joys with our happiness. Looking unto Jesus brings our soul to taste the real spiritual rest in which we desire nothing else, and in which we do not become tired of desiring—a foretaste of eternal life. Every earthly joy will weary us, but the mystical contemplation of Jesus is an unfathomable fountain of satisfaction.

How does this relate to the Westminster Confession's theology and spirituality? In the first question and answer of the Westminster Larger Catechism we read these classic words: "Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God and fully to enjoy him forever." The concept of "enjoy" reveals that the glorification of God makes human beings happy. Or oppositely, in order to have our deepest needs satisfied, we must glorify God. But in the outworking of the Westminster Confession these aspects are not really addressed. In the Reformation, these notions did not disappear, but the Christian life became focused on reconciliation and justification. We find

19. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 3.2.2.3.

20. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 4 (fourth part) 2.4.2.

the same approach in the Westminster Confession. Apparently, the confession aims to clarify Reformed theology. In the context of this study, it is enough to observe this; further investigation is needed to identify the possible causes for this development. But we can observe that certain aspects of the spirituality of the Middle Ages remain present in the spirituality of the Puritans, as can be seen by reading the spiritual classics, such as Bernard and others.

The Person of Christ

Isaac Ambrose is in agreement with the vision of writers who prefer to be in hell with Christ to being in heaven without Christ.[21] The presence of Christ makes heaven to be heaven. In such expressions, Christ is much more highly valued than His gifts in creation and re-creation. This does not mean that Ambrose undervalues Christ's benefits, but that the gifts are evaluated as Christ's gifts and for the sake of Christ. This also means that his soteriology is determined by Christ and our mystical union with the person of Christ.[22] Treating the hypostatic union of Christ's divine person and the assumption of our human nature, he also deals with the mystical union between Christ and believers, which he characterizes as follows:

> It is a total union; that is, whole Christ is united to the whole believer, soul and body. If thou art united to Christ, thou hast all Christ; thou art one with him in his nature, in his name; thou hast the same image, grace, and spirit in thee, as he hath; the same precious promises, the same access to God by prayer as he; thou hast the same love of the Father; all that he did or suffered, thou hast a share in it; thou hast his life and death; all is thine. So, on thy part, he hath thee wholly, thy nature, thy sins, the punishment of thy sins, thy wrath, thy curse, thy shame; yea, thy wit, and wealth, and strength, all that thou art, or hast, or canst do possibly for him. It is a total union: "My beloved is

21. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 4 (fourth part) 2.2. Compare 4 (sixth part) 2.3.

22. Compare Thomas Goodwin: "More of God's glory shall instantly shine forth in that small Model, the Man Christ Jesus, having the God-head dwelling in him personally, than by God's making Millions of Worlds furnished with Glories.… And although our Redemption by Christ, as we are Sinners, is an infinite Benefit; yet his Person thus given us, is more worth than all those his Benefits, *Est aliquid in Christo formosius Salvatore.* And then by our Interest in his Person, we come to inherit God with him, to be Heirs, and Coheirs with Christ of God, in such a way communicated, as but for this his Union with God first, we should never have attained." Mark Jones, *Why Heaven Kissed Earth. The Christology of the Puritan Reformed Orthodox theologian, Thomas Goodwin (1600–1680)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 209.

> mine, and I am his": whole Christ is mine, and all that I am, have, or can do, is his.[23]

It is clear that believers have all spiritual and physical benefits in their union with Christ. Christ is not only their Savior, they do not only believe in Christ, but they exist "in" Christ as their head, their bridegroom, and their true vine. In this citation of Ambrose, the believer has primarily Christ and "only" secondarily the gifts of Christ. The benefits that Christ has accomplished are not enjoyed without enjoying Christ. The spiritual benefits for believers are determined by Christ, so that spiritual joy in the benefits is a benefit because of Christ. The beauty of the gifts is the beauty of Christ. Therefore, Ambrose summarizes God's covenant in the person of Christ. We do not only receive several gifts, but we receive a person:

> Thus runs the tenor of his covenant: "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." This is the general promise; I may call it the mother-promise, that carries all other promises in its womb. Consider, that it is God in Christ that is propounded to us in this phrase, "I will be a God to thee." Here is the greatest promise that ever was made. Christ, God, is more than grace, pardon, holiness, heaven; as the husband is more excellent than the marriage-robe, bracelets, rings.[24]

Thinking from the person of Christ implies a spiritual focus on the incarnation of God's Son:

> We should labor to apprehend what is the riches of this glorious mystery of Christ's incarnation; we should dive into the depths of his glorious actings; we should study this mystery above all other studies. Nothing is more pleasant, and nothing is more deep. That one person should be God and man; that blessedness should be made a curse; that heaven should be let down into hell; that the God of the world should shut himself up, as it were, in a body; that the invisible God should be made visible to sense; that God should make our nature, which had sinned against him, to be the great ordinance of reconciling us unto himself; that God should take our flesh, and dwell in it with all his fullness, and make that flesh more glorious than the angels, and advance that flesh into oneness with himself, and through that flesh open all his rich discoveries of love and free grace unto the sons of men; that this God-man should be our Saviour, Redeemer,

23. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 3.1.4.2.3.
24. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 2.2.2.3.

> Reconciler, Father, Friend; Oh what mysteries are these! No wonder if when Christ was born, the apostles cry, "We saw his glory, as of the only begotten Son of God"; noting, that at the first sight of him, so much glory sparkled from him as could appear from none, but a God walking up and down the world.[25]

It is remarkable that Ambrose says that we should study the mystery of the incarnation "above all other studies." It might also strike our attention that Ambrose's excitement about the mystery of the incarnation of God's Son is motivated by his understanding of the unity of the person of God's Son rather than a sum of the divine and the human natures. Thinking from the unity of His person leads to the deep mystery that God's Son exists as a finite creature, in which both the theologoumenon of the so-called *communicatio idiomatum* (communication of properties) and the theologoumenon of the *anhypostasis* (Jesus's human nature did not exist apart from the divine person) are expressed.

It may also strike us that Ambrose speaks about our "oneness" with God as fruit of God's union with the human nature, in which we hear a qualified *theosis* (divinization or deification). Ambrose denied an ontological union with God, but he reasoned from the mystical union with Christ by the indwelling of the Spirit.

The infinite condescension of God in Christ bridges the infinite distance between man and God, so that the incarnation is the sure basis for the boldness of faith to come to God in Christ:

> O the infinite condescension of God in Christ! God takes up our nature, and joins it to himself as one person, and lays that before our faith; so that here is God, and God suited to the particular state of the sinner. Now with what boldness may our souls draw nigh to God! (…) Oh, look once more, and be not discouraged! See, God is not come down in fire. God is not descended in the armour of justice and everlasting burnings; no, he is clothed with the garments of flesh, he desires to converse with thee after thy own form, he is come down to beseech thee to see with thine own eyes thy eternal happiness. Oh, the wonder of heaven! It is the cry of some poor souls, O that I might see God! Lo here God is come down in the likeness of man, he walks in our own shape amongst us. It is the cry of others, O that I might have my heart united to God! Why, he is come down on this very purpose, and hath united our nature unto himself. Surely God hath left

25. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 4 (first part) 2.5.3.3.

> all the world without excuse: O that ever there should be an heart of unbelief, after these sensible demonstrations of divine glory and love! Why wilt thou now stand off?[26]

The infinite condescension of God in Christ does not only grant the boldness to come to God's Son, but it assures us also of the incomparable preciousness of Christ's work. This is a great comfort for people who feel themselves great sinners. Ambrose allows himself the freedom to speak here in a comparative sense of the weight of sin. While the absolute weight of sin can only be underestimated (Anselm), the weight of sin in comparison to the value of Christ's sacrifice cannot be overestimated:

> Christ's death and blood is superabundant to our sins: The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, 1 Tim. i. 14, υπερεπλεονασε, it was over full, redundant, more than enough. Many an humble soul is apt to complain, "O if I had not been so great a sinner, there might have been hope." This is to undervalue Christ's redemption, this is to think there is more in sin to damn, than in Christ's sufferings to save: whereas all thy sins to Christ, are but as a little cloud to the glorious sun; yea, all the sins of all the men in the world, are but, to Christ's merits, as a drop to the ocean.[27]

Ambrose describes the meeting of Christ and His bride at the day of judgment in a very intimate way:

> They look, and gaze, and dart their beams, and reflect their glories on each other. Oh the communications! Oh the dartings of beams betwixt Christ and his saints I look as when two admirable persons, two lovers meet together, their eyes sparkle, they look on, as if they would look through one another: so Christ and his saints at first meeting, they look on, as if they would look through one another: and such is the effect of these looks, that they give a lustre to each other by their looks.[28]

The same is true of Jesus opening His heart at that day in which He explains in direct speech His eternal and ever-active love for His bride:

> Before I made the world I spent my infinite eternal thoughts on thy salvation ; when the world began, I gave thee a promise, that I would

26. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 4 (first part) 2.5.4.2.

27. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 4 (third part) 3.3.4. This quote also caught the attention of Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 369.

28. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 5.1.4.1.

> betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, in loving kindness, in mercy, and in faithfulness, Hos. 2:19, 20. It was I that for thy sake was incarnate, and lived, and died, and rose again, and ascended : and since my ascension that have been interceding for thee, and making ready the bride-chamber, where thou and I must live for ever and ever.[29]

This personal character of the interaction with Jesus determines also the way we read the Bible. For Ambrose, the Bible is not (only) a book with objective information, but the great Subject of salvation is present in Scripture, so that he reads Scripture as a personal meeting of Jesus with himself. We see that, for example, in his treatment of the capture of Jesus by His enemies in the garden of Gethsemane. Ambrose does not only see historical persons acting in this capture, but he feels himself involved:

> Oh, my pride! and oh, my covetousness! and oh, my malice and revenge! oh my unbelief! and oh, my unthankfulness! and oh, my uncharitableness to the needy members of Christ Jesus! why, these were the rout, these were they that led, and dragged, and drew Jesus (as it were) by the hair of his head; these were they that took hold of the chains, and pulled him forwards, and showed him in triumph to this bloody Annas; nay, these were the Judas, Jews, Annas, and all: Oh! that ever I should lodge within me such an heart, that should lodge in it such sins, such betrayers, such murderers of Jesus Christ.[30]

The same is the case in the historical moment where Jesus asks Peter for the third time whether he loves Him. Without any interruption, announcement, or explanation, Ambrose applies this directly to the believing reader: "Nay, art thou not grieved that Christ should ask the third time for thy love?"[31]

In this context, it is also understandable that this approach to the Bible is related to preaching the Word of God. Sermons should be full of the warmth of Christ's presence:

> Oh that our sermons were warming sermons! May we not fear that the Spirit is gone, whilst the people are dead, and we are no more lively in our ministry? It is said of Luther, That when he heard one preach very faintly, preaching, here is no heat at all to be gotten." Oh? when

29. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 5.1.4.4.
30. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 4 (third part) 1.6.4.
31. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 4 (fourth part) 2.6.

> the Spirit comes, it comes with a tongue of fire; instead of words, sparks of fire will fall from us on the hearts of hearers.[32]

How does this relate to the Westminster Confession? The theologians of the Westminster Confession are emphatically in the line of the Reformation, as evidenced by the scriptural principle they employ. The scriptural teaching in the first article leaves no room for misunderstanding that the authority of Scripture precedes everything else and that the entire content of faith is carried by this authority. This may give the impression that objective Scripture is isolated from the life of faith. In Ambrose, it appears that Scripture functions as the *viva vox Christi* (the living voice of Christ), right in the middle of the life of faith. For him, the objectivity of Scripture is not an end point, but a starting point, because the person of Christ speaks to us in a living voice in the form of Scripture.

We see a comparable relationship in Christology. Formally, Ambrose agrees with Westminster, because in Westminster also the human hypostasis of the divine Son is acknowledged. Both Westminster and Ambrose agree with orthodox Christology. But in the working out of the details, we see great distinctions and differences with their implications for spirituality.

The accent in the Westminster Confession is on soteriology. In chapter 8 of that Confession, complete redemption accomplished by Christ is clarified—He is also a mediator of application. So, Christology and accomplishment are combined in one chapter. This means also that this confession is characterized by great emphasis on the application of redemption and the order of salvation. The themes of effectual calling, justification, adoption, sanctification, saving faith, repentance unto life, good works, perseverance of the saints, and assurance of grace and salvation are distinguished and separated from Christology.

The extensive treatment of the benefits for the believer in the Westminster Confession coheres with the covenant structure of this confession, which makes it necessary to treat the human party in the covenant. In this context it is revealing that the concept of mystical union is missing in the Westminster Confession. This means that the benefits of grace are described from the viewpoint of the regenerated man, while it is clear in Ambrose's work that believers have these benefits "in" Christ.

The distinction between Christ and His benefits can help to clarify that the soteriological character of faith is at stake. It is well known that

32. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 4 (fifth part) 1.9.6.

the speculative theology of the Middle Ages could say much about Christ's essence and His natures, without soteriological relevance. In contrast to the speculative interest in Christ's person, theologians of the Reformation underlined the soteriological character of Christian faith.[33] We see this in the first edition of Melanchthon's *Loci Communes*.[34] The Wittenberg theologian equates knowledge of Christ with knowing His benefits.

The weak point of this approach, however, could be that Christology is completely functionalized or instrumentalized and that Christ is identified solely in terms of His benefits. The sharp distinction between accomplishment and application could give rise to an instrumentalization of Christology. In the case of an instrumentalized Christology, Christ is only the accomplisher of benefits for sinners, while an intimate personal relationship with Christ is lacking. Spirituality will then be focused more on the spiritual position of the believer than on the knowledge of the person of Christ.

To avoid this functionalization of Christology, the Heidelberg Catechism provides a nuanced distinction between Christ and His benefits by distinguishing between the ingrafting in Christ and the reception of His benefits.[35] Also, in the Puritan tradition we are conscious of various efforts to focus attention on the person of Christ.[36] The words of John "Rabbi" Duncan help our reflection:

> We make far too little of the Incarnation; the Fathers knew much more of the incarnated God. Some of them were oftener at Bethlehem than

33. Compare Luther in his explanation of Psalm 51 (WA 40.I, 328): "The true subject of theology is the man who stands under the accusation of sin, and God, who justifies and saves the sinful man.… Thus this is the essential theological knowing—that the man knows himself."

34. Philip Melanchthon, *Opera quae supersunt omnia*, Corpus Reformatorum Series I (Halle: Saale, 1834 sqq) 21.85. Luther (WA 1,362) said, in his twentieth thesis of the Heidelberg Theses in 1518, that true theology and knowledge of God exist in the crucified Christ. In his commentary on John 4:10, Calvin (CO 47, 80) remarks that we know Christ only if we know the gifts of the Father.

35. See Willem van Vlastuin, "The Promise of *unio mystica*: An Inquiry into the Functioning of a Spiritual-Theological Concept in the Heidelberg Catechism," in *Spirituality of the Heidelberg Catechism*, ed. Arnold Huijgen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2015), 168–185.

36. In the Puritan tradition, the glory of Christ's person was an explicit theme. Jones, *Why Heaven Kissed Earth*, 202–14. See also, Beeke, *A Puritan Theology*, 154–59. Samuel Rutherford (1600–1661) called the practice of loving Jesus because of His benefits "the love of a whore." *Letters of Samuel Rutherford* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2006), 72–73.

> at Calvary; they had too little of Calvary, but they knew Bethlehem well. They took up the Holy Babe in their arms; they loved Immanuel, God with us. We [can never be] too often at the cross, but we are too seldom at the cradle; and we know too little of the Word made flesh, of the Holy Child Jesus.[37]

We can conclude that Duncan's remark cannot be applied to Isaac Ambrose. Looking at his relationship with Bernard and theologians of the early church, we see that he was not only rooted in the theology of the cross of the Reformation, but he was also rooted in the theology of the cradle of the early church. We can also say that the latter theology was the window to relate to the theology of the Reformation in his *Looking unto Jesus*. This qualitative remark is quantitatively confirmed by the fact that Ambrose refers more to Augustine and Bernard than to Luther and Calvin.[38]

The Heavenly Christ

Luther is well known as a theologian of the cross.[39] Calvin was more sensitive to the heavenly glory of Christ. In this respect, Ambrose joins the Calvinistic tradition. Looking in the table of contents, it is remarkable how large the part about the heavenly Christ is in *Looking unto Jesus*. The chapters about Christ's ascension and intercession together make up sixteen percent of the entire book. While the description of the ascension is comparably short, the great accent is on the spiritual meaning of Christ's ascension and His work as ascended Lord.

This emphasis on the heavenly Christ and His work is, on the one hand, related to the history of salvation; namely, that the Christ to whom we are related in this dispensation has risen and is active on the right hand of His Father. There is a definite new position in Christ's existence, because Christ did not have this kingdom before as God-man.[40] On the other hand, the focus on the heavenly Christ is an indication of the spirituality of Ambrose. Christ's glory is an important aspect in Ambrose's spirituality.

37. Alexander Moody Stuart, *Recollections of the Late John Duncan, LL.D. Professor Of Hebrew And Oriental Languages, New College, Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1872), 167.

38. In *Looking unto Jesus*, Ambrose refers once to Calvin, four times to Aquinas, eight times to Goodwin, ten times to Luther, seventeen times to Bernard, and twenty-one times to Augustine.

39. See Carl R. Trueman, *Luther on the Christian Life: Cross and Freedom* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015).

40. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 4 (fifth part).1.5.

Furthermore, it is important for Ambrose that Christ's work is continuing in heaven. Without Christ's continuing work in heaven, His sacrifice at the cross would be without effect: "So all that ever Christ did or suffered upon earth, had been ineffectual unto us, had he not entered into heaven."[41] This is a great designation of the unity of Christ's accomplishment and application.

Christ's presence in heaven on behalf of His people on earth is depicted in a personal way. Ambrose is not only talking about Christ's intercession, Christ's love, and Christ's compassion in heaven, but he also introduces Jesus as speaking to and pleading with the Father, so that the reader witnesses the encounter between Father and Son: "I do have your company, but I must have theirs as well."[42] So, Christ pleads with His Father to have His complete body of the elect with Him. He loves His church, He cannot miss her, and He is in love with her. The terms Ambrose uses remind us of the theological concept of *totus Christus,* implying that Christ is not complete without His body:

> Behold how the joy of the bridegroom is over his bride on the wedding day (…) so is Christ's joy over His saints on the last then, then begins that joy, which shall not end in all eternity (…) Christ as Mediator is not fully perfect until all His members are united with Him in glory; as we say that the head lacks an arm, or hand, or leg, so it is a kind of spiritual lameness when Christ our Head does not have all His members with Him.[43]

So, it is understandable that Christ as a person is completely dedicated to His church on earth, and that He is still compassionate toward them. While the glory of Christ's heavenly position might give the impression that Christ had lost awareness of the brokenness of earthly reality, Ambrose assures us of the contrary:

> Surely there's a violence of heavenly passion in Christ's heart, as God-man, which makes him to break out into prayer to God, and into compassions towards men. O that tempted souls would consider this! It may be Christ is giving you a cup of tears and blood to drink, but who knows what bowels, what turning of heart, what motions of compassion, are in Jesus Christ all the while? Those who feel the fruit

41. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 4 (sixth part) 1.7.
42. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 4 (sixth part) 1.8.
43. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 5.2.3.

> of Christ's intercession, know this; and cannot but subscribe to this truth. O ye of little faith, why do ye doubt of Christ's bowels? Is he not our compassionate high-priest? he is touched, saith the apostle, with the feeling of infirmities; it is an allusion to the rolled and moved bowels of God, in Jeremiah xxxi. 20. Christ in heaven is burning and flaming in compassion towards his weak ones; and therefore he pleads, intercedes, and prays to God for them.[44]

We perceive also a theological reflection upon the relationship between Christology and pneumatology when Ambrose unites Christ's intercession in heaven and the intercession of the Spirit in us. The effect of Christ's intercession is the groaning of the Spirit in the soul of believers. This leads to a holy unity between the praying Christ, the praying Spirit, and the praying Christian:

> If Christ's intercession is mine, then is the Spirit's intercession mine: in this case we need not ascend up into heaven to learn the truth, rather let us descend into our own hearts, and look whether Christ hath given us of his Spirit, which makes us cry unto God with sighs and groans which cannot be uttered; O come and let us ransack our own consciences; let us search whether we feel the Spirit of Christ crying in us, "Abba Father": Certainly these two are as the cause and the effect: Christ's intercession in heaven, and his Spirit's intercession, are as twins of a birth! Or rather, Christ's intercession in heaven breeds another intercession in the hearts of his saints.[45]

The reverse is that experience of the groaning Spirit in us assures us of the burning heart of the heavenly Christ for us:

> O my soul, hath God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into thy heart? Hast thou the indwelling of the Spirit; and now by the help of the Spirit canst thou pray with earnestness, confidence, and an holy importunity? Canst thou cry, "Abba, Father"? Canst thou cry with earnestness, with confidence, Father? and "Abba, Father," (or Father, Father,) with an holy importunity? These are the signs of the Spirit's intercession (…) Surely this is the fruit, the effect, of Christ's intercession, and therefore thou mayest comfortably conclude, "Christ's intercession is mine." If I feel a holy disposition to pray and intercede

44. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 4 (sixth part) 1.7.4. Thomas Goodwin's most popular book was related to this reality, *The Heart of Christ in Heaven Towards Sinners on Earth* (1651).

45. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 4 (sixth part) 2.4.1.

> for others, especially for the distresses of the church of God, then is Christ's intercession mine. We should, as near as we may, in everything conform to Christ; and this conformity is an evidence of our interest in Christ: O my soul, go down into the inmost closet of thy heart, look what disposition there is in it towards the members of Christ; and thou mayest conclude; there is in Christ's heart the very same disposition towards thee.[46]

How is this heavenly-mindedness related to the Westminster Confession? The first observation is that the heavenly Christ is not an explicit theme in the Confession. The second observation is that we do find the heavenly Christ in chapter 8.4. Expressing that Christ rose in the same body in which He suffered, the Westminster Confession explains further about this body "with which also He ascended into heaven, and there sitteth at the right hand of His Father, making intercession."

We see that Ambrose acts within the framework of the Westminster Confession, but the significance of the ascended Christ is much greater in Ambrose. In the Heidelberg Catechism, Christ's ascension has an important place, seen in questions 46–49. However, there is a great difference with Ambrose. While Ambrose treats the fact of the ascension quite briefly, in the Heidelberg Catechism three of these four questions are dedicated to the ascension. We can understand that in the Lutheran context of Heidelberg, it was necessary to relate to Luther's view of the ubiquitousness or omnipresence of Christ's body to account for his doctrine of consubstantiation with regard to the Lord's Supper.

Ambrose's accent on the heavenly Christ reminds us more of the Belgic Confession, in which one article, article 24, is explicitly dedicated to Christ's intercession. In this article we read the warm language of the comfort in Jesus's humanity in heaven and His intercession for His people on earth. Also, in the Westminster Larger Catechism, questions 53–55, we find the spiritual meaning of Christ's ascension and intercession. It seems that the Heidelberg Catechism has more emphasis on spirituality than the Westminster Confession. If we understand this as characteristic for a confessional document, it implies that spirituality and theology, head and heart, are distinguished and even separated from each other.[47] It can also

46. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 4 (sixth part) 2.4.1–2.

47. According to Philip Sheldrake, this unity of heart and head is broken after the late Middle Ages. *Spirituality and Theology: Christian Living and the Doctrine of God* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2004), 33–64. See also Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation:*

be asked whether it is not necessary to explain doctrinally the relationship between Christology and pneumatology.

We can conclude that the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Westminster Larger Catechism make the spiritual meaning of the heavenly Christ explicit, but that the Westminster Confession lacks this focus on the spiritual meaning of Christ's ascension and intercession, while Ambrose explores this spiritual meaning of Christ in heaven.

Visio beatifica

In the history of the church, much consideration is given to texts in the Bible that speak about seeing God, such as Job 19:27, Matthew 5:8, 1 Corinthians 13:12, and 1 John 3:2. Calvin understood the seeing of God in heaven as seeing His essence.[48] Paul's words in 1 Tim. 6.16 about God dwelling in an inaccessible light problematizes the direct seeing of God in the eschaton. Most theologians understood the *visio beatifica* (beatific vision) as a seeing of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Texts as John 1:14, 1:18, 14:8, and 2 Corinthians 4:6 gave the biblical foundation to this approach. Which place did Ambrose take in this tradition?

It is important to understand that, according to Ambrose, there is a continuity between seeing by faith in this life and the seeing of God face to face in the eschaton. So, Ambrose did not make a contradiction between seeing by faith and the immediate seeing of God, because the beginnings of the eschatological seeing of God are already present in this dispensation:

> Consider that looking unto Jesus is the work of heaven; "it is begun in this life, (saith Bernard), but it is perfected in that life to come;" not only angels, but the saints: in glory do ever behold the face of God and Christ; if then we like not "this work, how will we live in heaven? The dislike of this duty is a bar against our entrance; for the life of blessedness is a life of vision; surely if we take no delight in this, heaven is no place.[49]

Does this imply that there is an immediacy in faith? Ambrose reasons along the lines of Ephesians 1:18 that believers have an enlightened eye of their

The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 52–83. J. I. Packer offers a concept to unite heart, head, and hands in *A Passion for Holiness* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1992), 167–70.

48. Hans Boersma, *Seeing God: The Beatific Vision in Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 271–78.

49. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 1.3.7.11.

intellect to see God in Jesus. Also, in heaven, God's people do not see God in Christ in His glorified humanity with their bodily eyes, but with the eyes of their mind. Only in the second coming of Jesus, they will see God in Christ also with the eyes of their glorified bodies.[50]

The pivotal point in understanding Ambrose's theological spirituality is the insight that the present seeing of Jesus with the intellectual eyes of faith is effective in our souls. Not only are our minds filled with knowledge, but by looking unto Jesus our affections are warmed.

> That Christ gives a sincere and inward love of himself unto their hearts. No sooner is their eye of faith looking unto Jesus, but presently their heart is all on fire. Such a suitableness is betwixt Christ and their souls, as is between the hearts of lovers; their love to Christ is like the love of Jonathan to David, a wonderful love, and "passing the love of women," 2 Sam. 1:26. They love him as the bridegroom to whom their souls are married, as the choicest pearl by whom they are enriched, as the sun of consolation, by whose beams their souls are comforted, as the fountain by whom their hearts are refreshed, and their desires every way satisfied.[51]

It is necessary that the spiritual knowledge of Christ has effect on the whole of our souls. This means that looking unto Jesus is more than a bare intellectual and speculative knowledge. Therefore, Ambrose is also careful in distinguishing between common and general emotions on the one hand, and the effective affections of the saving work of the Spirit:

> When it is not done to purpose, as if our look to Christ, makes us not like Christ; a man may give a thousand glances every day towards Christ, yet if there be no effectual impression upon the heart, Christ takes it, as if he had never looked towards him at all.[52]

This important distinction raises the issue of testing our affections, because there can be many affections that are not saving. The Devil can believe the message of Christ's resurrection, but that is not experimental faith.[53] Characteristic of saving affections is the spiritual effect of the affections, namely that our souls are directed heavenward.

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50. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 1.3.1.1. See also, 5.1.10.; Cf. Schwanda, *Soul Recreation*, 156; Boersma, *Seeing God,* 319–20.

51. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 1.3.6.10. See also 1.3.2 and 4.2.2.

52. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 1.3.3.1.1. See also the whole of 1.3.3 and 4 (third part) 3.1.

53. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 4 (fourth part) 2.5.

> Certainly affections in holy administrations with delight and joy, maybe in those, who, yet have no true grace; so it may be, that the novelty and strangeness of a doctrine may much affect and delight; or the nature of the doctrine, as it is comfortable, without any respect to spiritual operations, may exceedingly affect, or the minister's abilities, because of his parts, eloquence, elocution, affectionate utterance, may much delight and stir up the hearers' affections; fine head-notions may produce some affectionate heart motions; but what symptom of grace in all this? The sign therefore I lay down of my propriety in Christ's intercessions is not every sweet motion, or every excited affection, but that which is holy, spiritual, heavenly, saving; I may discern much of this, if I will but look into the grounds and effects of my excited or stirred-up affections, if the ground thereof be fetched from heaven, and in their effect they tend towards heaven, if they wean my heart from the world, if they elevate and raise up my affections to things above, if they form, and frame my conversation heavenwards, then may I be assured these motions and affection are of the right stamp, for all such motions are but sparks of that heavenly fire, the fame whereof is mindful of its own original; they are the fruit of Christ, and they go back to Christ, they work towards their centre, they tend towards the place from whence they came.[54]

We may notice that the fruits of practical life are not mentioned. Ambrose can express the effect of looking unto Jesus in other spiritual dimensions, but also, in his alternative expression, the accent is on the effects upon the heart:

> Would you know wherein lies the power of Christ? I answer, In casting down the strongholds of sin, in overthrowing Satan, in humbling men's hearts, in sanctifying their souls, in purifying their consciences, in bringing their thoughts to the obedience of Christ, in making them able to endure afflictions, in causing them to grow and increase in all heavenly graces; and this power we partake of, who rightly and experimentally look up to Christ.[55]

After the commencement of eternal life in this life and renewal in the image of Christ, Christians are prepared for heaven. When Christ's plan of history is fulfilled, Christ will return. According to Ambrose, Christ will step

54. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 4 (sixth part) 2.4.2.

55. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 1.3.5. Perhaps Ambrose wants to distinguish saving faith with the virtues of philosophers and civil people, *Looking unto Jesus* 4 (fourth part) 2.4.

back in His coming back as mediator. He will deliver His kingdom to His Father; God will not reign through Christ's humanity, but by Himself. Then, the glory of Christ's divine nature will be revealed more clearly, so that God's people will see Him as God all in all:

> For this essential divine glory. Divine glory, it is that glory which Christ hath as God: this he never laid aside, but as the sun in a dark gloomy day may not send forth his beams, so Christ the Sun of righteousness, in the time of his abode upon earth, (except a little glimpse only in his transfiguration), did not set forth his glorious beams; but hereafter the body or humanity of Christ shall not hinder the breaking forth of all his divine glory. No sooner the Son is subjected, and his mediatory office discharged, but Christ as God, will manifestly put forth his more immediate glory to all his saints, "Behold now, we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is", 1 John 3:2.[56]

Although the beatific vision implies the direct knowledge of Christ as the divine Son, this does not mean that His human nature is laid down. This appears from Ambrose's description of the beatific vision:

> There is a mental vision, a sight of Christ by the eyes of our understandings; and surely this exceeds the former, the eye of the body is only on the body of Christ, but the eye of the soul is on the body and soul, on the humanity and Deity of Jesus Christ. This is the very top of heaven, when saints shall have been lightened with a clear and glorious sight of Christ as God; divines usually call it, "Beatifical vision."[57]

The reference to 1 John 3:2 in the previous quotation raises the issue about our deification. Ambrose can write in quite an open-minded way about his interpretation of this text and 2 Peter 1:4, saying, "It was the great promise of the Old Testament, that Christ should partake of our human nature, and it was the great promise of the New Testament, that we should partake of his divine nature."[58] It seems that Ambrose interprets this deification pneumatologically:

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56. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 5.1.10. see also 5.1.8–9. It seems that Boersma accents too much that the saints will see God in Christ. I think that Ambrose underlines more the divine essence of Christ than God in Christ. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 320–21.

57. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 5.1.10.

58. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 4 (fifth part) 1.8. See also 4 (first part) 1.5: "And as this conjunction is immediately made with his human nature, so thereby we are also united

> Awake, awake, O my soul, awake, awake, utter a song!" tell over these passages, That God is come down into the world, that God is come down in the flesh, that God is come down in flesh in order to thy reconciliation; that God is come down in the likeness of man, that he may bring thee up into the likeness of God, and that all these are but the first openings of the grace, and goodness, and glory of God in Christ to thy soul: and oh what work will these make in thy soul, if the Spirit come in who is the Comforter![59]

How does this relate to the Westminster Confession? The differences between the Westminster Confession and Ambrose are great. First, the Westminster Confession does not speak or refer directly to the beatific vision. The only indirect reference can be found in the expression that the saints in heaven behold "God's face" in chapter 32.1 and the "presence of the Lord" in chapter 33.2.

Second, while Ambrose's understanding of personal renewal is characterized by continuity between sanctification and glorification, this relationship is very implicit in the Westminster Confession. In chapter 13.2 we read about sanctification as "imperfect in this life;" also, in 16.4 and 16.6 we read the qualification of "this life," and in 16.2 we read that good works as God's workmanship are created in Christ Jesus with eternal life as "the end." In an implicit way, we can understand these expressions as the continuity between sanctification and glorification.

Third, Ambrose understands sanctification as the beginning of glorification, which means that glorification is the theological starting point of sanctification. This means that Ambrose understands the Christian life in its eschatological perspective and that this perspective is determinative for the interpretation of sanctification. In the Westminster Confession, this approach is reversed. Ambrose approaches from union with Christ, while the Westminster approaches from the regeneration of man.

Fourth, Ambrose describes the Christian life especially as an affective life, while the Westminster Confession focuses on the ethical dimension of the Christian life. This makes Ambrose more mystical and spiritual, while the Westminster is characterized by external, practical Christianity. We can also say that Ambrose's spirituality is more characterized by

to the divine nature, 2 Pet. 1:4. Yea, the person of the believer is indissolubly united to the glorious person of the Son of God."

59. Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus* 4.2.7.

heavenly-mindedness, while the Westminster Confession is more focused on perseverance in the struggle on earth.

Fifth, because in Ambrose's theological concept the beatific vision is an important pivotal point, we see in his work a reflection on the relationship between Christ's divine and human nature in heaven, and Christ's position as mediator. These reflections are absent in the Westminster Confession. The Confession focuses on the details of judgment, resurrection, and eternal life, while Ambrose is interested in the content of eternal life.

Conclusions and Considerations

What is the conclusion of this comparison between the Westminster Confession and *Looking unto Jesus*? First, we can conclude that there are great differences between the Westminster Confession and Ambrose within the framework of a theological and doctrinal agreement. These differences between Westminster and Ambrose cannot be interpreted by the metaphor of the skeleton and the flesh, in which the skeleton represents the theological system and the flesh represents the corresponding spiritual experience. The differences between the confession and Ambrose cannot be divided between the theological and the spiritual dimensions, because those differences also concern theological issues. Apparently, doctrinal agreement provides room for different theological and spiritual emphases.

Second, we can conclude that Ambrose's theological concepts are directly related to spiritual life, and that his understanding of spiritual life is determined by the personal, intimate knowledge of and relationship with Jesus. His focus on personal happiness is directly related to this personal interpretation of spiritual life. This means that Ambrose's theology serves his understanding of the spirituality of the personal relationship with Jesus. While the Westminster Confession focuses on the soteriological earnestness to be saved, the order of salvation in believers, the benefits they receive, the responsibilities they have, the conflicts that they experience, and the obedience to which they are obliged, Ambrose's spiritual theology is focused on the person of Jesus and the relationship with Him. Without contrasting these approaches as such, we can contrast their spiritual directions. While the Westminster Confession is benefit oriented, Ambrose is person oriented.

Third, Ambrose's person-oriented theology accounts for specific accents in his theology, for example, with regard to the offer of grace. Ambrose reasons that sinners have boldness to come to Jesus because God's Son has become incarnate in our nature. Another example is the value of Christ's

offer. Because Christ is a person of infinite worth, His satisfaction is of infinite value, to comfort sinners that they are definitively right with God and may be assured that Christ's satisfaction for sin is greater than their guilt. Furthermore, the person-oriented theology of Ambrose is a potent remedy against the functionalizing and instrumentalizing of Christology. Another aspect of person-oriented theology is the sensitiveness for the heavenly Christ, His intercession, and His desire to have His bride present with Him. These dimensions are not present in the Westminster Confession.

Fourth, Ambrose's person-oriented theology gives another perspective to the Christian life. The affective and eschatological character of the Christian life is directly related to consciousness of the personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Consciousness that the Christian life is the beginning of glorification, and its openness to deification, is related to this personal relationship.

My conclusion is not that the Westminster Confession and *Looking unto Jesus* should be contrasted with each other. Neither the Westminster theologians nor Ambrose would have agreed with this reciprocal exclusion. However, the comparison between the Westminster Confession and Ambrose can serve to raise our consciousness of the differences between these theologies and spiritualities. In part, these differences can be related to the different character of these writings. The Westminster Confession is a doctrinal document, while *Looking unto Jesus* is devotional in nature. Ambrose wrote his *Looking unto Jesus* after recovery from serious illness, while Westminster was written by a committee in a careful process of seeking theological balance and uniting different wings of Christian orthodoxy. But this difference of character does not completely account for the variances between the two works. The different character of these writings could explain different accents, but we see also different theological and spiritual concepts in Ambrose. Further research can investigate how unique Ambrose's concepts are and what possible reasons can be offered for the use of those concepts.

In the context of this article, it is enough to acknowledge and to be conscious of the spiritual difference between the Westminster Confession and Ambrose's *Looking unto Jesus*. This consciousness can help us to use both writings to enrich our theology and spirituality. In this way, the contrast between theology and spirituality can be reduced, so that our theology is spiritual and our spirituality is theological, and the unity between heart and head is promoted. Our theology will be served by a spiritual consciousness, which enriches the experience of theological realities, and which has

the potential to uncover new theological perspectives. On the other hand, the affectionate spirituality of Ambrose in this particular book (as in other writings of Ambrose) can be enriched by the consciousness of conflicts and wrestlings with the old nature, the duty to be obedient, and the practical responsibility for the church and public life that is expressed in the Westminster Confession and other writings of Ambrose, such as his *War with Devils*.

Owen's Christological Use of Acts 20:28: A Foundational Text in His Apologetic for the Intrinsic Sufficiency and Limited Extent of Christ's Satisfaction

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Despite increasing interest in John Owen,[1] scholars have yet to plunge the depth of "quite possibly, the finest theological mind that England has ever produced."[2] As affirmed by Ryan McGraw in his recent book, "Scholars are only recently beginning to note the importance of John Owen as a seventeenth-century Reformed Orthodox Theologian."[3] Furthermore, the 2015 *Ashgate Research Companion to John Owen*[4] opens a wide range of possibilities to embrace Richard Muller's call for "more detailed approaches to individual thinkers" by using "expanded digital resources, whether printed texts, manuscripts, or catalogues,"[5] to compare, contrast, and trace aspects of Owen's thought, theological system, method, and loci.[6]

1. According to johnowen.org there are more than twenty unpublished dissertations on John Owen's life and thought since the 1990s. Oxford's Center for Early Modern Studies lists almost the same number of published influential PhD dissertations. I am grateful to Dr. Greg Salazar for his mentorship, Dr.Adriaan C. Neele for the encouragement in the pursuit of this topic, Dr. Ryan M. McGraw for his careful revision of my article and Dr. Crawford Gribben for introducing me to Owen.

2. Carl R. Trueman, "John Owen" in *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals*, eds. Timothy Larsen, David Bebbington, and Mark A. Noll (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003), 494.

3. Ryan M. McGraw, *John Owen: Trajectories in Reformed Orthodox Theology* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 189. According to Dr. Meyers, concerning the doctrine of justification, "Presently, there are no full-length treatments of Owen's doctrine." Stephen Meyers, "God, Owen, and Justification: The Role of God's Nature in John Owen's Doctrine," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 8, no. 2 (July 2016): 1.

4. Kelly M. Kapic and Mark Jones, eds., *The Ashgate Research Companion to John Owen's Theology*. (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate Research Companion, 2015).

5. Richard Muller, "Directions in the Study of Early Modern Thought," *Perichoresis* 14, no. 3 (2016), 12.

6. See Carl R. Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2016), 17–33.

Although scholars of Owen have produced secondary literature on his atonement theology, little attention has been given to his use of specific biblical texts, such as Acts 20:28, concerning his Christological apologetic. Though Owen's atonement theology is exegetically grounded in all the Scriptures,[7] his Christological use of Acts 20:28 renders it a foundational text in his apologetic for the limited extent and intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's satisfaction, over against universalistic and Unitarian atonement theologies, that, in his view, undermined the efficacy and value of Christ's death.[8] This study proposes to fill in the gap of Owenian scholarship by chronologically assessing his use of Acts 20:28 from 1642–1684. From his earliest publication in 1642 to his more mature post-Restoration works, Owen's Christological use of Acts 20:28 consistently refutes heterodox views of the atonement. Acts 20:28 was his preferred text in countering universal propitiation from 1642–1655, and from 1655–1684 Owen used it contra Socinian Unitarians who denied the intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's death. The relevance of Acts 20:28 in Owen's polemical methodology is evidenced by its ubiquitousness in Owen's thought. The doctrinal content and theological substance of Acts 20:28 renders it an ideal text to advance Owen's lifelong apologetical ambition to defend the limited extent and intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's satisfaction.

Significance of Study

Acts 20:28 is prolifically used by Owen throughout his career, with over 130 written occurrences.[9] His ecclesiastical use of the passage must be distinguished from its Christological use as a foundational text in his particularist apologetic. His ecclesiastical use of Acts 20:28 is notable given the historical-literary context of the passage (Paul's discourse to the Ephesian elders concerning church governing and pastoring). One would expect

7. In The Death of Death alone, Owen's text collation to establish the limited extent and value of Christ's death is exhaustive and scripturally comprehensive. In his discussion of Christ's atonement's original purpose and intention, Owen also highlights Ephesians 5:25–27 and Titus 2:14 (John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold, vol. 10 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark), 210.

8. This research has been based on searches made via an electronic version of Goold's edition of Owen's *Works*.

9. Although this research is based on this writer's reading and thorough analysis of Owen's Christological works (e.g., *A Display of Arminianisme*, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, *Christologia*, *Of the Death of Christ*, *A Dissertation on Divine Justice*, and *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*), having the electronic version of Goold's edition immensely helped to both catalog and identify Owen's Christological use of Acts 20:28.

Owen's use of such a passage for ecclesiastical purposes. In this regard, he exhorts elders to "feed the flock of God";[10] establishes Christ, the founder, and builder of the church, as the sole authority over His body;[11] defines elders as polemicists of scriptural truth;[12] and articulates the nature of church government.[13] However, Owen's most remarkable use of the passage was concerning his Christological apologetic, since, in his theological system, Christ is the *scopus et fudamentum Scripturae*.[14] Exegetically speaking, Acts 20:28 was the definitive proof text for Owen's defense of the intrinsic sufficiency and limited extent of Christ's satisfaction. In exhorting the Ephesian elders, Paul calls their attention to the nature of Christ and the extent of his work by stating that "God purchased his church with his own blood."

Not surprisingly (as will be demonstrated in this work), Owen frequently used Acts 20:28 to avert universalism and unitarianism. Although Owen's Christological use of Acts 20:28 is conjoined to a comprehensive variety of Scriptures, the frequency and singling out of Acts 20:28 in Owen's thought highlights the significance of the passage in the strategy of Owen's Christological apologetic. Albeit many texts are mentioned by Owen in defense of Christ's deity[15] and limited atonement,[16] Owen's use of Acts 20:28 ranks as a preferred scriptural foundation in favor of the intrinsic sufficiency and limited extent of Christ's satisfaction over against formidable opponents to the principal Reformed atonement view. Hence the reasons to single out this text for specific chronological, theological, and exegetical analysis in Owen's Reformed particularist[17] soteriology.

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10. *Works*, 3:86; 4:493; 4:508; 9:433; 13:56; 15:159; 16:48;75.

11. *Works*, 8:286; 15:235.

12. *Works*, 1:9; 7:186; 11:36; 13:56; 15:250; 287; 306; 356; 16:108; 22:195.

13. *Works*, 4:449; 15:438; 491.

14. Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy*, 2nd ed., vol. 2, *Holy Scripture: The Cognitive Foundation of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 207. See also, John Owen, *Synesis Pneumatikē, Or, the Causes Waies & Means of Understanding the Mind of God as Revealed in His Word, with Assurance Therein and a Declaration of the Perspicuity of the Scriptures, with the External Means of the Interpretation of them* (London: 1678).

15. *Works*, 20:7 (John 1:1; Rom. 9:5; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 John 3:16, 5:20).

16. *Works*, 10:359 (Acts 20:28 is cited as a proof text in conjunction with John 17:9; Matt. 20:28, 26:26–28; Mark. 10:45; Heb. 6:20; Isa. 53:12; John 10:15; Heb. 13:20; Matt. 1:21; Heb. 2:17; John 11:51, 52; Rom. 8:33, 34).

17. This term is used in this work in contrast to the universalist view adopted by Arminians, who affirmed Christ's sacrifice was for all men, not just the elect.

A Chronological Analysis, Set in Context

The 1640s–1650s are critical decades in the study of British Puritanism. The ascension of Charles I and Laud's nomination as vice-chancellor of Oxford promoted strenuous conflict between Parliament and the Crown. These circumstances inevitably led to the English Civil War, which culminated in the beheading of the king and promoted the rise of the Cromwellian regime.[18] Owen's towering politico-religious influence is indisputable during this period. Indeed, he had become the "*primus inter pares*"[19] of the independents and the "preacher-in-chief"[20] of Parliament during the civil war years and was designated to preach the day after Charles's execution.[21] Before these years of political influence, Owen enjoyed national prestige as a Reformed theologian because of his earliest publication, *A Display of Arminianisme* (1642), followed by his *Salus Electorum Sangui Jesu*, or *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (1647). Owen also published his *Two Short Catechisms* in 1645 as pastor of the parish at Fordham. In these early works, Owen's principal polemical aim—albeit not exclusive—was to oppose the Dutch Remonstrants heresy. On that account, during these years his use of Acts 20:28 focused on its enclosed exegetical presupposition concerning the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice.

Acts 20:28 in Owen's Polemics for the Limited Extent of Christ's Satisfaction, 1642–1655

In *A Display*, Owen's apologetical goal was to vindicate the particularist

18. Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 388–89; See also, John Spurr, *The Post-Reformation: Religion, Politics and Society in Britain, 1603–1714* (Harlow, England: Pearson Longman, 2006), 40–144.

19. "first among equals" (John Coffey and Paul Chang-Ha Lim , *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 77.

20. Christopher Hill, *The Experience of Defeat: Milton and Some Contemporaries* (N.Y.: Viking, 1984), 172.

21. *Works*, 8:133. Though distancing himself from fifth monarchists (Peter Toon, *The Correspondence of John Owen 1616–1683*, (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1970), 1516–1518, Kindle; Liu Tai, *Discord in Zion: The Puritan Divines and the Puritan Revolution 1640–1660*, Series Archives internationales d'histoire des idées 61 (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1973), 154–58), Owen had a millenarian bent. For the Independents' parliamentarian influence from 1640–1641, see Liu, *Discord in Zion*, chap. 1; Hill, *Experience of Defeat*, 50–52. For the biographical information of this research, I owe credit to Gribben's recent intellectual biography, unless cited otherwise. Crawford Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism: Experiences of Defeat*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

doctrine of satisfaction "contained in divers of the Thirty-nine Articles."[22] Certainly, Owen's opposition to the Arminian menace—against which he proclaimed "a holy war"[23]—had some relation to his disappointment at Oxford.[24] In the university, he was exposed to the dangers of institutional heterodoxy, which resulted in his abandonment of the university in 1637. Owen graduated BA in 1632 and MA in 1635. His discontentment with the university began in the summer of that year, "when Laud imposed forms on the university that he could not accept," and for Owen, "the rejection of Reformed orthodoxy was personal."[25] Not surprisingly, five years later, Owen's first publication, *A Display of Arminianisme*, was entirely dedicated to the opposition of Arminian doctrine. For Owen, universalism implied the demerit of Christ's death since it denied sovereign grace and attributed to fallen sinners a cooperative and definitive role in salvation.[26] Hence, his Christological use of Acts 20:28 in 1642, outlined in *A Display*, articulates the value of Christ's blood concerning the efficacy of His atonement. Albeit the "blood of God," says Owen, "was so exceedingly precious, of that infinite worth and value, that it might have saved a thousand believing worlds… Christ giveth life to every one for whom he gave his life; he loseth not one of them whom he purchased with his blood."[27] The rhetorical frame of Owen's polemical reasoning aligned him with mainstream Reformed particularists such as "the mastermind of Puritanism"[28] and the Puritans' principal

22. *Works*, 10:9.

23. *Works*, 10:7.

24. Gribben, *John Owen*, 38–40. See also, Nicholas Tyacke, "Oxford University and Arminianism" in *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590–1640* (England: Oxford University Press, 1990).

25. Gribben, *John Owen*, 35–36. Gribben further explains that although Owen, a year later, would be ordained a priest by John Bancroft—a committed Arminian and friend of Laud—Owen did not vow obedience and loyalty to their anti-Puritan prescriptions. Scholars have commonly acknowledged a more predominant Calvinistic uniformity in England before "the Arminian insurgency of the late 1620s." Deborah Shuger, *Religion in Early Stuart England*, (Texas: Baylor University Press, 2012), 231; Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 8. For Lake's challenge of this assumption, see Peter Lake, "Serving God and the Times: The Calvinist Conformity of Robert Sanderson," *The Journal of British studies* 27, no. 2 (1988): 82. Sarah Mortimer states that "through the 1620's the Remonstrants were accused of Socinianism; their enemies were determined to show that their theology lay well beyond the boundaries of acceptability." Sarah Mortimer, *Reason and Religion in the English Revolution: The Challenge of Socinianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 39.

26. *Works*, 10:13; 53–57.

27. *Works*, 10:89.

28. Andrew Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity in Covenantal Thought: A Study in the*

voice in the "Elizabethan glory days of high Calvinism,"[29] William Perkins (1558–1602). Perkins's employment of a similar scholastic argument in his Christological apologetic uses strikingly homologous language to that of Owen. Christ's atonement is "sufficient to redeem everyone…albeit there were a thousand worlds of men,"[30] says Perkins in *Armilla Aurea* (1592).[31] Or, as stated in *Reformed Catholike:* "And considering it was the obedience of God, as Paul signified when he said, 'feed the church of God, which he purchased with his blood' (Acts 20:28), it was sufficient for many thousand worlds."[32] Indeed Perkins acknowledged that "Christ's death is sufficient to save many thousand worlds" though he denied that was God's *ad intra* determination, "for if it were thus effectual…Christ's righteousness should be imputed for the justification and sanctification of all and every man."[33] For Perkins—as for Owen—"predestination had two parts: Election and reprobation." Christ, the foundation of the decree of election, was "called of his Father from all eternity, to perform the office of the Mediatour, that in him all those which should bee saved might be chosen."[34] Perkins's Chris-

Reformed Tradition to the Westminster Assembly (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 461.

29. Shuger, *Early Stuart England*, 274.

30. Cited by Jonathan D. Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism: John Preston and the Softening of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 31. See also, William Perkins, *A Golden Chaine* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1595) 325–28.

31. According to Jonathan D. Moore, the importance of *A Golden Chaine* "is clear when it is realized that 'the basic document of Arminianism,' namely Jacobus Arminius' *Examen Modestum Libelli*, was in fact a response to this very treatise." Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism*, 31. Historian Carl Bangs has described Arminius's *Examen Modestum Libelli* (written in response to Perkins's *Golden Chaine*) as a foundational document of the Remonstrants' religion, in which he denounces Perkins's doctrine of absolute predestination. Carl Bangs, *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), 209. Tyacke argues that the work was symptomatic of the ascendency of Calvinism in Cambridge University during the late sixteenth century. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 29. See also, Richard A. Muller, "Arminius and the Reformed Tradition," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 70, no. 1 (2008): 19–48.

32. *The Works of William Perkins*, ed. Joel R. Beeke and Derek W. H. Thomas, vol. 7, ed. Shawn D. Wright (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2018), 7:133. In his *A Godly Exposition of the Sermon of the Mount*, Perkins states, "It is the righteousness of that person, who is both God and man; and therefore is an infinite righteousness, of merit sufficient to save a thousand worlds." *The Works of William Perkins*, ed. Joel R. Beeke and Derek W. H. Thomas, vol. 1, ed. J. Stephen Yuille (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014), 261.

33. *The Works of William Perkins*, ed. Joel R. Beeke and Derek W. H. Thomas, vol. 5, ed. Ryan Hurd (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 361–62.

34. Perkins, *A Golden Chaine*, D3.

tological use of Acts 20:28 in *A Golden Chaine* is more similar to Owen's in the mid-1650s when Parliament commissioned him to disprove the Socinian heresy, which resulted in the writing of *Vindiciae Evangelicae*. In conjunction with John 17:19 and 2 Corinthians 5:19, Acts 20:28 functions as an apologetical proof text to defend the dual nature of Christ rather than the extent of His atonement.[35] Certainly, Perkins was aware that the case for the dignity of Christ's atonement based on His theanthropic nature lies more heavily in Acts 20:28. John 17:19 and 2 Corinthians 5:19 speak of the fruits of Christ's death but not concerning His nature as the basis of His merits. Perkins pursues the same line of argumentation in his catechetical work *Foundations of Christian Religion*. In answer to the question, "Could the sufferings of Christ, which were but for a short time, countervail everlasting damnation and so appease God's wrath?" Perkins answers, "Yea; for, seeing Christ suffered [Acts 20:28; 2 Cor. 5:15], God suffered, though not in His Godhead. And that is more than if all men in the world had suffered forever and ever."[36] Proof that, in Christ, the fact that "God suffered" lay not in 2 Corinthians 5:15 but in Acts 20:28. In 2 Corinthians, Paul affirms the fruits of Christ's death, but the complete statement about the intrinsic sufficiency of His death based on the dignity of His person is given by the latter passage. Similarly, in his exposition of Revelation 1:5, Perkins asks, "How can blood wash away filthiness?" He answers that it is not the substance of Christ's blood that cleanses the elected sinner by faith, for

> that substance of blood which was shed is lost…, but the merit thereof remains still…because His blood was the blood of God (not of the Godhead) but of Him who was both God and man. For the manhood of Christ was received into the union of the second person, and so it may be called the blood of God, as Paul says, 'God redeemed his church by his blood' [Acts 20:28].[37]

The rhetorical and theological similarities seen in Owen's Christological use of Acts 20:28, and noted in Perkins's polemical strategy, is striking. Owen's predecessor drew Christological parallels in his defense of Reformed Christology that are emulated by Owen, such as the unified nature of Christ's priestly actions of oblation and intercession, or as in Perkins's taxonomy—satisfaction and intercession. Perkins's influence on

35. Perkins, *A Golden Chaine*, chap. 18. See also, *The Works of William Perkins*, 5:130.

36. *The Works of William Perkins*, 5:498.

37. *The Works of William Perkins*, ed. Joel R. Beeke and Derek W. H. Thomas, vol. 4, ed. J. Stephen Yuille (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 342.

Owen's thought is identifiable. A seventeenth-century revised edition of *The workes of that famous and worthy minister of Christ in the Universite of Cambridge, Mr. William Perkins*[38] was published in London seven years before Owen's *A Display*. Owen may have referred to this work when recounting the debate between Perkins and Arminius, "the sophistical heretic."[39] For Owen, Perkins was to be named amongst towering figures who opposed universalism, such as "Piscator…Twisse…Rutherford" and the "Synod of Dort" divines.[40] Perkins's remarkable popularity and outstanding reception amongst British Reformed divines precludes Owen's monopoly on the use of Acts 20:28 in favor of Reformed particularism. Certainly, one is able to trace parallels not only in relation to Perkins and Owen, but also from Owen to Bunyan, who was acquainted with Owen's writings.[41] Owen's formidable predecessor also seemed to emphasize many of Owen's principal Christological themes, such as the inseparability of oblation and intercession as unified priestly actions, presented as an argument against the universality of redemption.[42] Thus, it is proven how, in diverse instances, the Elizabethan father of Puritanism used Acts 20:28 as his exegetical basis in favor of the intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's death.

Irrefutable argumentations against general ransom theory were not sufficient for Owen to root out the "poison contained in the Arminian doctrine."[43] Ironically, under the Cromwellian regime, the Remonstrants' heresy found fertile soil to grow and expand, due to Cromwell's religious liberty and toleration policies. Britain had grown to accept all kinds of

38. *The workes of that famous and worthy minister of Christ in the Universitie of Cambridge, Mr. William Perkins,* (John Legatt: London, 1635).

39. *Works*, 10:66.

40. *Works*, 10:409. Although this was Owen's interpretation, many would deny that the Synod of Dort is strictly particularist. The extent of Christ's atonement was widely debated amongst the Dortian delegates of King James I. The view of John Davenant and Samuel Ward, the two prominent Hypothetical Universalistic deputies, eventually prevailed and won over the other delegates (George Carelton, Walter Banlcanqual, and Thomas Goad). See Lynch, *Davenant*, 72; Anthony Milton, *The British Delegation and the Synod of Dort (1618–1619)*. Church of England Record Society (Series); v. 13. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 218–22; Richard A. Muller, *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition: On the Work of Christ and the Order of Salvation.* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 534.

41. *The Miscellaneous Works of John Bunyan*, ed. T. L. Underwood and Roger Sharrock, vol. 1, *Some Gospel-Truths Opened, A Vindication of Some Gospel-Truths Opened, A Few Sighs from Hell* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 67.

42. Perkins, *A Golden Chain*, chap. 18. See also, Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism*, 38–54; Gribben, *John Owen*, 401.

43. *Works*, 10:21.

Protestants, and "hundreds of General Baptist churches preaching rank Arminianism to one other, were left undisturbed."[44] Hence, in 1647, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* appeared. Owen's central argument in *The Death of Death* upholds the immutability of God's decree of election and the covenant of redemption as the basis of Christ's unified priestly work of oblation and intercession.[45] The objectors to his doctrine defend a general mediation theory to which Owen responds by stating that "it was his Church which he *redeemed with his own blood*, Acts 20:28…not one word of mediating for any other in the Scripture."[46] John Goodwin (1594–1665), a prominent Arminian theologian, published in 1651 his *Redemption Redeemed*,[47] which was followed by another attack on Reformed particularism with the publication of *An Exposition of the ninth chapter of Romans* (1653).[48] In *Redemption Redeemed*, he seeks to establish

44. Coffey, *Companion to Puritanism*, 81–83.

45. *Works*, 10:245, 10:464, 10:187. Conclusion revised and expanded from Helio Carneiro, "John Owen's Theology of Particular Redemption: A Study of the Basis and Efficacy of Christ's Priestly Work," (Paper for CH/ST860, PRTS, 2019).

46. John Owen, *Salus Electorum, Sanguis Jesu, Or, the Death of Death in the Death of Christ…* (London: 1648), 38. See also, *Works*, 10:213; 10:272–10:273; 10:223–10:224; 10:281; 10:290–10:294.

47. John Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed, Wherein the Most Glorious Work of the Redemption of the World by Jesus Christ is Vindicated* (London, 1651).

48. In this treatise, Goodwin attempted to disprove God's double decree of predestination, wherein He freely chooses from eternity, on the sole basis of His good pleasure, some to salvation and others for damnation. Goodwin's goal was to assert "the true understanding of the Apostle in the chapter" since the Reformed defended "a peremptory election and reprobation of a determined number of men." Goodwin, *An exposition of the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans* (London, 1653), to the reader. According to him, there is "nec vola nec vestigium (not a fly or trace)…of any such election and reprobation in it," but Paul's goal was to vindicate sola fide. Albeit Goodwin attempts to disassociate his interpretation with Arminius, he acknowledges that "there be some streins and turnings here and there which sympathize with the principle of that way." Goodwin, *An exposition*, to the reader, S.6. His interpretation of "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated" is that God had "shewed respects of love to Jacob and his posterity partly and giving unto them the land of Canaan, whereas Esau received only the "rough, craggy and incult Mountain of Idumea." (Goodwin, *An exposition*, A Paraphrase of the Ninth Chapter. Although Goodwin affirms that there is no unrighteousness in God's punishment of the wicked, His judicial action must be executed only after the sinner has made his impenitence and rejection clear—such as with Pharaoh. For Goodwin, as for Arminians of his time who deny God's sovereign intent and design in Christ's sacrifice, it lays in sinful men's power whether to be dissolved or condemned. Election and reprobation are not from eternity based on God's free choice but in time based on man's response. God only has the liberty to destroy based on "an abundance of guilt contracted by a long-continued course of sinning…Neither is that will of God, by which men

an exegetical basis for a universal atonement theory, which he believed to be "a most ancient and divine truth."[49] First, he relies on texts "which present the gift and sacrifice of Christ as relating indifferently unto the world" (John 1:29; 3:16; 5:51; 1 John 1:22; 2 Corinthians 5:19; 1 Timothy 2:6; 2 Peter 3:9)[50]—all of which are explained by the Reformed to reference peoples of every kind, not every person in particular. His explanations of these texts are followed by others of a similar kind where universal calls of repentance are proclaimed (John 6:37; Mark 16:16; Romans 3:22–23). Goodwin's strongest associations of Scripture are those he believes imply Christ has died for the reprobate (Romans 14:15, 1 Corinthians 8:1, 2 Peter 2:1 and Hebrews 5:29).[51] Though extensive justification is given against the particularist view,[52] Goodwin does not directly answer the Reformed objection raised by Owen's Christological use of Acts 20:28; namely, that if God bought the church with His blood and not the non-elect, how can it be said that Christ's death propitiated for the sins of those He did not actually redeem? Goodwin argued that the infinite sufficiency of Christ's death necessitated His universal intention of spilling His blood to propitiate all men.[53] Goodwin defended the notion that if God decreed the infinite value of Christ's death, He also intended "his death itself for all men; and consequently Christ died not sufficiently only, but intentionally for all men."[54] All men, he states, are "simply and absolutely, after the same manner, and upon the same terms that all Other men, yea, the elect themselves, are bought by him." Goodwin's only interaction with Acts 20:28 in *Redemption Redeemed* is to mention it in passing as a central biblical text used by the Reformed to defend limited atonement.[55] According to Goodwin,

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are hardened, irresistible…but conditional upon a supposition of his own voluntary neglect or contempt, of the gracious application made by God unto him." Goodwin, *An exposition,* A Paraphrase of the Ninth Chapter. In his exposition of Romans 9:17, Goodwin plainly states that "here is not in least intimation of any end propounded by God to himself from eternity about pharaoh" for he was not "under any absolute impossibility of declining this obedience" unto God's command. "He that is not willing that any should perish," says Goodwin, "but that all should come to repentance…could not be willing…that pharaoh should perish, or persist in impenitency." (Goodwin, *An Exposition,* 183).

49. Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed,* 129.

50. Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed,* 131.

51. See also, Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed,* 186–226.

52. Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed,* 131–158.

53. Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed,* 204–206.

54. Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed,* 156. For Goodwin's full argument, see 153–58.

55. Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed,* 207.

> if an estimate be made of the intentions of God in the death of Christ, concerning the salvations of men, by this rule it will be found that he bare more gracious intentions in the death of Christ towards many reprobates and their salvation, than towards many of the elect, or of those who in the end come to be saved. For nothing is more evident, than that many perish under greater and more excellent means of salvation than are vouchsafed unto many others, who yet are saved thereby. So that it is a reasoning of no value which concludeth that 'Christ died not equally for all and every man, because all and every man have not the same means of salvation granted unto them.'[56]

Similarly, Hugo Grotius in his *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum: Acta Apostolorum*, evades the question of the extent of Christ's atonement and simply states that God's "acquirendi modus"[57] was that "por mortem cruetam Christos illam postestatem colligendae sibi ecclesia adeptus est secumdum vaticinium." His interaction with Acts 20:28 (including cross-referencing it with Ephesians 1:14 and Isaiah 53:10) is superficial and does not articulate any precise conclusion concerning the nature of Christ's satisfaction.[58]

Owen was adamant in affirming that Christ's blood is sufficient to propitiate the Father on behalf of all men, but it accomplishes only that which was agreed upon from all eternity in the intra-Trinitarian compact.[59] As stated by Perkins in *A Golden Chaine*, "It cannot be that he should be a propitiation for them, for whom he doth not vouch to pray."[60]

Hence, from his earliest publication in 1642 to the *Death of Death* in 1647, Owen's Christological use of Acts 20:28 served the purpose of disproving Arminian universalism and asserting particular redemption. Owen's principal apologetical aim in his early years was to defend the atonement's value by proving its limited extent and efficacy—that Christ sought to redeem "his church" only, and not the reprobate. However, the intrinsic

56. Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed,* 219.

57. "Method of aquisition" was that "By the bloody death of Christ, the church obtained for itself the prophecy, of gathering that afterlife." This author is not proficient in the Latin and has used Whitaker's "Dictionary of Latin Forms" (William Whitaker, *Dictionary of Latin Forms* (Bellingham, Wa.: Logos Bible Software, 2012); https://latin-words.com. (Hugo Grotius. *Annotationes In Novum Testamentum: Continens Annotationes Ad Acta Apostolorum*. (Zuidema: 1828), 189).

58. Grotius, *Annotationes, 189.*

59. *Works*, 10:345–10:347.

60. Perkins, *A Golden Chaine*, chap. 52.

sufficiency of Christ's satisfaction—albeit not forefront to his argument—is always a Christological presupposition in Owen's apologetical use of Acts 20:28. For the Reformed orthodox, the value of Christ's death is inexorably dependent upon Christ's theanthropic nature.[61] As stated by Thomas Aquinas (whose scholasticism highly influenced Owen),[62] Christ's sacrifice was of sufficient dignity to save all men "propter dignitatem vitae suae… quae erat vita Dei, et hominis."[63] Though Arminians demerited the efficacy of Christ's particular atonement, it was the Socinians—by their denial that Christ was "θεὸν ἀληθῶς καὶ ἄνθρωπον"[64]—who denied Christ's substitution altogether. According to John Biddle (1615–1662), Christ did not accomplish atonement on the cross, since Biddle denies the necessity of divine propitiation.[65] His interpretation of Hebrews 9:14—which speaks of the blood of Christ being an offering unto God for our sins through

61. See Canons of Dort, II.4; Gerald Lewis Bray, *Documents of the English Reformation: United Kingdom*: (Minneapolis: Fortress Press,1994), 453.

62. Christopher Harold Cleveland, *Thomism in John Owen*, (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2016).

63."on account of the dignity of his life…which was the life of God and Man." (Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa theologica*, Editio altera Romana. (Romae: Forzani et Sodalis, 1894), III q.48 a.2 resp).

64."truly God and truly man" (Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom: The Greek and Latin creeds, with translations* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1890), 2:62.

65. John Biddle, *The Faith of One God, who is Only the Father; and of One Mediator Between God and Men, who is Only the Man Christ Jesus; and of One Holy Spirit, the Gift (and Sent) of God; Asserted and Defended: In Several Tracts Contained in this Volume.* (United Kingdom: 1691), 31. A year after Biddle's publication, a book entitled *Mr. John Biddle's Strange and New Trinity of a God, a Man and an Angel* was published by John Brayne, in which he upheld "the Apostolical and true opinion concerning the Trinity." John Brayne, *Mr. John Biddle's Strange and New Trinity of a God, a Man, an Angel, and faith therein, proved to be untrue,* (United Kingdom: Edward Blackmore, 1654), 1. He interacts with Biddle's interpretation of Hebrews 9:14 and is consistent with Owen's interpretation, asserting that the eternal Spirit is indeed "the divine nature or being in Christ, and therefore not called the Holy Spirit" Brayne, *New Trinity of a God*, 17. This interpretation is not apparent. Prominent church fathers such as Ambrose of Milan and John Chrysostom attributed the reference to "the eternal Spirit," to the Holy Spirit. Owen follows the Athanasian interpretation. According to Athanasius, "The Lord is that Spirit." Athanasius of Alexandria, *Four Discourses Against the Arians*, in *Select Works and Letters*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. John Henry Newman and Archibald T. Robertson, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series* (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1892), 4:312. See Ambrose of Milan, *Three Books of St. Ambrose on the Holy Spirit*, in *Select Works and Letters*, 10:106. John Chrysostom even translated that Christ "through the Holy Spirit offered Himself." John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John and Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. Philip Schaff, *A Select Library*, 14:440.

the "Eternal Spirit"[66]—is that the eternal spirit must be "Christ's spiritual body," and that Christ "made his offering for our sins, when, after the resurrection, he entered into heaven, and being endued with a Spiritual and Immortal body, presented himself before God."[67] These interpretive distortions explain why Owen used the text of Acts 20:28 so frequently against the Socinians in order to reassert the deity, and thereby infinite value, of Christ's sacrifice.

Owen's *Two Short Catechisms* (1645) proves how his Christological use of Acts 20:28 had already served the apologetical purpose of supporting Chalcedonian orthodoxy[68] against "the blasphemous Socinians"[69] by demonstrating that the immediate effect of Christ's death is inseparably related to His hypostatic union. In this work, Acts 20:28 is used by Owen once to affirm the deity of Christ, then to affirm its efficacious ransom paying.[70]

Owen's subsequent publication, *Of the Death of Christ* (1650), in which his Christological use of Acts 20:28 strengthened his apologetical aims, was written to refute another crypto-Arminian universalistic view of the atonement,[71] expounded by "Mr. Baxter, a learned divine."[72] Richard Baxter

66. For Biddle's discussion on the personhood and deity of the Spirit, see John Biddle, *The Apostolical and true option Concerning the Holy Spirit revived and asserted* (London, 1653).

67. Biddle, *The Faith of One God*, 16.

68. For Owen's use of the Chalcedonian Creed in his orthodox Christological apologetics, see John Owen, *Christologia Or, A Declaration of the Glorious Mystery of the Person of Christ, God and Man: With the Infinite Wisdom, Love and Power of God in the Contrivance and Constitution Thereof*…. (United Kingdom: N. Ponder, 1679), 301.

69. John Owen, *Dr John Owen's Two Short Catechisms Wherein the Principles of the Doctine of Christ are Unfolded and Explained: Proper for all Persons to Learn before they be Admitted to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and Composed by Him for the use of all Congregations in General* (London: 1700), 35.

70. Owen, *Two Short Catechisms*, 27,35.

71. Baxter did not believe in limited atonement. His identification with hypothetical universalist theology is because he affirmed the universality of the atonement while not denying God's decree of predestination. Baxter's atonement theology was heavily influenced by the famous Dortian delegate John Davenant. See: Lynch, John Davenant's Hypothetical Universalism (Oxford Studies in Historical Theology) 2021. For an analysis of Hypothetical Universalism in the Westminster Standards see: Lee Gatiss, "A Deceptive Clarity?: Particular Redemption in the Westminster Standards." *Reformed Theological Review* 69, no. 3 (2010): 180–96.

72. *Works*, 10:435. See Tim Cooper, "Why Did Richard Baxter and John Owen Diverge? The Impact of The First Civil War," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 61, no. 3 (July 2010).

considered Owen to be rigidly "over-orthodox."[73] Indeed, "the Calvin of England"[74] was "more logical and consistent in his Calvinism than most."[75] They disputed the immediate results of Christ's death, or "the satisfaction and merit of Christ."[76] Essentially, in *Of the Death of Christ* (1650), Owen was interested in clarifying "about the payment made for sin in the blood of Christ, of what sort and kind it is,"[77] whether it was *idem* or *tantundem* to the debt incurred by the elect. Consistent with his view of Christ's efficacious satisfaction, Owen defended the payment was *idem*. "This for Owen constitutes the perfection of Christ's sacrifice," says Jonathan Moore.[78] Baxter's soteriology was more associated with eccentric Puritans such as John Preston (1587–1628)[79] than with the strict high Calvinists like Perkins.[80] Baxter defended the efficacy of Christ's death as originally determined by God's *ad intra* decrees, albeit the Son's blood was spilled in propitiation for the sins of the elect and reprobates alike, provided they repent and believe. Hence, for Owen, this kind of via-media universalism must still be refuted as demeriting to the efficacy of Christ's death. "A man that holds to the moderation of the Synod of Dort," Baxter affirmed, "need not say that Christ did

73. Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxteranae*, (London, 1696) 2:199, cited by Simon J. G. Burton, *The Hallowing of Logic: The Trinitarian Method of Richard Baxter's Methodus Theologiae* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 2011), 27.

74. Peter Toon, *God's Statesman: The Life and Work of John Owen*, (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1971), 173.

75. Hill, *Experience of Defeat*, 178.

76. *Works*, 10:435–436. Owen acknowledged that the nature of the controversy with Baxter was rather a matter of "ways of delivering things than the doctrines themselves" *Works*, 10:435. The same acknowledgment is made by Baxter when both divines disputed the essentialness of the creeds and the sole necessity of Scripture for salvation. Albeit Baxter held firmly to his view of the absolute necessity of Scripture for the knowledge of God in salvation, he acknowledged that "our difference is not de doctrina tradita; but de modo tradedi," Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxteranae*, 200.

77. *Works*, 10:437.

78. Jonathan Moore, "English Hypothetical Universalism and Reformed Confessions," in *Reformed Historical Theology*, vol. 17, *Drawn into Controversie: Reformed Theological Diversity and Debates Within Seventeenth-century British Puritanism*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and Mark Jones (Oakville, Conn.: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 133. In Owen's own words, "I affirm that he paid *idem*, that is, the *same thing* that was in the obligation, and not *tantundem*, *something equivalent* thereunto, in another kind." *Works*, 10:438.

79. Shuger notes Preston's "predestinarian framework" but associates him with the "'softer' Calvinism expounded by the British delegation at Dort," which "abandons the limited atonement of Elizabethan Calvinism." Shuger, *Religion in Early Stuart England*, 273. Cf. 278, 281–83.

80. Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism*, 94–111.

not dye or satisfie for all men."[81] "Christ suffered in the stead of all mankind having that punishment on him which all mens sins deserved," says Baxter.[82] He further states, "All mankind immediately upon Christ's satisfaction, are redeemed and delivered from the legal necessity of Perishing… they are given up to the Redeemer as their owner and ruler, to be dealt with upon the terms of mercy which have a tendency to their recovery."[83] Baxter is in line with hypothetical universalist theology in this respect.[84]

Furthermore, albeit Baxter denied any association with Remonstrance theology, there are notable similarities with their soteriology in his thinking.[85] Arminius could not accept that God's "*nudo & absoluto decreto*" was to elect some and "reliquam autem hominum multitudinem codem decreto rejecisse quibus Christum non dedit & quibus christi mortem utilem."[86]

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81. Richard Baxter, *Confession of Faith*, (London: 1655), 21. For a summary of the credal toleration of hypothetical universalism in the Synod of Dort (1618–1619), and the Westminster Assembly (1643–1649), see Haykin, *Drawn into Controversie*, 124–56; Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism*, 173–75.

82. Richard Baxter, *Universal Redemption of Mankind by the Lord Jesus Christ*, (London: 1694), 17.

83. Baxter, *Universal Redemption*, 36.

84. Amar Djaballah's presentation of Moise Amyraut's theory of universal redemption—based on his analysis of Brief Traitté de la Predestination—proves how Amyraut did not see his doctrine as heterodox, but rather as "faithful to Calvin and the first Reformers, and indeed compatible with the Cannons of Dort." See Amar Djaballah, "A Historical Survey of Moise Amyraut's Brief Traitté de la Predestination," in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*, ed. David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2013), 172; Brian G. Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth-century France* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969). According to Turretin, Amyraut believed that there were two types of redemption, limited and universal. The particularity of redemption is established in connection with God's immutable decree of election and its universality from the perspective of the non-elect equal disposition to believe. Turretin's analysis of Amyraut's Traité de la Predestination in Francis Turretin, *The Substitutionary Atonement of Jesus Christ*, 2nd ed. (Crossville, Tennessee: Puritan Publications), 1633–1656 (Kindle).

85. Jacobi Arminii, *Opera theologica*, (Netherlands: Godefridus Basson, 1629), 737. See also, Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 39; *Reformed Historical Theology*, v. 14, *God's Twofold Love: The Theology of Jacob Arminius (1559–1609)*, ed. William den Boer, trans. Albert Gootjes (Oakville, Conn.: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 120–34.

86. "Bare and absolute decree" was to elect some and "The rest of the multitude of men by decree to whom he did not give Christ and to whom Christ's death was not beneficial." Iacobi Armini, *Examen modestum libelli, quem D. Gulielmus Perkinsius apprime doctus theologus, edidit ante aliquot annos de prædestinationis modo & ordine, itemque de amplitudine gratiæ divinæ. Addita est propter argumenti convenientiam Analysis cap. 9. ad Roman. ante*

If God commanded all to repent and determined the elect and reprobate before the fall, "this command is vain" and "useless," argued Arminius, "for in no way can it be performed by him to whom the promise as made does not belong."[87] As demonstrated by Arminian theologian William den Boer, Arminius's theology of *duplex amor Dei* (namely that God loves supremely His justice and subordinately, all humans) did not allow for a supralapsarian soteriology.[88] Simply put, Arminius asserted that "Nam mortis Christi universalitas latius se extendit obiecto praedestinationis."[89]

The Arminians also maintain that God's acceptance of Christ's atonement was based on His gracious propensity, not in the inherent completeness of His sacrifice or actual and objective satisfaction of His justice. If the application of Christ's merits were based on the efficacy of His work, and according to Arminius, His death "efficax fuit ad peccatum abolendum et Deo satisfaciendum," universal salvation would be the obvious result.[90] Hence, Baxter's universalism was equally refuted by Owen in the 1650s as an atonement theory that Acts 20:28 did not allow for.

Scholars well document the longstanding soteriological controversies between Baxter and Owen.[91] For the present chronological analysis, suffice it to say that in *Of the Death*, Owen's polemical use of Acts 20:28 served

multos annos ab eodem ipso D. Arminio delineata (Netherlands: ex officina Godefridi Basson, 1612), 100.

87. Carl Bangs, ed., James Nichols and William Nichols, trans., *The Works of James Arminius: The London Edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 3:307.

88. Boer, *God's Twofold Love*, 80–166.

89. "the universality of Christ's death extends broader than to the object of predestiantion." Jacobi Arminii, *Opera theologica*, 672.

90. "was effective in abolishing sin and satisfying God." As noted by William den Boer, Arminius distinguishes among the "procurement, exhibition and application of the atonement…Christ can be the Mediator only for those in whose place He went to the cross; Christ's sacrifice, the procurement of the atonement, must be distinguished from the result of that procurement, which is the actual atonement itself.""What remains undiminished," he goes on to say, "is God's right to grant all the benefits earned by Christ that are distributed freely according to God's mercy in Christ to those whom it pleases Him to grant them." Boer, *God's Twofold Love*, 120. This notion is what Francis Turretin denounced as being a "Nominal Atonement" (Turretin, *Substitutionary Atonement*, 1088–1100, Kindle). Turretin argued that if Christ's death did not pay the exact price of the elect's redemption but was instead accepted by the Father as a gracious act, He was not truly satisfied, given the due penalty of the law; the atonement was not actual.

91. Jonathan David Lindell, "*John Owen and Richard Baxter: A Conflict Concerning the Nature of Divine Satisfaction*" PhD diss. (Dallas Theological Seminary, 2010); Tim Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2012); Trueman, *John Owen*, 106–18.

an identical purpose as seen in *A Display* and *Death of Death*, since, for Owen, both the hypothetical and actual universalist devalued the absolute efficacy of Christ's ransom paying. For Owen, Christ's atonement was only efficacious insofar as the payment of the debt He incurred was exact in relation to His original intent. However, a substantial development is seen in Owen's thought concerning his use of Acts 20:28 in his Christological polemics in relation to justification. He argued Christ's efficacious atonement gave the objects of His merits the immediate right to the benefits He procured on their behalf. For Owen, the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, the perfection of His death, the nature of justification, and the application of Christ's benefits were all existentially inseparable salvific realities. Owen postulated that "that which is merited and procured for any one, thereunto he for whom it is procured certainly hath a right. That which is obtained for me is mine in actual right…He obtains for them eternal redemption, Heb. 9:12; purchasing them with his own blood, Acts 20:28."[92] Owen was adamant in his belief that what Christ procured through His death could not contradict the atonement's original predestinarian purpose, lest His blood were spilled on behalf of those He did not intend to save. All universal ransom claims—whether hypothetical or actual—contradict Owen's robust particularist polemic displayed in his Christological use of Acts 20:28 from 1642 to the mid 1650s.[93] Against the proponents of general ransom, Owen was in good company not only in Britain but also on the Continent. Prominent Reformed orthodox contemporaries in Owen's time set forth identical arguments on the Continent against universalist soteriology. One such Calvinist contemporary was Francis Turretin (1623–1687), a towering representative of Genevan Reformed theology.[94] In his famous *The substitutionary Atonement of Christ*, he utilizes the traditional scholastic distinction "that Christ died sufficiently for all, but efficiently for the elect only."[95] "This is perfectly true" he goes on to state,

92. *Works*, 10:467.

93. See Carl R. Trueman's chapter in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her*.

94. Turretin, The *Substitutionary Atonement,* 316, Kindle; Post-Reformation Digital Library, accessed November 4, 2020, http://www.prdl.org/author_view.php?a_id=50 .

95. As noted by some Reformed historical theologians such as William Cunningham and Louis Berkhoff, the scholastic distinction that Christ died *sufficienter pro omnibus, efficaciter pro electis* has been revised by the Reformed since Calvin to avoid the misunderstanding that Christ intended universal redemption in his death. William Cunningham, *Historical Theology: A Review of the Principal Doctrinal Discussions in the Christian Church Since the Apostolic Age, vol. 2* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1864), 332; Louis Berkhof, *Vicarious Atonement through Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1936), 176. The relation between

> if it be understood of the dignity of Christ's death.… The pivot on which the controversy turns is, what was the purpose of the Father in sending the Son to die…It is said that Christ 'hath purchased the church [or his flock] with his own blood' (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:26–27). If Christ died for every one of Adam's posterity, why should the Scriptures so often restrict the object of his death to a few?[96]

Acts 20:28 in Owen's Polemics for the Intrinsic Sufficiency of Christ's Satisfaction, 1655–1684

Despite the sharp soteriological disagreements that characterized Baxter and Owen's relationship, their arguments were considered within the confines of Reformed orthodoxy.[97] However, Owen's engagement with the Socinian heresy had another tone,[98] as seen in his subsequent Christological publication *Vindicae Evangelicae* (1655). Thus, a radical development is noticed in Owen's Christological use of Acts 20:28 from 1655 to his most mature polemical literary activity in the 1680s. After Owen was commissioned by Parliament to disprove the Socinian heresy, his Christological use of Acts 20:28 served a more fundamental polemical goal due to the severity of the Unitarian heresy. The Socinians denied Christ's theanthropic composition, and thus His death's intrinsic sufficiency, whereas universalists attributed inefficacy to Christ's atonement by asserting a general ransom theory.[99] Owen's apologetic against universalists from 1642–1655 aimed to defend the value of Christ's blood for the exact fulfillment of its original intent. The Socinian question was whether His blood had any redemptive

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the universal propitiation and universal intrinsic sufficiency has been debated since the Reformation between Lutherans, Semi-Pelagians, Arminians, and Calvinistic universalists. See Cunningham, *Historical theology*, 300–60; Berkhof, *Vicarious Atonement*, 151–79. In Medieval times, Aquinas was already answering objections raised by some who rejected the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice based on the damnation of the non-elect. Aquinas answers by stating that "Christ's Passion was sufficient and superabundant satisfaction for the sins of the whole human race," albeit it "works its effect in them to whom it is applied." Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, STh., III q.49 a.3 resp-STh., III q.49 a.3 ad 1. For Owen's discussion on the subject, see *Works*, 10:295–96.

96. Turretin, *Substitutionary Atonement*, 1664–1689, Kindle. See Turrettini, *François. De satisfactione Christi disputationes* (Netherlands: Fredericum Haring, 1696), 7.

97. See Jonathan Moore's discussion on English hypothetical universalism and Reformed confessions in *Drawn into Controversie*, 143–48.

98. See *Works*, 4:249; 7:27–28; Toon, *The Correspondence of John Owen*, 132.

99. Owen mentions a "division and separation" of Socinianism "from the reformed churches" in Poland in 1562. *Works*, 12:20–21.

value at all, for, according to Owen, Socinians make "the cross of Christ of none effect."[100]

What was the role of the intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's satisfaction in Owen's Christological apologetic against Socinian Unitarianism? Was Christ's humiliation a mere moralistic venture or the fulfillment of a redemptive intra-Trinitarian covenant? How did the Socinians' rejection of Christ's dual nature distort the salvific teleology of the atonement? Moreover, what were the fundamental counterarguments of British and Continental Reformed orthodox representatives? These questions have been answered satisfactorily by scholars elsewhere.[101] However, for the present chronological analysis of Owen's use of Acts 20:28, it is proper to chart his answers to these questions from his Christological particularist apologetic. Major works such as *Vindiciae Evangelicae* (1655), *The Doctrine of Justification* (1677), and *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (1668–1684) must receive special attention; other works that follow the same line of apologetical argumentation will also be cited. Owen's apologetical arguments must also be compared with prominent Reformed orthodox predecessors and contemporary scholars to improve the framework with which one understands his arguments' intellectual context. One such scholar was the Puritan divine John Prideaux (1578–1650), Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford[102] from 1615 to 1642, who vehemently opposed Socinianism.

100. *Works*, 23:314. According to Jan Rhols, Socinian Unitarianism received credal denunciation as early as 1618–1619 at the Synod of Dort. Martin Mulsow and Jan Rhols, *Socinianism and Arminianism: Antitrinitarians, Calvinists and Cultural Exchange in Seventeenth-Century Europe*, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 134 (Netherlands: Brill, 2005), 44; Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, 44–50. This denunciation came a decade after the first Latin publication of the Racovian Catechism—by its relation to Arminianism. Earl Morse Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism: Socinianism and its Antecedents* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945), 171. In 1614, James I had already burned a copy of the Racovian Catechism in London, though his act of repulsion did not prevent Socinianism's rapid spread. Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, 39.

101. Richard W Daniels, *The Christology of John Owen*. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2004), 97–146; H. John McLachlan, *Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951); Carl R Trueman, *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology* (Kiribati: Paternoster Press, 1998).

102. John Prideaux, *A Synopsis of Counsels, Oxford* (printed by A. and L. Lichfield, printers to the university, 1671), Title-page; Matthew, H. C. G., Brian Harrison, and British Academy, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: In Association with the British Academy: From the Earliest times to the Year 2000* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2004), 343. There is not much secondary literature published on Prideaux (All manuscripts related to Dr. Prideaux are obtained from PRDL database, accessed from October 17–23, 2020

Almost all of Prideaux's sermons conclude with a Trinitarian doxology to "pater in Filio per Spiritum Sanctum, Cui Individue Trinitati sit Regnum, potentia & gloria in sacula seculorum."[103] He believes Christ to be the Creator and God "to whom all the types and sacrifices of the law made reference."[104] Like in Owen's Christological apologetic, Acts 20:28 is referenced as a definitive text in favoring the Reformed view of the atonement. Prideaux states, "The Incarnation was most agreeable to the second person in the Trinity.… This only is Sufficient to make good these harder speeches in appearance. God hath purchased the Church with his owne blood!

(http://www.prdl.org/author_view.php?a_id=467). The available manuscripts of his surviving works point to his high Calvinism. According to Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, he was a prominent Reformed scholar, chaplain to King James and Charles I (though vehemently opposing Laud's Arminian innovations; Prideaux, ONDB, 343–44). For a survey of Prideaux's influence in Oxford during the 1630s, see: Charles Edward Mallet, *A History of the University of Oxford*, (England: Methuen, 1927), 1: 259–65. Prideaux preceded the more famous Calvinist Conformist Robert Sanderson (1587–1663; *ONDB*, 344). Peter G. Lake, "Serving God and the Times: The Calvinist Conformity of Robert Sanderson," *The Journal of British Studies* 27, no. 2 (April 1988): 81–116. Sanderson taught at Oxford during the years of the Civil War (1642–1648). (http://www.prdl.org/author_view.php?a_id=488, accessed 11/20/2020). According to Peter Lake, Sanderson was a Calvinist who "also hated Puritanism" and "cooperated enthusiastically with the Laudian regime" in the 1630s. Lake, *Serving God and the Times*, 81. According to Shuger, Sanderson was seized by parliamentary forces in 1644 and released in 1646, in which year he retook his professorship at Oxford. Shuger, *Stuart England*, 230–31. Lake proves that, more towards the end of his life, Sanderson seemed to have repudiated his "long-lasting commitment to Calvinist Orthodoxy." Lake, *Serving God and the Times*, 113. However, Lake describes him as "a moderate Calvinist." *Serving God and the Times*, 114. Despite his Royalism, Laudian ties, and post-Restoration allegiance to Charles II, scholars such as Peter Lake have asserted Sanderson's subscription to essential Calvinistic doctrine. Lake, *Serving God and the Times*, 103–108.

103. "The Father in the Son through the Holy Spirit, to whom the Trinity is the Kingdom, power and glory for ever and ever." John Prideaux, *Concio habita Oxoniae ad artium baccalaureos in die Cinerum* (Iohannes Lichfield & Gulielmus Turner academiae typographi: 1626), 40, https://books.google.com/books?id=nvpAVXENF2gC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false. For other examples, see John Prideaux, *The Great Prophets Advent—sermon on John 6:14*, 28; John Prideaux, *Reverence to Rulers*, 29. All other sermons of Dr. Prideaux cited in this work are part of a collection included in *Christ's Counsell For Ending Law Cases: as it has beene delivered in two sermons upon the five and twentieth verse of the fifth of Matthew* (Oxford: Imprinted by Leonard Lichfield, 1636). Digitalized by Princeton Theological Seminary, accessed through *Early English Books Online*.

104. Prideaux, *A Christmas Free Will Offering as it was Delivered in a Sermon on Christmas day at Christ's Church in Oxford*, 7. For Prideaux's defense of Calvin's threefold offices of Christ, see Prideaux, *A Christmas Free Will Offering*, 1–2; Prideaux, *The Draught of the Brooke*, 18.

Acts 20:21" (Prideaux quotes Acts 20:28 but cites it as Acts 20:21).[105] Prideaux's defense of Christ's person is far from being an exclusive Christological claim that had no bearing on his doctrine of salvation. Like Owen, Prideaux understood how the Socinian's denial of Christ's deity rendered the atonement a mere example of messianic humiliation, which accomplished no merit or satisfaction on behalf of the elect. Hence, Prideaux warns of "how dangerously doth *Socinus* take vantage by affirming, that Christ so meriting for himselfe, served his own turne only, and not ours, in that behalfe, and therefore his doings, and sufferings were only exemplary for our imitation, not satisfactory for our redemption."[106]

Owen was in the early years of his adolescence when Prideaux aimed to dismantle "some Heretiques that opposed our Savior's deity…which by the Arians heretofore, and now by the Socinians is eagerly and perfidiously opposed."[107] Prideaux's efforts in the 1620s–1630s obtained some success, albeit not sufficient to eradicate the Polish anti-Trinitarian sect. "In 1654 the commands of the Council of State were laid upon Owen to undertake the refutation of Socinianism…in the following year the '*Vindiciae Evangelicae*' appeared."[108] Owen writes *Vindiciae* as an apology against those "who of old opposed the doctrine of the Trinity, especially of the deity of Christ, his person and natures."[109] In the preface, Owen refers to "our Doctor Prideaux,"[110] citing his *Lectiones de Justificatione*, where he endorses Harmanus Ravenspergerus's work written against Hugo Grotius's *Defensio Fidei Catholicæ de Satisfactione Christi, adversus Faustum Socinum Senensem*.[111] Not surprisingly, in *Vindicae*, Acts 20:28 is used seven times: three times in defense of the intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's death—denouncing

105. Prideaux, *A Christmas Will Offering*, 8–9.

106. Prideaux, *The Draught of the Brooke*, 16. The influence of Calvin on Prideaux is evidenced by his frequent quotation of the Magisterial Reformers. Here, he references Calvin's exposition of Christ's satisfaction "in the 17. Chap. Of the 2d of his Institutions" to strengthen his case against Socinians. The human nature of Christ alone, argued Prideaux, "falls short of the infinite reward…Our men rightly ascribe all the merit to the person, consisting of both natures, where the humane is advanced to that pitch of dignity, by union with the God-head, which makes the merit infinite." Prideaux, *The Draught of the Brooke*, 17.

107. Prideaux, *The Great Prophets Advent*, 26.

108. *Works*, 12:3–4.

109. *Works*, 12:12.

110. *Works*, 12:27.

111. "Defence of the Catholic faith on the Satisfaction of Christ against Faustus Socinus of Senene," *Works*, 12:27. PRDL.org does not list this work to which Owen refers (http://www.prdl.org/author_view.php?a_id=441, accessed October 25, 2020).

"Mr. B's" (Biddle) denial of Trinitarian doctrine, the eternal generation of the Son, His incarnation, and the hypostatic union[112]—and three other times showing the efficacy of Christ's satisfaction by virtue of His merits as the God-man.[113] "Because he did it who was God and man," says Owen, "and as God and man, God is said to 'redeem his church with his own blood' Acts 20:28."[114]

An additional development in his Christological use of Acts 20:28 is seen in Owen's apologetic for the essentialness of Christ's dual nature as the foundation of His efficacious sacrifice. In *The Doctrine of Justification* (1677), Christ's intrinsic sufficiency was evoked as an essential component of the believer's justification by the imputation of Christ's righteousness. Owen writes against Socinians who "destroy the merit of Christ"[115] by denying His deity and, consequently, His right and ability as the mediator of the covenant to impute His active obedience to those for whom He substitutes.[116] Owen mentions Acts 20:28 to defend the Reformed orthodox position that the value of justification by the imputation of Christ's righteousness depended on His hypostatic union. Indeed, "the mediators obedience was the obedience of his person; for 'God redeemed his church with his own blood,' Acts 20:28…his acts who was that person, and whose power of operation was a property of his person. Wherefore, the obedience of Christ, which we plead to have been for us was the obedience of the Son of God."[117] The same Christological apologetic, exegetically based on Acts 20:28, appears in all of Owen's other major Christological publications, such as *A Brief Declaration* (1669),[118] *Cristologia* (1679),[119] and *Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ* (1684).[120]

For the purpose of this research, Owen's life project, "which marked the climax of his post-Restoration writing career,"[121] and became "one of the

112. *Works*, 12:74–75; 12:210; 12:249. The seventh instance is in 12:338.

113. *Works*, 12:432; 12:556; 12:627.

114. *Works*, 12:432.

115. *Works*, 5:165.

116. Meyers, *God, Owen, and Justification*, 79–82.

117. *Works*, 5:255.

118. *Works*, 2:382; 2:416; 2:430. For Owen's ecclesiological use of Acts 20:28, see *Works*, 15:88; 15:128–129; 15:159; 15:235; 15:250; 15:276; 15:280–281; 15:306; 15:355–356; 15:438; 15:483; 7:186; 16:45; 16:75, 16:105; 16:106; 4:447; 4:493; 4:508; 22:107; 22:195.

119. *Works*, 1:47–48; 1:99; 1:224–225; 2:51.

120. *Works*, 1:327.

121. John W. Tweeddale, "John Owen's Commentary on Hebrews in Context," in *The*

most exhaustive…polemical and pastoral treatises of seventeenth century Puritanism,"[122] deserves special attention. Given its status as the most voluminous Reformed commentary in Early Modern history,[123] Owen's most mature Christological treatise,[124] *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, must be set apart from his other works for analysis. Crawford Gribben notes how in Owen's first manuscript entitled *Tractatu de sacerdotio Christi*—which he never published—he developed "what appear to be its principal themes through much of his later writing—including the Reformed view of the work of Christ."[125] Indeed, the masterpiece of Owen's Christological apologetic is displayed in his only biblical commentary.

The first volume of *Hebrews* came out in 1668, and the last was published posthumously in 1684. The subject matter of Owen's most notable exegetical achievement was—as described in the subtitle—"the doctrine of the person, office and work of the Messiah." To the end of his publishing career, he believed "the greatest opposition that ever was made among Christians unto the doctrine of the priesthood of Christ, or rather unto the office itself, is that which at this day is managed by the Socinians."[126] Hence one of his principal aims in all four volumes is to discredit Socinian Unitarian heresy, which distorted the whole of Christian doctrine, particularly the value and merits of Christ's satisfaction. At this point in his publishing career, Owen's sharp polemical astuteness and exceptional literary skill come together in a careful selection of arguments and texts to defuse opponents of Reformed particularism.

Ashgate Research Companion to John Owen's Theology, ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Mark Jones (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2012), 52.

122. Tweeddale, "Hebrews in Context," 55.

123. Robert Keith McGregor Wright, *John Owen's great high Priest: The Highpriesthood of Christ in the theology of John Owen, (1616–1683)* (Denver: University of Denver, 1989), 177–78.

124. John W. Tweeddale's comment that Owen "is generally not remembered as a biblical exegete" is striking given his authorship of *Hebrews*—the most extensive British biblical commentary of the early modern period. John W. Tweeddale, *John Owen and Hebrews: The Foundation of Biblical Interpretation*, T&T Clark Studies in English Theology (London: T & T Clark, 2019), 2. Dr. Tweedale affirms the need for a reappraisal of Owen's theological legacy. He seeks to review his work from the lenses of his commentary on Hebrews. Tweedale, *John Owen and Hebrews*, 27–52. As stated by Tweeddale, "The history of biblical interpretation, particularly in the seventeenth century, is a growing but still relatively uncultivated field of research." Hence, the need to assess Owen's interpretation of Acts 20:28 in light of his pre-critical exegetical methodology and epistemological presuppositions.

125. Gribben, *John Owen*, 42–43.

126. *Works*, 18:17; 20:305–306.

Not surprisingly, Acts 20:28 has five occurrences in his exposition of Hebrews 1:1–2 alone.[127] We find another four occurrences in chapters 2 and 3, eight occurrences from chapters 4–7, seven occurrences in chapter 9, and three occurrences in chapter 13. Albeit Acts 20:28 is sometimes conjoined to other texts, in many cases, Owen singles out the passage as an essential proof text in his case for the intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's satisfaction. In his exposition of Chapter 2:2–4, many texts are mentioned to describe the character of the death of Christ (Philippians 2:8; Hebrews 2:10; 1 Peter 1:18–19). Owen uses Acts 20:28 to conclude and sum up the main idea of all the other texts. "And therein," says Owen, "God redeemed his church with his own blood," Acts 20:28.[128]

In his exposition of Hebrews 2:9, Owen contrasted and compared available variants and Syriac copies to establish the most reliable translation of ὅπως χάριτι Θεοῦ ὑπὲρ παντὸς γεύσηται θανάτον (so that by the grace of God for everyone he might taste death). Owen argued that some copies read, "For God himself by his grace tasted death." He indicates how some take his version to be a Nestorian distortion since it reads that Jesus "by the grace of God might taste of death for all." The Nestorians "would not grant that God might be said to die, contrary to Acts 20:28."[129] This is the only text Owen mentions to affirm that God's blood was spilled by virtue of Christ's oblation. In the words of Herman Witsius, it was "not the blood of a mere man, but 'the blood of God' was shed."[130] Similarly, Matthew Poole's exegesis of Acts 20:28 in his famous *Annotations Upon the Holy Bible* demonstrates how the dignity of Christ's sacrifice is dependent upon His nature. He defends that the blood of Christ can be "called truly the blood of God there being in Christ two natures in one person, and a communion of the properties of each nature." "If Christ had not been man," Poole states, "he could have had no blood to shed: had he not

127. John 1:1 is mentioned numerous times (Works, 18:217; 19:60; 20:7) as a proof text for Christ's deity (as in the case of 1 Tim. 3:16), but not as proof of the dignity and value of Christ's sacrifice (21:258; 21:355; 23:402). Other texts Owen frequently employed throughout his career in favor of limited atonement, such as Mark 10:45 (20:360; 23:402), Heb 2:17 (19:202; 20:360; 21:403), and Isa. 53:12 (22:288; 3:231) do not qualify as a prooftext of the intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's death, based on the dignity of His nature.

128. *Works*, 20:36.

129. *Works*, 20:322. See also 21:415, 422; 21:528–529; 22:340; 22:452–453; 22:534.

130. Herman Witsius and Donald Fraser, *Sacred Dissertations, on What is Commonly Called the Apostles' Creed*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: A. Fullarton & Co, 1823), 271.

been God, the blood which he shed could not have been a sufficient price of redemption."[131]

Owen's use of this text communicates a mystery in his mind. He acknowledges that only the flesh is capable of suffering, "but he suffered who *was the Son of God*, and as he was the Son of God, or God could not have 'redeemed the church with his own blood,' Acts 20:28."[132] Owen's argument in his exposition of Hebrews 4:14 is similar. He states that since "every high Priest…is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices to God," Jesus must have something to offer. "The Divine nature or Person are not to be offered," says Owen, for "God cannot be a sacrifice, though he who is God was so to be."[133] After explaining how all other temporal options for the atonement of the elect would "have been a provocation unto God," Owen justifies Christ's incarnation through His exclusive qualification as the atoning sacrifice for the elect. "Wherefore, this Son of God became Jesus" Owen argues, "this by its *oneness* with our nature…was meet to be offered for us; and by its union with his person was meet and able to make atonement with God for us; and so 'God redeemed his church with his own blood,' Acts 20:28."[134] Owen singles out this text to make the same argument repeatedly in the book of Hebrews: that though His death was not of the whole person, "the Son of God died, whence God is said to 'redeem his church with his own blood,' Acts 20:28."[135] Owen also consistently singles out Acts 20:28 in Hebrews as the authority for his doctrine of the efficacy of Christ's work, based on the dignity of His person. Owen states,

> The excellency and efficacy of his sacrifice is hereby demonstrated, that through him our faith and hope may be in God. He who offered

131. Matthew Poole, *Annotations upon the Holy Bible. Wherein the Sacred Text is Inserted, and various Readings Annex'd, Together with the Parallel Scriptures…. / by the Late Reverend and Learned Divine Mr. Matthew Poole* (London: 1696), at Acts 20:28. For Augustine's view, see Novatian, "A Treatise of Novatian concerning the Trinity", in *Fathers of the Third Century: Hippolytus, Cyprian, Novatian, Appendix*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, e A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis, vol. 5, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature Company, 1886), 636.

132. *Works*, 21:528–29.

133. John Owen, *Exercitations on the Epistle to the Hebrews, Concerning the Priesthood of Christ Wherein the Original, Causes, Nature, Prefigurations, and Discharge of that Holy Office, are Explained and Vindicated: With a Continuation of the Exposition on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Chapters of Said Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: 1674), 309.

134. *Works*, 21:414–15; see also, 21:422.

135. John Owen, *Exposition on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Chapters of Said Epistle to the Hebrews*, 309.

> this sacrifice was "the only-begotten of the Father," the eternal Son of God. That which he offered was "his own blood." "God purchased his church with his own blood," Acts 20:28. How unquestionable, how perfect must the atonement be that was thus made! how glorious the redemption that was procured thereby.[136]

In his exposition of Hebrews 3:3–6, Owen founded the church's existence upon the work of Christ as God based on two texts. Though 1 John 3:16 is referenced, the weight of the argument is made on the basis of Acts 20:28, since 1 John 3:16 mentions the death of Christ but is not a prooftext for His deity. Hence, we see the notable use of this text as an encapsulation of Owen's robust atonement theology in his Christological apologetic. Indeed, a chronological analysis of Owen's Christological use of Acts 20:28 in his apologetic against Socinians from 1655 to his last publication points unambiguously to

> the true excellency and efficacy of the blood of Christ in his sacrifice was from his divine person, whereby "God purchased his church with his own blood," Acts 20:28… The dignity of his person gave efficacy unto his office and offering. No other person, in the discharge of the same offices that were committed unto him, could have saved the church; and therefore all those by whom his divine person is denied do also evacuate his offices. By what they ascribe unto them, it is impossible the church should be either sanctified or saved. They resolve all into a mere act of sovereign power in God; which makes the cross of Christ of none effect.[137]

Conclusion

Owen's life-long zeal to defend the intrinsic sufficiency and limited extent of the atonement through his Christological use of Acts 20:28 is thus proven. From 1642 to the mid 1650s, Owen's primary apologetical task concerning Christ's atonement was to root out the influence of Arminian universalism from British soil; thus, his Christological use of this Scripture in these early years reinforced his strict Reformed particularism, even against hypothetical universalists such as Richard Baxter in the 1650s. After Parliament named Owen as the polemicist *par excellence* against Socinians in 1655, Owen employed the same Scripture to uphold the value of Christ's death based on his theanthropic nature, until the very end of his

136. *Works*, 23:281. For other examples, see 23:314; 23:273; 23:392.

137. *Works*, 23:273; 23;314. See also, 23:369, 392.

publishing career in 1683. Thus a chronological analysis of Owen's Christological use of Acts 20:28 charts a polemical development that reinforced his defense of limited atonement from 1642 to the mid 1650s, and the intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's death from *Vindicae* (1655) to his publication of *Hebrews* in 1684. Owen's arguments are echoed by towering British and Continental Reformed orthodox representatives. It was "God's own blood, Acts 20:28," says Owen. "The Lord Jesus, out of his incomprehensible love unto his people, would spare nothing, avoid nothing, deny nothing, that was needful unto their sanctification, their reconciliation, and dedication unto God.—He did it 'with his own blood.'"[138] Owen's Christological use of Acts 20:28, in his particularist apologetic, effectively refuted the universalist's and Socinian's opposition to the Reformed particularistic view of Christ's sacrifice. From his earliest publication to his more mature post-Restoration works, Owen's Christological use of Acts 20:28 consistently reaffirms his apologetic for the limited extent and intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's satisfaction.

138. *Works*, 24:445–46.

Infused by Divine Life: Stephen Charnock and the Doctrine of Regeneration

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Perhaps less well known in some circles than his contemporaries Richard Baxter (1615–1691) and John Owen (1616–1683), Stephen Charnock (1628–1680) was, nevertheless, an influential Puritan preacher quite famous in his day.[1] Born in London in the parish of St. Katharine Cree, he entered Emmanuel College on May 30, 1642, receiving his bachelor of arts degree from Cambridge in 1646 before heading to Oxford, where he was incorporated Master of Arts in 1649.[2] He died in 1680 with only a single work published, *The Sinfulness and Cure of Thoughts*, while the remainder of his manuscripts issued posthumously.[3] His most famous work is *The*

1. Biographical information on Stephen Charnock is limited. For dictionary articles, see Richard L. Greaves, "Charnock, Stephen (1628–1680)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), 137; J. C. Spalding, "Stephen Charnock," in *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century* (The Harvester Press, 1982), 203–204. For more sustained attention on Charnock and his social location, see Julian E. Gutierrez S., "The Lord Reigns Supreme: An Investigation of Stephen Charnock's Exegetical, Doctrinal, and Practical Theology Concerning the Existence and Attributes of God" (PhD diss., University of St. Andrews, 2017), 9–31; Larry Siekawitch, *Balancing Head and Heart in Seventeenth Century Puritanism: Stephen Charnock's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Great Britain: Paternoster, 2012) 18–28. For the theological matrix that undergirds Charnock's thought, see Hansang Lee, *Trinitarian Theology and Piety: The Attributes of God in the Thought of Stephen Charnock (1628–1680) and William Perkins (1558–1602)* (PhD diss, University of Edinburgh, 2009), 38–75.

2. Due to his "singular gifts and unwearied exertions," Charnock obtained a fellowship at New College Oxford and was promoted to Senior Proctor in 1652 before heading to Ireland to serve under Henry Cromwell. W. M. Symington, "Life and Character of Charnock," in Stephen Charnock, *Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 1:5.

3. The five volume Banner of Truth set is a reprint of Charnock's works from the 1864 James Nichol edition. James M'Cosh (1811–1894), former president of Princeton, asserted in his introduction to the 1864 collection that a memoir was imminent after the death of Charnock, but it never materialized and no evidence exists that a manuscript was produced.

Existence and Attributes of God, a set of discourses that reflect, in Puritan fashion, on theology proper. Equally impressive in terms of breadth and scope are Charnock's treatises on the doctrine of regeneration.

This article will explore Stephen Charnock's doctrine of regeneration and draw out implications for Christian spirituality.[4] Much of the contemporary discussion concerning regeneration is polemical, arguing for or against a particular *ordo salutis* between the new birth and faith.[5] While these discussions are important, my more modest approach will assume the traditional Reformed position—regeneration precedes saving faith—and investigate the fruit of the doctrine as it works itself out experientially and practically.[6]

Survey and Summary

The Church Fathers, enmeshed in the Trinitarian and Christological controversies that dominated the early councils, did not treat regeneration as its own locus of theological reflection, and often stumbled when they did articulate the doctrine.[7] In defense of the Spirit's divinity, for example, Ambrose blurred the line between water baptism and Spirit-wrought regeneration,

James M'Cosh, "Introduction," in *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2010), 1:vii.

4. The term *spirituality* is unfortunately laden with ambiguity. Previously, I followed the definition given by Evan Howard where spirituality is "our actual, lived relationship with God through the Spirit of Christ" along with the "formulation of a teaching about the lived reality" and "the formal study of that relationship and those teachings," Evan Howard, *The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008), 16. John Gill (1697–1771), however, now best captures my thinking. He wrote in his systematic theology that "doctrine has an influence on practice, especially evangelical doctrine, spiritually understood, affectionately embraced, and powerfully and feelingly experienced," John Gill, *A Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, (Paris, Ark.: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 1984) 1:34. In light of Gill, my own definition is that Christian spirituality is the integration of beliefs, experiences, and practices that make for a fully realized Christian life.

5. For an overview of recent polemics concerning the *ordo salutis*, see J. V. Fesko, *Beyond Calvin: Union with Christ and Justification in Early Modern Reformed Theology (1517–1700)*, (Bristol, Conn.: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2012), 53–74. For an exhaustive biblical, theological, and historical analysis, see Matthew Barrett's dissertation, *Reclaiming Monergism: The Case for Sovereign Grace in Effectual Calling*, (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011).

6. Here, I am following Joel Beeke and others, who have maintained that real theology is not merely speculative but deeply experiential and practical. Joel R. Beeke and Paul Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology*, (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2019), 1:125–28.

7. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 515.

as did Chrysostom, Augustine, and others.[8] Strictly speaking, however, the word translated *regeneration* (παλιγγενεσία: *palingenesia)* is only found in two passages, Matthew 19:28 and Titus 3:5. Of these only the latter deals with regeneration as new birth, as it is considered in this article. The Matthew passage refers to the eschatological recreation of the world, while the Titus passage refers to what is traditionally thought of by regeneration—the beginning of new spiritual life. Considered as new spiritual life, there are a host of other biblical words and images that speak to this same reality. For example, when Jesus stressed the necessity of regeneration to Nicodemus in John 3:3 and stated, "unless one is *born again* (γεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν), he cannot see the kingdom of God," he clearly had in mind new life given by the Spirit (see John 3:6), even if the exact word *regeneration* is not used. Cast in this light, regeneration covers many biblical passages concerning God's work in bringing new life to a dead soul.[9]

Reformed theologians who abandoned the sacramental system of Rome and rejected baptismal regeneration used the term *regeneration* to cover a range of distinct aspects of the salvation experience, from initial quickening to effectual calling, conversion, and even sanctification.[10] Though they were flexible in their treatment of the doctrine, they were united in affirming the logical and causal priority of regenerating grace.[11] It is in Puritan

8. St. Ambrose, "Of The Holy Spirit," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd series*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955) 10:144; For Chrysostom and Augustine, see Peter Gorday, ed., *Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2000), 305.

9. To name just a few passages: Ezekiel 36:26; John 1:13, 3:3; Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 2:29, 5:1.

10. This is not to say that baptismal regeneration was uniformly rejected by all, but that the prevailing Roman Catholic sacramental system and its concept of baptismal regeneration was rejected. While Catholics and some Anglicans continued to defend baptismal regeneration, Reformed theologians by and large did not. For further treatment on baptism in the Reformed tradition, see J. V. Fesko, *Word, Water, and Spirit: A Reformed Perspective on Baptism,* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010) 79–155. For treatment on the Reformed position concerning regeneration, see Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 515–32; Beeke, *Reformed Systematic Theology,* 3:400–22. For a more ecumenical approach, see Thomas Oden, *Classic Christianity: A Systematic Theology,* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992) 612–22.

11. For example, Antonius Waleus (1673–1639) treated regeneration under repentance as follows: "It is customary to consider this repentance in two ways: either as a spiritual disposition poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, or as an action from us that proceeds from that disposition. In the first way, it is properly speaking and in its strict sense called regeneration; in the second way, it is called repentance." Polyander, Rivetus, Walaeus, Thysius. *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae: Synopsis of a Purer Theology. Latin Text and English*

theology, however, that the experiential and practical dimensions of the doctrine are especially emphasized and thus provide rich resources for Christian spirituality.

The experiential and practical dimension of the doctrine was no less present in the work of Charnock, who was fond of describing regeneration as the infusion of divine life in the soul.[12] Charnock articulated his theology of regeneration in four theological sermons contained in volume 3 of his complete works. The title of each work reflects an area of doctrinal emphasis: *The Necessity of Regeneration*, *The Nature of Regeneration*, *The Efficient of Regeneration*, and *the Instrument of Regeneration*.[13] While this paper will primarily focus on how Charnock developed his ideas, other Puritan and Reformed voices will help clarify and confirm Charnock's theological reasoning.[14]

Translation, ed. Roelf T. Velde and Willem J. van Asselt. (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 2:277. On this point, he echoes Calvin: "I interpret repentance as regeneration, whose sole end is to restore in us the image of God." Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1:601 (3.3.9). Of course, by repentance, both Calvin and Waleus mean something much deeper than a mere apology—an entire life of clinging to God.

12. Henry Scougal (1650–1678), though not writing about regeneration per se, expresses a similar sentiment: "I know not how the nature of religion can be more fully expressed than by calling it a divine life." *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* (Mansfield Centre, Conn.: Martino Publishing, 2010), 30. Cf. Peter Van Mastricht, *A Treatise on Regeneration*, ed. Brandon Withrow (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2002), 7. Peter Van Mastricht was professor of theology in Utrecht while Charnock traveled the Continent from 1660–1675. We know Charnock spent time in France and Holland during the years he was absent from England and most likely developed his theology on account of his travels and study. Thus, it is unsurprising to find echoes of continental Reformed theologians such as Van Mastricht in his works. See also, Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic) 3:132; M'Cosh, "Introduction," *The Complete Works of Stephen* Charnock, xix; Siekawitch, *Balancing Head and Heart*, 20.

13. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:7–335. As noted above, Charnock published only a single work in his lifetime. James M'Cosh intimates this was in part due to modesty. Charnock's work on God's providence was published the same year he died, his *Existence and Attributes* following the year after. The folio containing Charnock's treatises on regeneration were published in 1683. See M'Cosh's introduction in *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 1:xxv–xxvi.

14. While exact citations to outside sources are not as extensive as one would like, many familiar voices show up throughout Charnock's work. He was acquainted with and referenced other Puritans such as Thomas Goodwin (1600–1680), John Owen (1616–1683), and Richard Baxter (1615–1691). He cited Dutch theologians such as Johannes Cocceius (1603–1669), and continental Reformed figures like Johannes Wollebius (1589–1629), Amandus Polanus (1561–1610) and Francis Turretin (1623–1687). To repeat a point from

The Necessity of Regeneration

Charnock's discourses concerning regeneration start by reflecting on John 3:3, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Whereas in a state of depravity the end or terminus of mankind points only at death, by regeneration a soul is now fixed to its original telos in God.[15] Thus, "regeneration in the soul," writes Charnock, "is absolutely necessary to a gospel and glorious state."[16] A relative change—merely altering one's legal status as a sinner—is not enough. The deeper necessity requires "a real change in the subject," a true transformation of the entire soul.[17] Charnock explains the necessity of regeneration in three broad movements. First, there are eight propositions regarding its necessity,[18] followed by two further considerations: regeneration is necessary to gospel privileges,[19] and regeneration is necessary to taste and savor the pleasures of heaven.[20] These reasons encompass the whole doctrine of salvation from the fall into depravity to the consummation of future glory.

First, Charnock explains the nature and scope of sinful depravity, which necessitates regeneration as the only remedy.[21] Our depravity extends not just to guilt but describes a state of being.[22] This state of sin affects every facet of the human soul. The mind, will, and affections lie corrupted and

above, after the restoration in 1660, Charnock spent 15 years traveling abroad, spending time in Holland and France while working out his theology. This explains the eclectic nature of his theology as well as justifies the inclusion of thinkers who either directly or indirectly assist in understanding Charnock on regeneration.

15. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:37.

16. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:15.

17. George Swinnock (1627–1673) echoes Charnock here by observing "the whole man" must be transformed. The parallels between Charnock and Swinnock are especially interesting given Swinnock was chaplain at New College, Oxford, when Charnock obtained his fellowship there in 1649. See George Swinnock, *By the Key of Regeneration*, in *The Works of George Swinnock* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1992), 5:16; Stephen Yuille, *The Fear of God in the Affective Theology of George Swinnock*, (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 30.

18. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:16–26.

19. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:27–47.

20. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:48–56.

21. Charnock's eighth proposition is contentious, according to Mark Jones and Joel Beeke. While they acknowledge Charnock assumes some general idea of regeneration, they submit it is problematic. However, Charnock clearly affirms that the spiritual doctrine of regeneration is wholly unknown to the natural mind, so the point of contention seems slightly overblown. See Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:184–185; cf. Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, "The Puritans on Regeneration," in *Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life*, (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 466–67.

22. Thomas Goodwin considered the import of such depravity when he wrote, "*Guilt*

skewed from their original design,[23] set upon the flesh and dead in sin.[24] The mind—that faculty whereby the soul makes sense of the world—is cockeyed, unable to rightly perceive God or self.[25] Instead of rightly perceiving reality, the mind carries a tincture of depravity into every perception.[26] The will, as that faculty which seeks to acquire what the mind perceives as good, is driven by corrupt habits ingrained by the fallen nature.[27] The affections, closely associated with the will, desire and delight in wickedness, and as such, cannot take pleasure in the offer of the gospel or love the God of the gospel.[28] Charnock concludes, "Because there was an universal depravation by the Fall, regeneration must answer it in its extensiveness in every faculty."[29]

The final portions cover the necessity of regeneration for this life under the gospel (a "gospel state") and for life in a state of glory. While here on earth, both the demands and enjoyments of the gospel are inaccessible to those who have not had their nature remade by the power of God. This pertains both to religious duties as well as the enjoyment of spiritual communion with God. Charnock insists, "We must be born again; it is not a dead nature, nor a dead faith, can produce living fruit for God. We may as well read without eyes, walk without legs, act without life, as perform any service to God without a new nature; no, we cannot perform the least; a dead

of sin is one thing (the best are guilty), but a *state* of sin is a further thing." *The Works of Thomas Goodwin,* (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1863), 6:77.

23. "Our end was actively to glorify God in service of him and obedience to him; but since man is fallen into this universal decay of his faculties, and made unfit to answer this end, there is necessary he should be made over again, and created upon a better foundation, that some principle should be in him to oppose this universal depravation, enlighten his understanding, mollify his heart, and reduce his affections to their due order and object." Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:17; see also, 3:18, 26.

24. Romans 8:6, Ephesians 2:1, 4; 4:18; Colossians 2:13.

25. Calvin agrees: "Indeed, man's mind, because of its dullness, cannot hold to the right path, but wanders through various errors and stumbles repeatedly, as it were groping in darkness, until it strays away and finally disappears." *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* 2.2.12 (270).

26. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:30.

27. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:34. Calvin writes, "The will, because it is inseparable from man's nature, did not perish, but was so bound to wicked desires that it cannot strive after the right." *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* 2.2.12 (271).

28. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:40.

29. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:29. Swinnock is also emphatic on this point: "Except he be thoroughly and universally changed; his understanding by illumination, his will by renovation, his affections by sanctification, and his life by reformation, he can never obtain salvation." *By the Key of Regeneration,* 17.

man can no more move his finger than his whole body."[30] Since for Charnock all action springs from some principle, whether depraved or divine, the unregenerate are incapable of any gospel service, as the principle from which the action springs is corrupt. Neither can the unregenerate enjoy the blessings of the gospel—union and communion with Christ—without regeneration.[31] Thus, the real beginning of a spiritual life is not found in the means of grace, spiritual disciplines, or religious duties. It begins with the grace of new life. This is the most pressing question Charnock accentuates in his uses for the doctrine, and it presses us to ask as well, Have I been born again?

Lastly, the demands and enjoyments of heaven require regeneration. Our fitness to the atmosphere of heaven and our ability to contemplate, love, and praise God depends on a nature suitable to divine blessedness.[32] This new nature is what allows for the delights of eternity. Apart from this work, there would be no capacity to relish infinite holiness. Such blessedness is then "inlaid in the very frame of our souls."[33] One should then expect a foretaste of these heavenly delights now if there really is life in the soul. If the spiritual taste has no appetite for divine things, it may indicate a lack of new life. Given that regeneration is necessary to all of life as it pertains to God, it follows that a deeper understanding of the nature of the change is in order.

The Nature of Regeneration

To understand the nature of regeneration, Charnock first defines the doctrine before positioning it around several clarifying points. He insists, "Every man in Christ hath a real and mighty change wrought in him, and becomes a new creature,"[34] but such a succinct summary begs for elaboration. Charnock obliges:

> Regeneration is a mighty and powerful change, wrought in the soul by the efficacious working of the Holy Spirit, wherein a vital principle, a new habit, the law of God, and a divine nature, are put into and framed in the heart, enabling it to act holily and pleasingly to God, and to grow up in external glory… There is a change, a creation, that

30. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:33.

31. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:42–44.

32. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:51–54.

33. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:54.

34. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:86. Calvin writes, "The Spirit so imbues our souls, steeped in his holiness, with both new thoughts and feelings, that they can be rightly considered new." *Institutes*, 3.3.8 (600).

> which is not is brought into a state of being. It is a certain spiritual and supernatural principle, or permanent form, *per modum actus primi*, infused by God, whereby it is made a partaker of the divine nature, and enabled to act for God.[35]

Since this work of God begins the supernatural life of every person who calls upon Christ as Lord in repentance and faith, Charnock distinguishes it from other aspects of the salvation experience to clarify its meaning.[36]

1. Regeneration differs from *conversion* as an effect is differentiated from a cause. Conversion is the activity of the soul turning to God, but in regeneration the soul passively receives new life.[37]

2. Regeneration differs from *justification* since by justification our legal standing is ameliorated, but by regeneration we are "assimilated [and] made like God."[38] Though logically distinct, justification and regeneration are often temporally coextensive. Charnock observes, "The form of one is imputing, the form of the other is infusing."[39] Justification releases from the guilt of sin, while regeneration washes the filth of sin.[40]

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35. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:88. Charnock and others often refer to this change as a physical change. By this is not meant that the soul is physical but that the change is deeper and more substantial than mere moral suasion. For example, while Peter Van Mastricht (1630–1706) calls regeneration a physical act that infuses life into the soul, he means only to distinguish the change of regeneration from a mere changing of the mind or affections. For a fuller explanation of how the word physical is used in this sense, see the translator's note in Van Mastricht, *A Treatise on Regeneration*, ed. Brandon Withrow (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2002, 13–17. See also, n32 in Beeke, *RST*, 3:406.

36. Van Mastricht writes, "Not that regeneration…is the only thing required unto salvation—since beside this conversion, sanctification, and so on are necessary, in which the power bestowed in regeneration may be drawn forth into actual exercises of faith and repentance—but that all and everyone who is regenerated will also be brought to conversion, sanctification, faith, and repentance, and so to salvation." *A Treatise on Regeneration*, 7.

37. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:88, 205. Francis Turretin (1623–1687) makes the same point: "Habitual or passive conversion takes place by the infusion of supernatural habits by the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, actual or active conversion takes place by the exercise of these good habits by which the acts of faith and repentance are both given by God and elicited from man. Through the former man is renovated and converted by God. Through the latter, man, renovated and converted by God, turns himself to God and performs the acts." Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, (Philipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 1994), 2:522.

38. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:89

39. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:90.

40. On this point, Charnock quotes from William Ames without an exact citation. The relevant portion, however, comes from *The Marrow of Theology*, 1.24.4–5.

3. Regeneration also differs from *adoption*. Adoption gives us the privilege of sons, while regeneration gives us the nature of sons.[41] One is an intrinsic change in the nature of the subject and the other, an extrinsic change to the relation between God and the redeemed.

4. Finally, regeneration differs from *sanctification*. Sanctification is the gradual increase of holiness that depends on faith, whereas regeneration does not depend on faith. Regenerating grace must first infuse the soul for the believer to exercise saving faith, but from this implanted grace grows the faith necessary to grow in holiness.[42]

Charnock curtails misunderstandings of regeneration by indicating what the doctrine does not teach. Specifically, regeneration is not the obliteration of one soul and the creation of a new soul, since "the essence of the soul and faculties remain the same, yet another light is darted in and other qualities implanted."[43] Swinnock writes, "The faculties of [the] soul are not destroyed, but they are refined; the same viol but new tuned."[44] Regeneration does not give the soul new powers nor remove affections and inclinations entirely. Neither does regeneration awaken some "gracious principle" lying dormant all along. Constrained by what the doctrine does not teach, Charnock then considers five facets of regeneration that fill out in greater detail what it means for the soul to undergo such change. For considerations of space, I will focus my attention on those portions where Charnock elaborates the most.

First, regeneration is a *real change* in the soul.[45] Charnock refers to this real change as a universal change in the whole man, reworking the mind, the affections, and the will by an exhaustive grace.[46] The terms, argues Charnock, used in Scripture to describe this change attest to its reality. It is called a "divine nature," a "new man," a "new heart," a "new creation," and a "resurrection."[47] The reason for such a powerful change is that grace is

41. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:90.

42. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:90. Charnock refers to the progressive nature of sanctification as gradual sanctification, which grows out of infused habits of grace.

43. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:91.

44. Swinnock, *The Key of Regeneration*, 25.

45. This is the longest section in his treatment of the nature of regeneration. One explanation is that the deep and abiding change wrought within the soul frames and explains the other facets to come. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:94–104.

46. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:95.

47. 2 Peter 1:4; Ephesians 4:24; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ezekiel 36:26.

deposited in the very substance of the soul via union with God.[48] Since the grace of union is established in the soul's substance, no faculty of the soul is exempt from change.

The real change wrought by this transformation has both an internal dimension and an external dimension. Internally, union with God by grace, at times called a "divine infusion,"[49] changes both the vital principle from which life springs as well as the end, or telos, to which life points.[50] This vital principle is the life of God producing faith, "the first discovery of all spiritual life in us" as well as love—a "true fire.… The desire of the heart is carried out by God; his heart draws near to God, because his sole delight is in God, and his whole desire for Him."[51] Along with this comes a new motivation behind the life and actions of the reborn creature.[52] Subsequent to a new principle of life, there is now a new orientation of the soul. A previous life that aimed at death through self-love now anchors itself to love for Christ. Charnock writes, "The greatest distinction between a regenerate and natural man is this, self is the end of one, and Christ the end of the other."[53] Herein lies the external dimension, when a soul transformed by grace expresses outwardly what God has done inwardly. Charnock observes, "If there be not then new works, there is no new creation, for the chief intention and aim of God cannot be frustrated. Christ formed in a man is not a sleepy and inactive being."[54] This external dimension lays the ground work of a life devoted to good works.

Considered as *habit,* regeneration implants within the heart "an inward frame, enabling a man to act readily and easily, as when an artificer hath the habit of a trade."[55] Habit does not denote a repetitious pattern of behav-

48. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:96.

49. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:99.

50. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:98–101. A vital principle simply refers to the source of objects' ability to act as the thing it is. A crude analogy will do. A car's vital principle is gasoline, but there's nothing inherent in the gas itself that makes the car run. A different source of power compatible with a combustion engine could be substituted. The analogy works when one considers that new life in the soul changes the power by which a human soul operates. Goodwin offers eight arguments toward regeneration as a principle of new life in the soul. Goodwin, *The Works of Thomas Goodwin,* 6:193–201.

51. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:98.

52. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:99–100.

53. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:83.

54. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:104.

55. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:104. Van Mastricht considers regeneration only as a power or principle of action, denying that regeneration in a strict sense can be considered as a habit. The reason is that regeneration merely confers the ability

ior, as its contemporary usage suggests. Instead, Charnock deploys the Aristotelean concept of habit, specifically in a Thomistic key.[56] Habits are "stable dispositions that develop the power of our faculties and render us capable of performing actions of high quality."[57] Thus, as Charnock applies the concept to regeneration, a habit moves the soul "rationally, sweetly, and readily" to attain the spiritual goods presented by the gospel.[58] The infusion of gracious habits is necessary because, left to himself, a man cannot by the exercise of his will clasp hold of the things of God.[59] God infuses the soul with a "spirit of love, a spirit of grace, whereby as their understandings are possessed with a knowledge of the excellency of his ways, so their wills are so seasoned by the sweetness of this habit, that they cannot because they will not act contrary thereunto."[60] A readiness is placed in the will so that joy and delight issues in response to spiritual goods.[61] This also illustrates the sharp distinction between Aristotle and Charnock. For Aristotle, and perhaps for synergists as well, habits are cultivated by education and training.[62] For Charnock, the habits we acquire through spiritual rebirth are gifts of grace that cannot be acquired through effort. What is conferred by

to act upon spiritual goods, whereas a habit is the possession of a potentiality to act whether the act is exercised or not. Van Mastricht, *A Treatise on Regeneration,* 26.

56. Given Charnock's education at Cambridge and his use of Aquinas in his *Existence and Attributes of God,* it is unsurprising that Aristotelean concepts helpfully explain his biblical theology. See Gutiérrez, *The Lord Reigns Supreme,* 24–26. Gutierrez also points out the five explicit references made to Aristotle in Charnock's works. Siekawitch covers Aristotle's influence but a bit more obliquely. *Balancing Head and Heart,* 37–47.

57. Servais Pinkers describes the Thomistic understanding of habit. Servais Pinkers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics,* trans. Mary Thomas Noble (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 225.

58. Michael Horton argues that the idea of infused habits has no place in covenant theology. However, his argument is based on two aspects important to keep in mind. First, Horton places the emphasis on the Word to mediate regeneration. Charnock agrees. Second, Horton sees little conceptual space between effectual calling and regeneration, arguing for a unity between these. Charnock distinguishes these conceptually but allows they might exist coextensively. Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way,* (Grand Rapids; Zondervan, 2011), 572–77.

59. Goodwin explains that, contrary to the opinions of Arminians, Catholics, and others who defend so called free will, the infusion of gracious habits is necessary to the initial experience and a life of good works thereafter. *The Works of Thomas Goodwin,* 6:189.

60. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:106.

61. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:106.

62. For a helpful summary, see the glossary definition of "education" [(1) moral education and habits (ethos)] in Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics,* trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett Press, 1985), 395.

grace can be cultivated but not habituated. Practically speaking, this empties us of all boasting and striving to acquire through our own means what must be granted by God alone.

Importantly, Charnock connects the unicity of this habit to the nature of God. He writes, "As the divine essence of God is one, yet contains all perfections eminently…So the grace infused into the heart contains in it virtually all the perfections wherein it may agree with the nature of God's holiness."[63] There are parallels between God's simplicity and the simplicity and unity of this infused habit. For Charnock, all the attributes of God are essentially one, but they can be distinguished as they refract through human experience.[64] Similarly, the infusion of a gracious habit into the soul is also one, though it can be considered differently, as it refracts through the experience of salvation. When this habit expresses itself in the understanding, it refers to the knowledge of God; when considered under the affections, it is called motion to God. And as it refers to the will, is the choice of God above all else. Just as the attributes of God refract through the mind and so appear diverse, though they are unified in the divine nature, so, too, the grace by which God implants new life in the soul germinates and funds all the graces present in the salvation experience.

Given the discussion above, an important question arises. If the grace deposited in the soul is as powerful as explained, why does Christian experience attest to weakness, frailty, and even failure? If my soul has been infused with gracious habits, why does it seem I still wrestle against the old life? Charnock observes that a "life infused with divine activity" experiences grace seminally present but not fully mature.[65] The most basic form of this new life is a clinging to God in faith and repentance with a subsequent spiritual life that "abounds in its vigor," battling against the old life in pitched spiritual warfare.[66] In other words, regenerating grace enlivens and empowers a fight against sin; it does not remove the need to fight against sin. Only when we step into eternity will the battle conclude.

This section on the activity of the soul is deeply edifying. A real principle of grace moving in the heart, no matter the current experience of ebb

63. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:107.

64. Charnock affirmed a classic position on divine simplicity, sometimes called Thomistic, and this is the basis for understanding the unity of the gracious principle deposited in regeneration. For more on Charnock's position on simplicity, see Gutierrez, *The Lord Reigns Supreme,* 52–55.

65. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:109, 107.

66. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:110.

and flow, cannot but make progress in the spiritual life. And as Charnock observes, this is independent of any one experience. Especially helpful is what Charnock calls a difficulty to sin. While the soul may not experience universal victory over sin, there is universal hatred for sin since "righteousness and holiness is the very constitution of the new creature."[67] Sometimes the best evidence of progress in the spiritual life is hatred for besetting sins and failures.

The Efficient of Regeneration: Part 1

The Efficient of Regeneration receives the greatest emphasis by far, broken into two books spanning 140 pages. The biblical foundation of this section comes from John 1:13, where John observed that anyone born again is born "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Charnock sees in this verse twin doctrines, one which denies man the ability to regenerate himself and the other which affirms God as the sole efficient of regeneration. The first doctrine, *Man, in all his capacities, is too weak to produce the work of regeneration in himself,*[68] unpacks in greater detail the anthropological reasons for which human creatures cannot produce regeneration in themselves. The second doctrine, *God alone is the prime efficient cause of regeneration,*[69] completes the discourse by emphasizing aspects of the doctrine of God that make regeneration monergistic in nature.

The reader will immediately notice these doctrines interpenetrate—discussing one entails considering the other. As will be seen, though there is an emphasis in each part, both treatises undulate between the doctrine of God and the nature of man. In part 1, after making exegetical comments on John 1:1–13, Charnock focuses his attention on explaining why no creature could ever be the cause of his own regeneration, presenting five propositions to support his claim. Again, I will focus my attention on the more substantial sections.[70]

The first proposition precludes any *preparation* for the grace of regeneration.[71] As creatures who possess rational faculties, mankind is certainly

67. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:109.

68. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:169.

69. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:249.

70. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:166–69, 177. I had initially thought to include Charnock's discussion on the nature of human freedom, but space constraints preclude his discussion. Nevertheless, categories such as *libertarian freedom* and *compatibilism* seem woefully inadequate.

71. Van Mastricht helpfully distinguishes three kinds of preparation, two of which are

equipped to receive grace, but as illustrated by the word *infusion*, no one can infuse himself. The creature is wholly passive; this is a work of God. Even spiritual activities, though apparently preparatory, are not formally so since there is no meritorious connection between preparations and received grace.[72] Aside from the fact that humans cannot lay any obligation on God, especially given our fallen nature, there are two important anthropological considerations that make preparation impossible.[73]

First, to prepare for regenerating grace a person must understand and desire the change. But the mind is buried in corruption and its capacities broken; "the understanding conceives only such thoughts as are pleasing to the law of sin."[74] Charnock observes that "though the light of the sun did shine a thousand times brighter than it doth, and strike upon the face and eyelids of a man with the greatest glory, yet if there be a spot upon the apple of his eye, if he wants a seeing faculty, he can apprehend nothing."[75] It is not a lack of faculties that restricts human beings from spiritual things, but the inability to morally exercise those faculties.[76] But just as the mind is darkened to the things of God, so, too, nothing but depraved desires live inside a hardened heart.[77] There are, then, two mutually informing facets to the

by God, and thus permissible, the other being a work of man, and so denied. If by preparation one means a kind of slowly inching towards the things in God readying for regeneration, Van Mastricht observes, "He must doubtless do it by a previous principle of life, and so must be supposed alive before life is implanted in him." *A Treatise on Regeneration,* 28.

72. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:178–79. Martin McGeown takes issue with some Puritans on this topic of preparation. The basic idea is that sinners might in some sense dispose themselves to grace by preparing for it. His fundamental disagreement is that Puritan notions of preparation are at odds with biblical theology and the Reformed confessions. Charnock, while defending the use of means of grace, denies preparation of any kind. See Martyn McGeown, "The Notion of Preparatory Grace in the Puritans," *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* 41, no.1 (2007): 58–84

73. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:184–88.

74. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:170.

75. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:185.

76. Charnock observes that if human beings lacked the proper faculties to obey God's commands or seek after God, then God would be monstrous in commanding that which was outside human nature. Charnock grants freedom to the human will but denies that any human will exercise that will towards godliness. It is the moral problem. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:171–73. Van Mastricht agrees, writing, "A man who is spiritually dead can hear spiritual truth; he can also, grammatically at least, understand what he hears. He can moreover approve in his judgement, at least speculatively, what he understands; and…have some kind of affection toward what he approves," but all of these are fruitless without a change in nature. Van Masticht, *A Treatise on Regeneration,* 11.

77. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:174–78.

problem: the mind fails to grasp the truth of the soul's condition, but even if it did the will is bound to craven lust.[78] While it might be argued that some do seem to desire grace, these desires never rise above mere wishful thinking, as evidenced by a life of sin thereafter.

The second proposition deals with the *production* of regenerating grace. When Charnock argues that no one can have a hand in producing grace in the soul, he makes this argument around two interlocking links. The first link draws upon the doctrine of God. God's sovereign independence and providence,[79] wisdom and power,[80] and foreknowledge and prescience[81] rule out human assistance in grace since "God is the first cause, upon whom man depends in all kinds of actions, much more in supernatural actions."[82] Charnock makes the further point that if men could cause grace, they would effectively be self-caused creatures, which is impossible. If God's activity and power depended on cooperation, then God's knowledge would be contingent and ever changing, His will to save possibly unfulfilled and frustrated, and His wisdom called into question at making covenant promises that cannot be eternally guaranteed.[83] More tragic, the blood of Christ by which the new image is drawn upon the soul would have been spilled for the bare possibility that some believe instead of securing salvation for those whom God intended.[84]

The second link joins the doctrine of God with the doctrine of man. Charnock considers man in a threefold state—as created, as fallen, and as redeemed—to show mankind incapable of producing grace. As no man played a part in initial creation, no man comes to the assistance of God in the act of re-creation. Charnock wryly states, "Man might as well have planted the divine image in his soul at first as restore it after it was lost."[85] Adam, though created in innocence and perfection, failed to cling to God.

78. Charnock writes, "What is not spiritually discerned cannot be spiritually desired." Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:187; see also, 190.

79. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:188.

80. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:189.

81. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:189.

82. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:188. One of the propositions I did not cover similarly relies on the nature of divine causation. Just as creatures and objects are sustained in being by continual creation, so, too, are the regenerate sustained by a continual supply of grace. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:209.

83. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:188–89, 190–91.

84. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:188, 190.

85. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:195; cf. Swinnock, *The Key of Regeneration*, 20.

How can it be that fallen creatures "with all these fetters [can] of ourselves put ourselves in a better state and act against nature?"[86] If Adam as created failed, mankind as fallen is worse, since the will of every human after Adam is warped and dead. There exists nothing but corrupt desires that delight in sin and hearts filled with wickedness.[87]

These arguments are more than mere deductions, sufficient as that would be. True theological reflection is, at its heart, experimental. Thus, Charnock's arguments are testable by experience. Given the enormous struggle against sin common to Christians after regeneration, the suggestion that an unregenerate person might in some sense succeed where Spirit-empowered believers fail is more than a stretch.[88] Moreover, if the unregenerate merely needed exposure to the truths of the gospel to choose and desire them, why are not more regenerated? Simply put, a deeper and more comprehensive work in the soul is needed.[89]

The first two propositions argued that mankind can neither produce nor prepare for grace. In this third proposition, Charnock argues that neither can human creatures cooperate with grace.[90] This at first seems to make a problem for conversion. As Charnock acknowledges, God does not repent and believe for people; they must do it themselves. The more fundamental question that Charnock addresses is, *How* can people repent and believe, given their fallen state? Charnock addresses the problem by distinguishing between the power to act and the act itself. We are active *in primo actu* but not *in primo actus*.[91] That is, we actively exercise the power to repent and believe but we passively receive the power to do so from God. In the first

86. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:195.

87. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:196–97.

88. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:200.

89. "Our motion to God must proceed from some higher cause than barely the proposal of the object, and a conviction by it." Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:200. Cf. Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology,* 2:533–37. This was basically the Socinian and Remonstrance error, that only a presentation of truth was required and by the exercise of reason men might know salvation.

90. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:205–208. This does not, however, mean there is no place for human agency. As Van Mastrich observes, "The Reformed, although they acknowledge a moral agency of God in the external call of the gospel which is previous to regeneration, and though they allow both a physical and moral agency together in conversion which follows regeneration, yet in regeneration strictly so called admit only a mere, absolute, physical agency." Van Mastricht, *A Treatise on Regeneration,* 38. "Physical agency" refers to a real and concrete change rather than a mere moral persuasion. See n36 above.

91. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:205.

act of a regenerated soul, there is concurrence between God and the soul, but the diffusion of divine life that grants the power to repent and believe requires no concurrence, any more than the shining of the sun depends on cooperation from the flowers that it causes to grow.[92] Several arguments support this claim.

First, the state of mankind as fallen precludes any co-working with God.[93] Titus 3:3 and Ephesians 2:2–3 clearly indicate that all human activity proceeds from a nature defined by lust, sin, and flesh—we sin by a strange and sad necessity.[94] Nothing latent in human nature could cooperate with God any more than a stone could cooperate in transforming into flesh. Second, and relatedly, the work of regeneration is the very principle required to cooperate with the work of God. The act of turning to God presupposes the first act of God in turning us to Himself; as Charnock states, "*actus secundus* supposeth *actus primum*."[95] Third and fourth, if cooperation preceded regeneration, then God could not be considered the author of grace but a coauthor, thus making whoever worked with God in the creation of a new nature a worthy corecipient of the subsequent glory.[96] This, however, is impossible, since God does not share His glory with anyone (Isa. 42:8).

The Efficient of Regeneration: Part 2

Charnock reemphasizes in part 2 of the *Efficient of Regeneration* that God acts unilaterally in bringing new life to the soul.[97] By way of illustration, he reflects upon Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones to emphasize this unilateral activity.[98] Those bones, lying dead and heaped in a mound, are

92. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:205. John Owen points out that opposition to grace cannot, in fact, be directed to the internal working of God's power but only to the external presentation of it. Since the work of the Spirit is internal to the soul, souls cannot resist grace. John Owen, *The Works of John Owen* (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1852), 3:318.

93. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:206.

94. Quoting Bernard, Calvin writes, "Thus, the soul, in some strange and evil way, under a certain voluntary and wrongly free necessity is at the same time enslaved and free: enslaved because of necessity; free because of the will." *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 2.3.5 (296).

95. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:206.

96. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:207.

97. "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13).

98. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:249–50.

brought to life only by God's breath. Charnock concludes, "Whatsoever, therefore, is holy, good, and spiritual in us, we owe to the new creating grace of God. All graces are his χάρισματα, his free donatives, over and above his common largesses to nature, a present from his infinite liberality."[99] Two emphases stand out in this section, one theological and one anthropological.[100] I will unpack the theological emphasis in two parts and then address how Charnock thinks about life in the soul anthropologically.

That God is the efficient cause

When Charnock argues that it is necessary for God to be the efficient of regeneration, he does not mean God's work is practically but not essentially indispensable. Charnock's argument aims for *theological necessity*; that is, considering the divine nature, regeneration is not only incoherent but impossible unless God is the efficient cause.[101] These arguments grow out of his view of divine causation. First, Charnock repeats a fundamental truth that sustains all reality—God is the first cause of all things. Therefore, regeneration cannot depend causally on creatures any more than creatures can subsist or sustain their own existence. Charnock argues,

> To say any creature can move to God, without being moved by God, or live without his influence, is to make the creature independent on God in its operations; and if it be independent in its operations, it would be so consequently in its essence…besides, if it be not created by him, it may subsist without him, it stands in no need of his quickening.[102]

99. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:250.

100. Space constraints prohibit detailing just how much biblical data Charnock wrestles with to form his theology and spirituality of regeneration, but it is important to note he was first a biblical theologian. However, since Charnock spends more time wrestling through issues of theology proper coupled with descriptions of how God works upon the soul, I have passed over his exegetical reflections. As an example, Charnock writes "As it is a *call* out of the world, God is the herald (2 Tim. 1:9); as it is *creation*, God is the creator (Eph. 2:10); as it is a *resurrection*, God is the quickener, (Eph 2:5); as it is a *new birth*, God is the begetter, (1 Peter 1:3); as it is a *new heart*, God is the framer, (Ezk. 36:26); as it is a *law in the heart*, God is the penman, (Jer. 31:33); as it is a *translation* out of Satan's Kingdom, and making us denizens of the Kingdom of Christ, God is the translator, (Col. 1:13); as it is a *coming to Christ*, God is the drawer, (Jn. 6:44); as it is a *turning* to God, God is the attracter." Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:53–54; see 3:249–52.

101. I think the word "necessity" can be used in a loose colloquial way that belies its actual meaning. It seems prudent to clarify that the kind of necessity spoken of is strict.

102. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:254.

Since regeneration is the creation of new life in the soul, a creature cannot be the cause of his own regeneration any more than a creature can be the cause of his own creation. An effect cannot precede its cause. Charnock then conjoins God's causal activity with divine covenant promises. Divine promises are fulfilled only by divine operation. He contends, "It is necessary that his power make good what his goodness hath promised."[103] When God says, "I will give you a new heart," He bonds Himself to a promise fulfilled exclusively by divine power.

The third theological consideration in this section links God's casual power and promises to divine foreknowledge. For Charnock, divine foreknowledge is independent of both time and creaturely willing.[104] God does not investigate the future to see what will happen or what creatures will do, but intuits all things by a kind of internal gaze.[105] This internal gaze refers to God's exhaustive knowledge of Himself and His will, grounding the knowledge of what will be in the knowledge of what God wills.[106] Thus, when God foresees a future work of grace (Romans 8:29), He foresees what His will has determined.[107] A kind of divine causal chain thus encircles regeneration. God knows and guarantees that which He has determined and promised because He causes and brings to pass the regeneration His people require.

Divine Perfections

In the section outlined above, Charnock discharges theological arguments derived from his understanding of divine causation. This next section unfolds how various divine attributes stand in relation to regeneration.[108] These perfections, reified when spoken of in the abstract, crystalize the attributes in the discrete act of regeneration. What perfections of God are eminent in this work? Several stand out.

103. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:254.

104. Charnock assumes a Boethian position. God's knowledge is direct and intuitive and he does not "look in the future" because He is outside of time, seeing instead all of time in one instant. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 1:352–53, 484.

105. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 1:461–64, 497–98.

106. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:255.

107. "If he did foreknow it, then he willed it, otherwise his foreknowledge depended upon an uncertain cause, and he might have judged that to come to pass which never might; unless the cause be determined by God, it is merely contingent." Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:255.

108. Charnock does not track with his *Existence and Attributes* perfectly, but he does join the doctrine of regeneration to the doctrine of God at a very granular level.

Charnock offers *mercy and goodness* as the first and chief of God's attributes displayed in monergistic regeneration. Some may think justification best manifests this mercy, but Charnock is clear: "There is as much of God in *imparting his nature* as in *imputing the righteousness* of his Son."[109] But this impartation of grace, which is regeneration, transacts in union with Christ. By this union, believers experience God's paternal affection for Christ and drink in His benefits.[110] Not only is grace manifest in the creation and the subsequent re-creation of a soul but mercy as well. Mercy means more than mere forgiveness. God could have simply forgiven sin, but Charnock sees regeneration as a superadded grace, more pronounced and profound than forgiveness.[111]

God's *sovereignty* also manifests in this work, since not everyone who hears the Word is transformed. Charnock observes, "Some hear the word, others the Spirit in the word: some feel the striking of the air upon the ear, others the stamp of the Spirit upon their hearts."[112] No explanation is given for why God transforms one and not the other. God has given men all they need, every faculty and capacity of body and soul required to fulfill their divine obligations. If a person does not respond, the blame falls not on God. We search in vain for causes ultimately hid from us.[113] Grace is a treasure that God is free to dispense or keep at His good pleasure; it perfectly displays His sovereign love.[114]

Charnock next anchors regeneration in divine *wisdom*, a wisdom that radiates through every facet of salvation, from the first glimmer of concern displayed for the lost to the glory that redounds as God redeems.[115] Such wisdom is revealed in the *nature* of the new birth.[116] Human beings are

109. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:266.

110. "He performs the other act of love, which is to assimilate us to himself, and bring us into a state of imitation of him, endowing us with the principles of resemblance to him." Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:264.

111. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:266.

112. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:267.

113. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:268.

114. Charnock articulates a typical Reformed view on the two wills of God. He writes, "For there are two acts of his sovereign will: one whereby he doth command men to do their duty, promises rewards, and threatens punishment, but the subject is to be disposed to do God's will of precept. Here comes the other act of his sovereignty, whereby he wills the disposing such and such hearts to the accepting of his grace, and doth will not to give others that grace, but to leave them to themselves." Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:269.

115. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:270.

116. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:271.

crafted into temples of the living God, the Lord Himself dwelling in hearts prepared for His glory.[117] The heart, affections, and habits are now framed and imprinted with a divine cause. The regenerated soul is a special work of the wisdom of God, the "soul of the soul," as Charnock puts it.[118] Not only the nature of the new birth but the *means* declare it to be the fruit of divine wisdom, as it is through the propagation of the gospel that God instills gracious habits.[119] The *manner* of it also reveals God's wisdom. Great wisdom works in the hearts of men, bending them in the direction God desires without working contrary to their nature.[120] It must be the highest example of divine skill to move us where we would not go, enlighten to us what we would not understand, and make loveable to us the things that we naturally despise. Charnock wraps up reflections on divine wisdom with an *argumentum a fortiori*. If God exercised wisdom in forming creation out of nothing, then *a fortiori* is wisdom revealed in regeneration.[121] Regeneration displays more wisdom than creation, since in regeneration God takes a shattered human soul and reframes it to mirror the divine nature more closely than at its inception.[122]

The attribute of God's *holiness* is also seen in this work.[123] Charnock observes, "The Spirit is called a spirit of holiness, not only as he is the efficient, but as he is the pattern, and like fire transforms into his own nature; for that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."[124] The second creation radiates God's holiness. This holiness reflects God's nature in much the same way Christ reflected the holiness of God's nature. But God's holiness resided in Christ essentially and intrinsically while redeemed men possess this holiness derivatively. Thus, to be renewed in the image of the Son is to

117. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:271.

118. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:271.

119. Van Mastricht observes that the use of external means precludes thinking of regeneration as though God were dealing with inanimate objects. *A Treatise on Regeneration*, 39.

120. "He so tunes the strings that they speak out willingly what naturally they are most unfit for." Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:270.

121. "[Regeneration] is not a new molding the outward case of the body, but the inward jewel wrapped upon the view of men; the spirit of the mind, which being more excellent, requires more skill for the new forming of it." Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:271.

122. "The grace in the new birth is nearer the likeness of God than the figure of men in the first birth." Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:272.

123. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:272.

124. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:273.

mirror in a creaturely way the infinite holiness of God. Charnock calls the holiness that God grants us "the implantation of grace in the heart," and such holiness is as necessary to the felicity of God's people as God's power and mercy.[125]

Lastly, Charnock sets the glory of regeneration within the context of God's *power*. As no man can open the eyes of the blind, neither does any man have the power to bring understanding to a depraved mind.[126] After presenting several biblical examples of divine power working on behalf of God's people, Charnock elucidates two ways in which regeneration displays the power of God. First, Charnock draws out the analogous ways in which divine power is used in creation as well as re-creation.

> One word created the world, many words are combined for the preparation of a new heart. It is easier to make a thousand glasses than to set together one that is dashed in pieces. It is easier for God to make a world…and create thousands of men in his image, as bright as Adam's, than to bring that into form which is so miserably defaced.[127]

Second, Charnock sees in the power working to bring about faith the same power by which Christ defeated the grave.[128] Specifically, the power indicated in Ephesians 1:19–20 explicitly ties the grace of believing to the power wrought in Christ's resurrection. Similarly, in passages such as Romans 6:4, the new life given by regeneration is plainly attached to the resurrection of Christ. This has the twin effect of revealing not only the magnitude and power of grace believers have received, but the depths of their spiritual depravity prior to God's grace, since nothing less than the power of God by which Christ was raised was sufficient for their salvation.

Life in the Soul

How God acts upon the soul monergistically in regeneration is a deep mystery, and while a theological explanation is difficult, it is also necessary. Monergism does not undermine the fundamental nature of human beings as rational and moral agents. As Charnock explains, while the work is unilateral, it is also congruous with the essential nature of mankind. Men and

125. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:273.

126. Charnock draws attention to John 9:23 and 2 Peter 1:3. No one can bring sight to the blind except God, and only by God's power are all things pertaining to life and godliness given. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:273.

127. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:274.

128. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:276–77.

women are not beasts or rocks, but creatures possessing understanding, will, and affections.[129]

> God therefore works by way of spiritual illumination of the understanding, in propounding the creatures happiness by arguments and reasons, and in a way of spiritual impression upon the will, moving it sweetly to the embracing of that happiness, and the means to it which he doth propose; and indeed without this work preceding, the motion of the will could never be regular.[130]

Thus, regeneration is primarily a work upon the mind, the will, and the affections in a way that dignifies instead of undermines humanity as created in the image of God. Charnock first addresses the understanding.

Enlightening the Mind

The first work of regenerating grace is to bring an understanding of the gospel.[131] Charnock writes, "Opening the eyes precedes the conversion from darkness to light…The first appearance of life, when God raiseth the soul, is in the clearness and distinctness of its knowledge of God."[132] Charnock is fully in line with his contemporaries on emphasizing the mind in regeneration.[133] Thomas Goodwin, for example, echoes Charnock on this point, writing that the work of the Spirit is especially pronounced on the mind in regeneration. Just as physical bodies are constituted to perceive physical objects, so the spiritual mind must be formed to understand spiritual things.[134] George Swinnock agrees and likens this work on the mind to opening the windows of the soul so that light may flood in.[135] Van Mastricht, like Charnock, observes that when regeneration applies to the faculty of the understanding it is called illumination and effects new

129. "He diffuseth a super natural virtue into the soul, not to thwart it in that course of working he appointed it in the creation, but to move it agreeably to its nature as a rational being." Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:279.

130. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:279.

131. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:280.

132. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:279.

133. As a reminder from above, Charnock was well acquainted with his contemporaries and was fond of quoting from Goodwin. He also quoted Turretin, and years spent in the Netherlands make it very likely he was familiar with Van Mastricht. While exact quotations are not always present, echoes of other Puritan writers are scattered about Charnock's work and references to them can helpfully elucidate and buttress the points Charnock makes. See also M'Cosh, "Introduction," in *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock,* 1:xiii.

134. Goodwin, *The Works of Thomas Goodwin,* 6:162, 164–66.

135. Swinnock, *The Key of Regeneration,* 27.

spiritual perceptions.[136] Turretin identifies this as the "first degree of efficacious grace" so that by "infusing his vivifying Spirit…gliding into the inmost recesses of the soul, reforms the mind itself, healing its depraved inclinations and prejudices."[137]

To strengthen this claim, Charnock points out that the Bible accentuates the "faculty in man appointed to the apprehension of the gospel message." That is, the gospel is described as knowledge, wisdom, revelation, etc., to emphasize the rational means by which God effects change in the soul.[138] While the work begins in the mind, it must terminate in the will to effect faith.[139] The understanding must take in the light of the gospel and diffuse it to the will so that the will is transformed and then embraces what it takes to be good. Charnock then explains how the Spirit works upon the mind in regeneration.

First, the Spirit of God sets the mind in proper order by removing naturally occurring blinders and prejudices.[140] He writes,

> Since the mind is filled with fogs, and incapable to perceive the splendor of divine truths, God acts upon the mind by an inward virtue, causing the word proposed to be mixed with an act of faith, which he begets in the soul, whereby it apprehends the excellency of that state presented to it in the gospel.[141]

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136. Van Mastricht, *A Treatise on Regeneration*, 22; cf. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:279.

137. Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 2:523. Charnock will make the same point on removing prejudices as well.

138. "It is called *knowledge* (2 Peter 1:2), *wisdom* (1 Cor 1:30); it is called sight that comes before believing (John 6:40); it is called *revelation* (Gal. 1:16) opening the heart (Eph. 1:18); comprehending (Eph 3:18)." Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:280.

139. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:280. Writing nearly 75 years after Charnock, Jonathan Edwards acknowledges the same: "Gracious affections do arise from the mind's being enlightened, rightly and spiritually to understand and apprehend divine things." Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 266.

140. Swinnock writes that, before regeneration, sin stood before our minds like a "strumpet dressed in her attire of pleasure and profit," but was stripped naked and shown for the evil and ugly truth that it was—spiritual disease and disgrace. Swinnock, *The Key of Regeneration*, 28.

141. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:281.

The faculties of the mind, as John Owen also observed, are given grace such that the natural faculties "understand savingly."[142]

Second, the Spirit brings the perceptive powers of the mind in contact with the external object of the gospel. Just as a blind man whose sight is restored now has his faculty of sight brought to bear upon external objects, so the mind of a man spiritually enlightened naturally comes to bear upon the gospel.[143]

Third, the mind must not only see and understand, but must maintain contact. The Spirit suspends the object in the mind, fixing it so it does not blow this way or that, but stays to do its work. The Spirit does this work through the Word: "And it is called the ingrafted word, fastened to the soul as a graft to the stock; when the heart is opened by the Spirit, the word is inserted in and bound to it, and at last the heart becomes one with the word, and grows up with it."[144]

Fourth, the mind is convinced upon the evidence.[145] God does not save absent human reason, but "the Spirit excites that reason he hath enlightened to judge of those excellent things he doth propose, and the strength of the arguments he backs them with, which are so clear and undeniable that they cannot be refused by the mind."[146] The will cannot be made to choose that which is repugnant to the mind. After regeneration, the good things of the gospel are sweetly presented and rightly understood.[147]

Sweetly Inclining the Will

The work God does in the mind must also be accomplished in the will and the affections.[148] Charnock writes, "The will is inclined, as well as the

142. Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, 3:331.

143. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:281.

144. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:282.

145. Van Mastricht notes that regeneration works upon the simple understanding and also affects the judgment, so that the truths of the gospel become more than generally true in the abstract but personally true and "profitable for them at this very time." *A Treatise on Regeneration*, 23.

146. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:283.

147. Edwards rightly points out the distinction between knowing things notionally and speculatively, and knowing them with a sense of sweetness, love, and by a sense of the heart. *Religious Affections*, 272.

148. While Charnock affirms a typical Puritan faculty psychology of understanding, will, and affections, the will and affections are treated under one heading. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:284. Cf. "For the Holy Ghost implants in the heart or will by regeneration a new inclination or propensity toward spiritual good." Van Mastricht, *A Treatise on Regeneration*, 23.

understanding enlightened, whereby spiritual things are approved with a spiritual affection; the same hand that darts light into the mind, puts heat into the will."[149] Charnock offers four interlocking propositions to further clarify this work of God upon the will.

First, there is an immediate supernatural work of God upon the will so that the gospel is embraced,

> not that the understanding only is enlightened, and the will follows the dictate of that without any further touch of the Spirit upon it; but the will, as it is a will, and therefore cannot be forced, there is need of a moral cause which may determine it according to its nature, and draw it by the cords of a man.[150]

The work of God upon the will is not coercive or by external compulsion. As Turretin helpfully points out, "The Spirit does not force the will and carry it unwillingly to conversion, but glides most sweetly into the soul."[151] Instead of coercion, God draws "by the cords of a man," which is to say that God works upon the soul in harmony with the faculties with which He created it.

Charnock sees the various biblical terms used to describe the internal work of God on the soul as evidence that regeneration is not merely intellectual persuasion but conversion of the will and affections as well.[152] He writes, "If faith be principally in the will, as I think it is, as to consent; and the words *leaning, resting, coming* rather note an act of the will than an act of the understanding; there is then an operation of God upon the subject, viz. the will, in implanting it."[153] The reason is that the will and affections are as diseased as the mind. In fact, mere understanding is not the heart of the problem. As Charnock reads Scripture, the deeper issue is a hatred and aversion to righteousness, which is a problem principally of the affections and will:

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149. "As the power of God raiseth every part of Christ, so the same power raiseth every faculty of the soul." Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:283. Cf. Van Mastricht, *A Treatise on Regeneration*, 24–25.

150. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:284.

151. Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 2:524.

152. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:284. Van Mastricht carefully distinguishes more layers to which regeneration applies than Charnock. For Charnock, the work of regeneration works upon the will and the affections but these are addressed at the same time, whereas in Van Mastricht there is a further category, "regeneration in the inferior faculties," that is addressed.

153. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:285.

> There is no less power requisite to make us spiritually willing than to make us spiritually knowing, since the corrupt habits in our wills are rather stronger than the prejudices in our understandings; therefore there seems to be a distinct act in removing the resistance from the one as well as the expelling the darkness from the other.[154]

Regeneration rehabilitates the will and not only expels habits and affections that shrink from God but sweetly moves the soul toward that which is holy.

Second, though this is an immediate work of the Spirit, it is neither compulsive nor by force.[155] Forcing assent would be contrary to what it means to have a will. Charnock argues, "It is not forced because it is according to reason, and the natural motion of the creature; the understanding proposing, and the will moved to an embracing; the understanding going before with light, the will following after with love."[156] The will is a rational faculty, and as such can only be moved upon rationally.[157] Reformed theology is often mischaracterized on this point, that somehow God is forcing Himself on people. But as Charnock points out, "Since the main work consists in faith and love, it is impossible there can be any force; no man can be forced to believe against his reason, or love against his will, or desire against his inclination."[158] Regeneration is a transformation of the inclinations.

Third, the emphasis of God's work on the will is not described in terms of power but love. By emphasizing love over power, Charnock does not mean God acts without power per se but without coercive or oppressive power. God is love and as such pours power through the prism of love to draw sinners sweetly, pleasantly, and irresistibly. God's infinite love "is not an extrinsic force, but intrinsic and pleasant to the will; he bends the creature so, that at the very instant wherein the will is savingly wrought upon,

154. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:285; cf. Swinnock, *The Key of Regeneration*, 33.

155. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:286.

156. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:286–87.

157. Like Charnock, because this inducing work of the Spirit is cast through the rational faculties, Edwards and the Reformed tradition behind him sees this as a work commensurate with what it means to have a will, instead of violating the will's freedom, as so often is the charge. Edwards writes, "As to the gracious leading of the Spirit, it consists in two things; partly in instructing a person in his duty by the Spirit, and partly in powerfully inducing him to comply with that instruction." *Religious Affections*, 282.

158. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:287.

it delightfully consents to its own happiness." This work is "sweet and alluring…it is a sweet efficacy, and an efficacious sweetness."[159]

Finally, as intimated above, this work is "insuperably victorious."[160] Or as Turretin explains, God is a "delightful conqueror."[161] There is a necessity that draws the soul, not by compulsion but by divine immutability. God wins over the mind, affections, and will every time. God secures His promise and preserves the liberty of the will not by leaving the will in a state of indifference but through accomplishing His intended purpose. Questions about liberty and the irresistibility of grace are important, but the more important question presses such considerations through the lens of divine power instead of human ability—Is God powerful enough to overcome depravity?[162] For Charnock and the Reformed tradition in which he stands, the answer is yes.[163] God's impress on the will "is not a faint and languishing impression, but a reviving, sprightly, and victorious touch."[164] If God were the author of faith by placing the will in a state of indifference, why is He not also called the author of unbelief, since either belief or unbelief result from this state of indifference? But God's motion in carrying us into belief does not leave us in indifference, nor does it destroy liberty.

I would like to make an observation before unpacking the last section of this paper. Charnock defends an order to regeneration that begins in the mind and then transforms the will before finally reorienting the affections. He suspects that any spiritual work that seems to begin with the affections without first enlightening the mind is likely to be transient at best.[165] This dovetails nicely into the section that follows on the role of Scripture in regeneration but sits at odds with contemporary methods of spirituality that hyperfocus on experiences, feelings, and practices to the exclusion of a mind transformed by right beliefs. If Christian spirituality is the confluence of beliefs, experiences, and practices that make for a fully realized Christian life—as I think it is—then the degree to which one or more of these

159. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:287; cf. Hosea 2:14; John 16:13.

160. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:288.

161. Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 2:524.

162. Turretin calls God's regenerating grace "powerful that it may not be frustrated; sweet that it may not be forced. Its power is supreme and inexpugnable, that the corruption of nature may be conquered." *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 2:525.

163. "By the spiritual life instantaneously produced, all inclinations or desire of resisting are suppressed or taken away." Van Mastricht, *A Treatise on Regeneration*, 29.

164. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:288.

165. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:288–89.

elements is ignored or overly emphasized will be the degree to which some expression of spirituality is deficient. If, as argued above, the mind is where the work begins, then Christian spirituality ought to first focus on having right beliefs before looking at the experiences and practices of the faith.

The Instrument of Regeneration

In this final section, I will look at how Charnock articulates the gospel's role in begetting new life in the soul. The burden is to explain the mechanism behind the Spirit's work in regeneration.[166] This section thus pairs with what has been discussed by explaining how God works in concert with human faculties. Charnock appeals to James 1:18 as the basis for his doctrine, "that the gospel is the instrument whereby God brings the soul forth in a new birth."[167] This verse states that "of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." While Charnock observes that God is the efficient cause of regeneration, the Word is the instrumental cause. This distinction between the efficient cause and the instrumental cause is embedded, for Charnock, in the Greek prepositions that distinguish being born *of* the Spirit (ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος, John 3:5) or *of* God (ἐκ θεοῦ, John 1:13) and being born *through* or by the Word (διὰ λόγου, 1 Peter 1:23).[168]

The Instrument of the Spirit

Charnock offers several propositions to further clarify the gospel's instrumentality. The first proposition denies that the law represented in the Old Covenant is this kind of instrument.[169] While in one sense the Law of God as it pertains to Scripture most generally revives the soul (Ps. 19:7), Charnock has in mind the more narrow conception of law as representative of the covenant of works.[170] The law forms the basis of works righteousness demanded by God and as such cannot renew the soul but only incites the

166. Swinnock, too, coordinates the Spirit's work in regeneration by the means of the Word. *By the Key of Regeneration,* 21.

167. Charnock, *The Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:309.

168. Charnock, *The Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:309. Charnock is exegetically nuanced on this point for good reason. See Murray Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament: An Essential Resource for Exegesis,* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 70–71, 105.

169. Charnock, *The Works of Stephen Charnock,* 3:309–10.

170. Charnock, *The Works of Stephen Charnock,*, 3:310.

flesh.[171] The law may be useful for breaking open a hard heart but lacks the power to mend the subsequent spiritual brokenness.[172]

The second proposition affirms the power of the gospel to do what the law cannot—bring life to the soul. Charnock contends, "[The gospel] is the instrument to unlock the prison doors and take them off the hinges; strike off the fetters, and draw out the soul to a glorious liberty."[173] Importantly, the gospel's effectiveness is not natural to it, as if it contained inherent power absent the Spirit of God. The gospel's working is supernatural and dependent upon the Spirit; otherwise, people would be converted simply by hearing the message, essentially reducing the gospel to intellectualism.[174] The smartest and brightest would see the truth of the gospel and believe. Of course, God could simply regenerate people by the exercise of sheer power, but the gospel is the normal means by which God brings life. Romans 1:16 states that the gospel is God's power to save, and this saving power works through the rational faculties of the soul when a person believes. Hearing the words of the gospel precedes believing and is thus the ordinary means whereby the Spirit glides into the heart of the lost.[175]

Charnock next pivots to explaining in anthropological terms why the gospel is the instrument of new life. That is, human creatures possess the faculties of understanding, will, and affections so that the work God does in the soul passes through these same channels.[176] God engages means and secondary causes because this is the divine structure of creation. More specifically, all rational action, spiritual or otherwise, proceeds from some work in the mind as objects are proposed via the senses. Every person possesses these faculties, and so this is how God reaches through our misery to accomplish salvation. While the work of the Spirit and the Word is

171. Romans 6–7; Galatians 3.

172. He writes, "I might have preached…the works of the law till my lungs had been worn out, and the renewing Spirit would have never entered you by that fire, but it descended upon you in the sweet gospel dew." Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:310.

173. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:310.

174. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:311. This is the Pelagian/Socinian/Remonstrance error, that by merely presenting the contents of the gospel to dead sinners, this will in some way effect regenerating change.

175. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:310.

176. He writes, "According to the method God hath set of men's actions, it is necessary that this regeneration should be by some word as an instrument, for God hath given understanding and will to man." Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:312.

supernatural and unique, that a person must have an object proposed to their mind in order to understand, believe, or love is common to all.

> Now we believe things as we conceive them true, or not believe them as we conceive them false. We love, desire, delight in things, as we conceive them honest or profitable; we hate, we refuse, or grieve, as we conceive them dishonest, or troublesome, or hurtful to us; whatever we are changed by in our understandings, wills, and affections, is represented to us under some of these considerations.[177]

Charnock rightly notices that regeneration absent the faculties of the soul would provide a man or woman with little explanation for the reorientation and transformation perceived in the understanding, will, and affections. But since the gospel pours through the mind into the affections and will with content aimed at knowing Christ, the revelation by necessity attaches the heart and mind to the Lord. Thus, stress is laid on the intellectual content of the gospel even if the form that content takes may vary. Put differently, whether read directly from the Scriptures or simply relayed through personal testimony, the gospel's content is embedded in the message and so pierces the hearts of depraved sinners to bring new life.

But the necessity of the Word is not limited to new birth alone. The whole of the Christian life unfolds by the ever-present ministration of the Spirit through the Word.[178] When God shows forth His glory for a change in the human soul, this passes through the "glass of the gospel."[179] The Holy Spirit quickens to faith, comforts with promises, and startles out of complacency and sin, all through the proclamation of the Word. The Word gives strength to continue living by faith, and empowers the faith given by grace.

Importantly, Charnock describes this life in grace by the Word in deeply Trinitarian language. God pours forth grace by the mediation of His Son, who directs and perfects this grace by the efficiency of the Spirit instrumentally through the Word.[180] This is a supernatural work of God in the soul, one that Charnock anchors in the centrality of the cross. That is, the Word is effective on account of the "bleeding wounds and dying groans of Christ."[181] What stands out, then, is that the doctrine of regeneration is not tertiary to considerations of the Trinity, Holy Scripture, or the doctrine

177. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:313.
178. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:315.
179. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:315; see 2 Cor. 3:18.
180. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:315.
181. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:317.

of the atonement. Charnock points out that the entire body of doctrine overlaps in our beliefs, experiences, and practices.

Touching the Soul

The question naturally arising at this point is, "*How doth the Word work?*"[182] That is, how does the Spirit enact such changes in the soul by His Word? As outlined earlier, the Word works objectively in the soul by the soul's faculties, first in the understanding. Charnock refers to this as the objective presentation of the Word. The Word is an object external to the soul that proposes what the Spirit empowers the soul to see. Here the tandem work of the Spirit and Word becomes clearer.[183] The Spirit opens the eyes of those spiritually blind, and the Word is the object that newly-restored eyes perceive. In the order of logic, regeneration comes first, even if temporally the new birth is contemporaneous with faith and conversion. The same Word that brings life to the soul is the Word the soul perceives on account of new life. This Word transforms the soul via the faculties, in harmony with the function of those faculties. Charnock identifies the work of the Word unique to each aspect of the soul: "The word is proposed under various notions: as *true*, and so it is the object of the speculative understanding; as *good*, so it is the object of the practical understanding the will; as *profitable*, so it is the object of the appetite and the affections."[184]

The Spirit touches the soul, as it were, and draws the heart into believing through the Word of God, first by exposing the filth of sin and second by declaring the only remedy.[185] Charnock writes, "When the Word like fire and the heart like tinder come close together, the heart catcheth the spark and burns."[186] If in the first place the Word works objectively via the understanding, Charnock also sees the Word working internally upon the will. Admittedly, it is hard to conceive how this Word works upon the will, but Charnock offers several biblical images to assist in understanding. The Word is a seed that contains within it all the powers of substantial change. The Word is a sword that cuts to the core of a person's soul. The Word is a

182. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:317.

183. Turretin sees in physical generation an analogy that helpfully explains the duality of Word and Spirit in regeneration. Just as the seed must enter a womb that is suited to carry life, so, too, the Word must enter a heart prepared by the Spirit. *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 2:533.

184. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:317–18.

185. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:318.

186. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:318.

"glass" by which the image of God is reflected and causes change.[187] These various biblical images point out an internal working of the Word in the soul. Charnock explains,

> The word is the glory of God in a glass, and imprints the image of the glory of God in the heart. It is a softening word, and produceth a mollified heart; an enlightening word, and causes an enlightened soul; a divine word, and engenders a divine nature; it is a spiritual word, and produceth a spiritual frame; as it is God's will, it subdues our will; it is a sanctifying truth, and so makes a sink of sin to become a habitation of Christ.[188]

Practically speaking, the Word thus takes a central role in regeneration, from preaching to teaching to personal Bible reading, because this is the external means whereby God effectuates spiritual transformation.

Conclusion

In this article, I have sought to explore Stephen Charnock's doctrine of regeneration for the sake of Christian spirituality. Given that I have defined Christian spirituality as the conjunction of beliefs, experiences, and practices that together make a fully realized Christian life, regeneration contributes to spirituality in at least the following ways. First, as Charnock consistently emphasizes, the most important aspect of Christian spirituality is not *what we do* but *who we are*. That is, the spiritual life begins by being born of the Spirit. Spirituality that ignores or deemphasizes this reality is little more than moral formation mixed with religious traditions. Second, this fundamental truth experientially funds the affective dimension of Charnock's practical uses. Our inner states witness either for or against the reality of infused life. From Augustine to Luther, Wesley, and many others, the work of regeneration has a deeply experiential character. But the inner reality has an external dimension as well. No less is the holiness that God implants inside the heart evident in the practice of life. Admittedly, external religious actions determine nothing and contribute nothing to the Spirit's work in rebirth. And a life of holiness is more accurately discerned by examining progress rather than any particular moment. That said, while Christ invites us to come as we are, He also requires that we go and sin no more. If regeneration really is the infusion of divine life, as Charnock argues, it is hard

187. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:319.
188. Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, 3:319.

to see how that life could not help being expressed in daily living. Finally, the most publicly available dimension of regeneration revolves around the Word of God, which is to say, God works in the hearts of His people, transforms them from death to life, and causes them to grow in a life of grace all through the Word of God. From preaching to personal Bible intake, God's Word is central to the spiritual life, and any serious attempt at maximizing that life must focus on the Word.

John Owen's Use of Athanasius: Finding the Pedigree of Puritan Theology in the Early Church Fathers

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The theme of this essay is the use made by John Owen of quotations from the early church fathers, with a particular focus on Athanasius, fourth-century bishop of Alexandria.[1] Wide reference to a range of contemporary and ancient authors is common to many Puritan divines in a manner that by no means undermines their clear commitment to the unique authority of Scripture as the basis of faith and practice. It is clear that, for them, a pledge to *sola Scriptura* was not a reliance on *nuda Scriptura* in the context of exposition and debate.[2]

Owen's View of the Primacy of Scripture and the Auxiliary Role of Other Authorities

It can be shown from many passages in his writings that Owen found unique authority for statements about God and the only basis for a true understanding of the Christian faith in his view of Scripture as the Word of God. As he put it in a sermon from 1675, "Now, the holy scripture of the Old and New Testament, is that which we profess to own as the rule of our faith and life, in relation to our future glory."[3]

More specifically, Owen believed in the self-attesting authority of Scripture, independent of other sources of knowledge of the truth. In *The Reason of Faith* (1677), he writes,

1. There are twenty-six references to Athanasius in Goold's indices (actually twenty-seven, but the index reference to 17.283 is an error, as this refers to Athanasius Kircher). The author can provide a summary analysis of the twenty-six instances on request.

2. See Anthony N. Lane, "Sola Scriptura? Making sense of a Post-Reformation slogan," in *A Pathway into the Holy Scripture*, eds. Philip E. Satterthwaite and David F. Wright (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 297–327.

3. Sermon 14 in *Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (London: Banner of Truth, 1965–1968), 8:497.

> It is or may be inquired, wherefore we believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, or that God is one in nature, subsisting in three persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; I answer, It is because God himself, the first truth, who cannot lie, hath revealed and declared these things so to be, and he who is our all requireth us so to believe. If it be asked how, wherein, or whereby God hath revealed or declared these things so to be, or what is that revelation which God hath made hereof; I answer, It is the Scripture and that only. And if it be asked how I know this Scripture to be a divine revelation, to be the word of God; I answer…I believe it so to be with faith divine and supernatural, resting on and resolved into the authority and veracity of God himself, evidencing themselves unto my mind, my soul, and conscience, by this revelation itself, and not otherwise.[4]

This sets Owen against those who would base their understanding of Scripture on the authority of the church, or on rational or scientific grounds that justify scriptural teaching, or on ideas of knowledge derived directly from nature or supposed revelation separate from Scripture itself. For Owen, it is clear that Scripture alone, by its own God-given nature, has authority over the Christian soul, and that certainty in the truth of Scripture is part of faith, which is "the graced response to revelation."[5]

Yet in the same work, Owen made clear that other sources of information and understanding have a role in the life of the believer and the work of the theologian. He gives a place to philosophical arguments as "previous inducements unto believing" (whence they have a role in apologetics) and "concomitant means of strengthening faith in them that do believe."[6] Moreover, "wherever there is occasion from objections, oppositions, or temptations,"[7] arguments taken from extra-scriptural sources can be used to overcome such opposition. Such lines of defense "are left unto us as consequential unto our believing, to plead with others in behalf of what we profess, and for the justification of it unto the world."[8] Owen is clear that reasoning of this kind can never provide "the ground and reason whereon

4. *Works*, 4:70.

5. This phrase comes from Sebastian Rehnmann's discussion of Owen's *The Reason of Faith*. "John Owen on Faith and Reason," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to John Owen's Theology*, eds. Kelly M. Kapic and Mark Jones (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), 31–48. The following paragraph owes much to Rehnmann's article.

6. *Works*, 4:71.

7. *Works*, 4:72.

8. *Works*, 4:48.

we believe"—faith is grounded in divine revelation or supernatural evidence; it is a grace or free gift of God, not an exercise of ungraced reason. Yet the role of reason as an adjunct to faith is part of Owen's armory in theological discourse.

Owen's Caution in Using the Fathers

In *The Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance* (1654), Owen notices favorably a work of Jean Daillé, a French Huguenot minister who lived from 1594 to 1670. His writings include the treatise *Du vrai emploi des Pères* (1631), translated into English by Thomas Smith as *A Treatise concerning the right use of the Fathers* (1651),[9] of which Owen writes approvingly, "I suppose all farther labour in that kind may well be spared."[10]

Much of Daillé's thesis surrounds the dangers associated with using the Fathers: too little survives from the earliest centuries; many are inherently obscure because of language, idiom, and choice of expression; the attribution of works to certain fathers is unsure; the texts have been corrupted (sometimes deliberately, sometimes through accident); their own opinions change and develop with time and controversy; they contradict each other; their debates were on quite other matters from present day religious controversies; it is difficult to know whether the church accepted their teachings in whole or in part; and, as the Fathers themselves were at pains to point out, their teaching is not the ground of authority for the faith of the church. However, Daillé in his final chapter points to the positive use that can be made of the Fathers' writings: they are worth reading (as are many other writers) for their piety and learning; they exhort believers to a life of holiness and they provide many strong proofs for the fundamentals of the Christian faith; and they can rightly be used as historical witnesses to refute those who seek to innovate in doctrine or church practice because their testimonies can show that there is no historical precedent for certain false ideas—where the primitive church did not adopt a practice there is no ground for innovation. Daillé illustrates all of these points and others in

9. Jean Daillé, *Use of the Fathers*, trans. Thomas Smith (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1856), https://archive.org/details/treatiseonright00dailuoft. *Bibliotheca Oweniana*, which purports to be the sale catalogue of Owen's library after his death, includes a 1651 edition of this work—see *Bibliotheca Oweniana, Sive Catalogus Librorum … Bibliothecæ … Joan. Oweni. Quorum Auctio Habebitur 26 Maii, 1684, per E. Millingtonum* (London, 1684), 2.4.43

10. *Works*, 11:24.

considerable depth with extensive quotation from a large number of writers of the early centuries of the church.[11]

A general statement of Owen's view of the force to be given to quotations from the early church fathers, very much in line with Daillé, can be found in *Causes, Ways and Means for Understanding the Mind of God* (1678). Owen comes in the later chapters to the work of the Holy Spirit in the minds of people through Scripture.[12] This includes consideration of the spiritual, academic, and ecclesiastical aids to interpretation of the Bible that are available to believers. Owen, in considering the topic of biblical exegesis, assesses what he terms "the joint consent of the Fathers,"[13] to which some have sought to give what he considers to be an unwarranted value. He points to the impossibility of the Fathers being considered "a rule of Scripture interpretation" because of their disagreements over articles of faith and in exposition of Scripture. He acknowledges that the "piety and ability" of the Fathers is undeniable but denies that their writings can provide a "determining authority."

The need for similar care in the use of the Fathers is at the forefront of Owen's mind in *Christologia* (1667). By way of introductory remark, Owen wishes to establish the responsibility of all Christian believers under God to develop and maintain a right understanding of the teaching of Scripture. "The defence of the truth, from the beginning, was left in charge unto, and managed by, the guides and rulers of the church in their several capacities," a duty given also to private believers.[14]

But, he explains, in the midst of dispute and controversy in the fourth century, the need was felt for "General Councils, armed with a mixed power, partly civil and partly ecclesiastical," a coming together of emperor and bishops. He points especially to the "Council of Nice [i.e. Nicaea, 325], wherein, although there was a determination of the doctrine concerning the person of Christ…according to the truth, yet sundry evils and inconveniences ensued thereon. For thenceforth the faith of Christians began to be resolved

11. Daillé, trans. Smith, *Use of the Fathers* (1856): too little survives 26, 30–32, obscure language 101–106, 117–27, unsure attributions 36–60, corrupted texts 61–69, changes in opinions 156–62, contradictions between Fathers 327–40, debates on other topics from modern day 32–34, whether the church accepted their opinions 184–90, Fathers not the ground of authority 247–49, 252ff, 269, worth reading 403, exhortations to holiness and proofs of Christian fundamentals 404–405, historical witness against innovation 407–11.

12. *Works*, 4:199–234.

13. *Works*, 4:227.

14. *Works*, 1:9.

into the authority of men." He refers to the difficulties encountered when explaining "their conceptions of the divine nature of Christ in words not used in the Scripture, or whose signification unto that purpose was not determined therein," with the result that "occasion was given unto endless contentions about them."[15] Owen alludes then to the advantage taken by Arians in regard to this variety of terms and the uncertainty that it bred. He observes the fallibility of the Fathers and the councils: "…it cannot be denied, but that some of the principal persons and assemblies who adhered unto the truth did, in the heat of opposition unto the heresies of other men, fall into unjustifiable excess themselves."[16]

Owen's own practice is set then within this broad context of caution about how the Fathers can be profitably used to support accurate statements of theology and Scriptural interpretation. Moreover, he shows care on several occasions to consider his readership and the appropriateness of detailed citation in support of his arguments.

We see Owen engaging with the Socinian John Biddle in *Vindiciae Evangelicae* (1655) and with the Roman Catholic Vincent Canes in *Animadversions on "Fiat Lux"* (1662) and *Vindication of Animadversions* (1664), in disputes with an academic and politico-ecclesiastical audience. The *Epistle Dedicatory* to *Vindiciae*[17] is addressed to "the Heads and Governors of the Colleges and Halls, with all other students in Divinity, or of the truth which is after godliness, in the famous University of Oxford." At the same time, *The Preface to the Reader* addresses "those that labour in the word and doctrine in these nations of England, Scotland and Ireland, with all that call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord."[18] In this context of a highly academic readership, Owen's references to patristic authors set his level of argument at a fitting intellectual height. In the *Animadversions* and *Vindication of Animadversions*, Owen alludes to Athanasius six times; in *Vindiciae* there are three such references.

On the other hand, there are times when Owen has in view the general Christian reader. Then, he may choose to deploy references to the Fathers with discretion. Owen is aware that not all readers will find these references helpful or easy to understand and that they could become a burden to the book he is writing. Therefore, he separates them away from the main text

15. *Works*, 1:10.
16. *Works*, 1:10.
17. *Works*, 12:6.
18. *Works*, 12:11.

into prefaces in *Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance* (1654)[19] and *Christologia* (1667)[20] and relegates them to an appendix in his early work on *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (1647).[21] At the start of the preface to *Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance*, Owen makes this point explicitly:

> If thy inquiry be only after the *substance* of the truth in the ensuing treatise contended for, I desire thee not to stay at all upon this preliminary discourse, but to proceed thither where it is expressly handled from the Scriptures, without the intermixture of any human testimonies or other less necessary circumstances… That which I now intend and aim at is, to give an account to the *learned* reader of some things nearly related to the doctrine…and what entertainment it hath formerly found and received in the church, and among the saints of God.[22]

We can see Owen's use of the early church fathers, then, as part of his careful and critical deployment of extra-scriptural resources in defense of his interpretation of Scripture, with an awareness of the needs and perceptions of his various readerships. We will see that the use of patristic writers has a particular role in establishing the pedigree of Owen's positions and that this has especial force within the context of some of the disputes in which he was engaged.

Owen's Use of Athanasius

Athanasius, deacon to the bishop of Alexandria at the Council of Nicaea in 325 and then bishop himself from 328 to his death in 373, provided a rich source of reference for Owen, as they shared polemical concerns in Christological and Trinitarian matters, and lived in times of exacerbated theological controversy.[23] The writings of Athanasius are dominated by his defense of the Nicene formulae against Arian opponents and others whom Athanasius identified as sharing common errors with Arians. Owen's use of Athanasius, in works spanning 1646 to 1681,[24] is by no means restricted

19. *Works* 11:24–67.

20. *Works*, 1:6–27.

21. *Works*, 10:422–24.

22. *Works*, 11:19.

23. John Piper provides an overview of Athanasius's life and draws parallels between Owen, Athanasius, and Gresham Machen. *Contending for Our All: Defending Truth and Treasuring Christ in the Lives of Athanasius, John Owen, and J. Gresham Machen* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 2006).

24. The earliest reference is an allusion to Athanasius's life in *A Country Essay for the*

to these themes, but his opposition to Socinian teaching in his day brought him to deal with many of the same issues that Athanasius had faced.

The Texts of Athanasius Used by Owen

There are considerable difficulties in following up the references made by Owen to the Fathers. The accuracy of citations in the text of Owen is distinctly variable; this may be the result of Owen quoting from memory, using *florilegia* or books of quotations from the Fathers and other writers that contained mistakes,[25] or the use of a text now improved upon by modern textual scholarship. However, there is also the possibility that the printed edition of Owen's writing does not convey what he intended in his manuscript submitted to the press. Goold, in his 1850 General Preface to his edition of the Works of John Owen, comments that he has sought to improve the text and references throughout, but that "Perhaps the works of Owen have suffered most injustice in regard to his quotations from the Greek and Latin Fathers."[26] He refers to printing errors that Owen did not have time to correct and suggests that he may have left such a task to others.[27]

A starting point for identifying the copies of Athanasius that were available to Owen is the catalogue *Bibliotheca Oweniana*, the auction list for what purports to be the sale of Owen's library after his death.[28] There must be caution in using this catalogue, given the reputation of the bookseller

Practice of Church Government, an annex to a sermon preached before the House of Commons entitled *A Vision of Unchangeable, Free Mercy*. *Works*, 8:65–66. The latest reference is a citation in *An Inquiry into the Original, Nature, Institution, Power, Order, and Communion of Evangelical Churches*. *Works*, 15.354. Both, as it happens, are discussions of aspects of ecclesiology.

25. Richard Snoddy has shown examples of Owen uncritically deriving citations from other authors. "A Display of Learning? Citations and Shortcuts in John Owen's *Display of Arminianisme* (1643)," *Westminster Theological Journal* 82, no. 2 (Fall 2020): 319–35.

26. *Works*, 1: xiv–xv.

27. The citation of "Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 5:22" in *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* may be a case of Owen giving an unchecked reference. *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews with Preliminary Exercitations*, ed. William H. Goold (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1854), 2:423. The reference to Socrates does not support Owen's argument about the change of the day of sacred rest from the last day of the week (the Jewish Sabbath) to the first day of the week, although Socrates does refer to the day of Christian gatherings in this place. Owen's discussion alludes to an incident in Athanasius's life that is actually recorded in Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1:27.

28. See a discussion of this catalogue in Crawford Gribben, "John Owen, Renaissance Man? The Evidence of Edward Millington's *Bibliotheca Oweniana (1684)*" in *The Ashgate*

Edward Millington, who may have used Owen's fame to sell off unrelated stock by association with the great man's name. Moreover, even if a considerable percentage of the catalogue was owned by Owen this is not evidence that he read or used these texts. Even more significantly, we cannot know what volumes Owen owned, used, and then gave away or what books went missing from his personal collection in other ways.

Bibliotheca Oweniana contains many volumes of works by the early church fathers. Editions of Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose, Tertullian, John Chrysostom, Cyprian, Basil, Irenaeus, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Justin Martyr, and others are to be found. Several of these are "*Omnia opera*" editions. Yet in the main lists of theological books in the catalogue, there is no edition of Athanasius. In the section headed "*Manuscripta varia Latina, Greca etc*," there are two works of gathered citations from the Fathers: "*Pat. Junii Collectanea e S.Patribus, & stricturae in varios locos sacra Scripturae*" and "*Collectanea Graeca (ex vetustiss. Manuscriptis) Pat. Junii 4to.*" Both of these are manuscripts by the early seventeenth-century Scottish scholar Patrick Young (Patricius Junius), who died in 1652. Furthermore, there is a document listed as "*Manuscript. Graecum S.Athanasii pars translata in Ling Lat altera scripta per P.Junium.*"[29] That Owen may have acquired these by direct contact with Young is an intriguing possibility, but the inaccessibility of these manuscripts today does not aid our search.

However, we would be wrong to deduce from the absence of volumes of Athanasius from the *Bibliotheca* that Owen did not have access to such texts. He may have possessed such volumes and made gifts of them to others. Moreover, when working in Oxford he would have had access to college libraries and to the recently re-founded Bodleian Library. In later years, we can presume that he had access to the libraries of others who were sympathetic to the Independent cause.[30] The *Bibliotheca* does contain volumes of church historians under the entries "*Eusebii, Ruffini, Socratis, Theodor-*

Research Companion to John Owen's Theology, eds. Kerry M. Kapic and Mark Jones (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), 97–112.

29. These items in *Bibliotheca Oweniana* are located in the order referred to at 1.32.3, 1.32.22, and 1.32.6.

30. The Bodleian Library's copies of *Bibliotheca Oweniana* are bound together with other book sale catalogues. The presence of editions of Athanasius in the libraries of Owen's contemporaries is evident. The Bodleian volume with reference "Johnson d. 739" contains catalogues spanning the years 1680–1702, many under the auspices of Edward Millington, including, for example, the sale catalogues of the libraries of Richard Davies (with a Paris 1581 edition of Athanasius), of Matthew Smallwood (Paris 1627 edition), and of John Lloyd (Basel 1556 edition).

eti, Sozomeni, &c Histor. Ecclesiast. edit. Grynei Bas. 1587" and "[Eusebii] *Historia Ecclesiastica, & Socratis, Sozomeni, Theodoreti, Evagri gr.lat. amplissimis Annotationibus Hen. Valesii 3 vol (lettred) Mog. 1672.*"[31] The works of Socrates and Sozomen in particular are important sources for events in the life of Athanasius.

Owen quotes from Athanasius in both Greek and Latin; this may begin to provide some further clues as to which texts he had access to. All early modern published editions of Athanasius prior to 1600 were Latin translations rather than the Greek text of Athanasius, and this was also true of some seventeenth-century editions. The 1600 Heidelberg and the 1627 Paris editions of the Greek text included Latin translations.[32]

While not giving us certainty, a few examples may point us in the right direction. In the preface to his *Christologia* (1667), Owen discusses the historical background of some of the terminology used in Christological and Trinitarian discussion. He refers to Athanasius in these terms: "The Grecians themselves could not for a long season agree among themselves whether οὐσια and ὑποστασις were of the same signification or no, (both of them denoting essence and substance,) or whether they differed in their signification, or if they did, wherein that difference lay. Athanasius at first affirmed them to be the same: "Orat. v. con. Arian., and Epist. ad African."[33]

The reference to *Oration 5 Against the Arians* is of note. There are four discourses with this title in Migne's edition of Athanasius in the *Patrologia Graeca* series.[34] However, according to Migne,[35] the 1627 Paris edition of the works of Athanasius has five orations—the *Epistula ad Episcopos Aegyptii et Lybiae* is oration 1, while orations 1–4 are numbered 2–5. In what is now given as oration 4, Athanasius states in the first section, "And as there is one Beginning and therefore one God, so one is that Essence (οὐσια) and Subsistence (ὑποστασις) which indeed and truly and really is."[36] This would appear to be the quotation that Owen has in mind.

31. *Bibliotheca Oweniana*, 1.4.139, 1.4.144.

32. A brief summary of early modern editions of Athanasius can be found in Archibald Robertson, *Prolegomena*, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (NPNF), Second Series, Volume IV,* ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (New York: Oxford and London: Christian Literature Company: Parker, 1892), xi–xii.

33. *Works*, 1:10.

34. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* tom. 26 (Paris 1857), col. 11–526.

35. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* tom. 28 (Paris 1857), col. 1645.

36. *Oratio contra Arianos IV.1* in *NPNF,* 4:433.

In his *Preliminary Exercitations* (1668) to his commentary on the epistle to the Hebrews, Owen discusses the question of the epistle's canonical authority. In doing so, he twice quotes Athanasius in Latin. First, he writes, "Moreover, as the Scripture, upon the accounts mentioned, is, by way of eminency, said to be *canonical,* so there is also a *canon* or *rule* determining what books in *particular* do belong unto the holy Scripture, and to be on that account *canonical*." So Athanasius tells us that by the Holy Scripture he intends *"libros certo canone comprehensos,"*—the books contained in the assured canon of it."[37]

This is footnoted as a reference to "*Athanas. in Synops*." The quotation of the Latin points to the 1600 edition published in Heidelberg that, for the treatise known as *Synopsis Scripturae Sacrae* (spuriously attributed to Athanasius), had, in parallel to the Greek text, the Latin translation given here by Owen.[38]

A few pages later Owen discusses the inclusion as canonical, by various writers and particularly by the Third Council of Carthage (397), of books that "…might be read in the church; which privilege they grant also to the stories of the sufferings of the martyrs, which yet none thought to be properly canonical." *"Non sunt canonici, sed leguntur catechumenis,"* saith Athanasius;—"They are not canonical, but are only read to the *catechumeni*."[39]

The footnote reference for Athanasius is again "*Athanas. in Synops*." The Latin is once more that of the translation in the Heidelberg 1600 edition of *Synopsis Scripturae Sacrae*.[40]

In *Pneumatologia* (1674), Owen discusses the work of the Holy Spirit in regard to Christ's human nature: "First, The *framing, forming, and miraculous conception of the body of Christ in the womb of the blessed Virgin* was the peculiar and especial work of the Holy Ghost." To this statement is footnoted a Latin quotation and the reference "*Athanas. de Fid. Un. et Trin.*"[41] The ancient text referred to (*de Fide Unitatis et Trinitatis, Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti—Concerning Faith in the Unity and Trinity of the Father, Son*

37. Owen, *Hebrews*, 1:28.

38. Operum Sancti Patris Nostri Athanasii Archiepiscopi Alexandrini, t. II, ed. P. Felckmann (Heidelberg 1600), 61, https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=pxBnAAAAcAAJ&redir_esc=y.

39. *Hebrews,* 1:21.

40. *Operum Sancti*, 63.

41. *Works,* 3:162.

and Holy Spirit) is now classed among Athanasian *spuria*. However, it was included in the Heidelberg 1600 and Paris 1627 editions.[42]

These arguments are by no means decisive, but it seems reasonable to suppose that Owen may at times have been working with 1600 and 1627 editions of Athanasius, copies of the church historians Socrates and Sozomen, as well as, perhaps, handy sourcebooks of quotations such as Junius's manuscripts.

Owen's Polemic Defense Against the Charge of Singularity

It was important to Owen to be able to demonstrate that his interpretation of Scripture provided an unchanged message from the days of the apostles. To the early modern, pre-Enlightenment mind, the power of ancient authority as a tool of argument was significant. Conal Condren has explored this habit of mind, also noting some exceptions in appeals to natural rights and the world of scientific learning, in regard to the field of political discourse, whose controversies and language were inseparable from the legal and theological. As he states in his concluding paragraphs, "In religion, then, a rhetoric of tradition and conservation was nearly always co-opted; a rhetoric of innovation and upstart or false tradition was to be distributed [i.e., attributed to opponents], much as was the currency of tyranny, arbitrariness and rebellion."[43] Despite the cautions raised by Daillé's work noted above, Owen's deployment of the Fathers is therefore in part a strategic move typical of his age. In the midst of a period of immense societal, political, and ecclesiastical ferment, and in the increasingly embattled position in which as a declared Independent he found himself, Owen offered the assurance of teaching that was not novel but could be traced from Scripture through the earliest ages of the church.

He makes this point succinctly in the final paragraph of his appendix to *The Reason of Faith* (1677). After giving a number of quotations from across church history to support his view of the ground of faith, he states, "These few testimonies have I produced amongst the many that might be urged to the same purpose, not to confirm the truth which we have pleaded for, which stands on far surer foundations, but only to obviate prejudices in the minds of some, who, being not much conversant in things of this

42. See discussion in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* tom. 28 (Paris 1857) col. 1435–1436 and col. 1648.

43. See Conal Condren, *The Language of Politics in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1994), 33–40, 70, 158. Condren shows the inter-connection of politics and theology, pp. 33–40, and their shared language, p. 70; the quotation is from p. 158.

nature, are ready to charge what hath been delivered unto this purpose with singularity."[44]

The avoidance of the charge of *singularity*, or innovation, looms large in Owen's motivation for seeking the support of ancient Christian authors. This works most effectively in his disputatious works and when the topics under discussion are the Christological and Trinitarian topics that the Fathers were also engaged with.

First, in many instances, Owen simply uses a quotation or allusion as a straightforward confirmation of agreement to show the historical pedigree of his own theology.

In *Pneumatologia*, (1674) he writes,

> I say, then,—1. That all *divine operations* are usually ascribed unto *God absolutely*. So it is said that God made all things; and so of all other works, whether in nature or in grace. And the reason hereof is, because the several persons are undivided in their operations, acting all by the same will, the same wisdom, the same power. Every person, therefore, is the author of every work of God, because each person is God, and the divine nature is the same undivided principle of all divine operations; and this ariseth from the unity of the persons in the same essence.

To the phrase ending *divine operations* Owen footnotes a Greek quotation and the reference: "*Athanas. Epistol. [i.31] ad Serapionem*."[45] The Greek means, "For surely the operation of the Trinity is shown from these words to be one. For the apostle does not mean that the things which are given are given differently and separately by each person, but that these gifts are given in the Trinity and that all are from one God."[46]

Athanasius wrote a series of *Letters to Serapion*, a bishop who had encountered teaching that the Holy Spirit was a creature, different from the angels only in degree. In the place cited, Athanasius has just quoted 2 Corinthians 13:14 (at the end of 1.30) and is now explaining the significance of the text: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all." Owen and Athanasius are of one mind in seeing that grace, love, and fellowship are not separate works

44. *Works*, 4:115.

45. *Works*, 3:93.

46. Present author's translation. See also C. R. B. Shapland, *The Letters of Saint Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit* (London: Epworth Press, 1951), 142.

belonging each solely to one specific member of the Trinity to give to believers, but that all are the work of one God.

Similarly, in *Vindiciae Evangelicae* (1655), Owen is combatting the Socinian writings of John Biddle. This is done at length with detailed rebuttal of Biddle's *Two-fold Catechism*. In chapter 19, Owen states, "It is the deity of Christ, then, which is the fundamental, formal cause and reason, and the proper object, of our worship; for that being granted, though we had no other reason or argument for it, yet we ought to worship him; and that being denied, all other reasons and motives whatever would not be a sufficient cause or warrant for any such proceeding." At the semicolon is appended a footnote with the reference: *"Athan. Ep. ad Adelph. Episc."*[47] and a Greek quotation that means, "Let them know that in worshipping the Lord in the flesh, we do not worship a creature but the Creator Who has put on the created body."[48]

This letter was written by Athanasius around 370 to Adelphius, bishop of Onuphis, and is designed to assist him in combatting heresy that Athanasius classes as Arian. The letter concerns worship, as it appears that these anti-Nicene thinkers had challenged Adelphius as to the consequences of the orthodox view that Jesus is to be worshipped—if He is a human being, then how can He be worshipped? In the same way, Owen in *Vindiciae* is countering the consequences of the Socinian denial of the full divinity of Jesus Christ. The words of Athanasius are apt in that, although they are dealing with different opponents, a shared theological standpoint equips Owen with the same arguments against error.

Canonicity is another topic that by its nature lends itself to discussion of historical pedigree. The definition of canonicity that Owen gives in his *Preliminary Exercitations* to his commentary on the epistle to the Hebrews makes this point: "The Scripture, upon the accounts mentioned, is, by way of eminency, said to be *canonical,* so there is also a *canon* or *rule* determining what books in particular do belong unto the holy Scripture, and to be on that account *canonical*."[49] The references, given previously, to an Athanasian text and other fathers in regard to the place of the epistle to the Hebrews in the canon and also to the nature of the Apocrypha are therefore historical foundations for the position that Owen adopts.

47. *Works*, 12:389.
48. Letter 60.6 in *NPNF,* 4:577.
49. *Hebrews*, 1:28.

In his *Theologoumena Pantodapa* (1661), we find an example of the way in which Owen can refer to the general thrust of patristic theology, showing the broad agreement of his theology with the past. In chapter 7 of book 1, Owen has been discussing the knowledge of God that may be acquired from the nature of mankind and the universe, and he has come now to consider the limitations of knowledge acquired in this way:

> We have demonstrably proved that some kind of knowledge of God flourished amongst the heathen nations who were without the light of God's word. This knowledge flowed from that double spring of which we have spoken, namely from the natural internal light and from that revelation of God which has been made through his works. Josephus, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius, Theophilus of Alexandria, Chrysostom, Eusebius, Theodoret, Tertullian, Lactantius, Arnobius, Augustine, and others of the ancients have long ago made plain that the outcome corresponded to those sources of knowledge—they have done this from the testimonies of learned men written amongst the pagans and gathered together by them from all around.[50]

Owen then goes on to refer to writers "of later ages" from Thomas Aquinas to Grotius who make the same point. He further lists a range of ancient pagan authors whose writings embody this basic knowledge of God.

Although Owen gives no specific reference, this is very much the theme of Athanasius's *contra Gentes*, which is recapped in *de Incarnatione*, chapters 11 and 12. For example, in *de Incarnatione*, chapter 12, Athanasius writes, "The grace of being in the image [that is, created in God's image] was sufficient for one to know God the Word and through him the Father. But because God knew the weakness of men he anticipated their negligence, so that if they failed to recognise God by themselves, through the works of creation they might be able to know the creator."[51]

Owen's allusion to Athanasius here fits well with the ancient bishop's arguments concerning the knowledge of God at different times within the historical dispensations of God's dealings with mankind. The theological language and terminology have changed; where Owen speaks of an "internal light," Athanasius tends to refer to human beings as endowed with grace by God in their natural state because they are made "according to the image"

50. *Works*, 17:78, present author's translation.

51. Robert W. Thomson, ed. and trans., *Athanasius, Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione* (Oxford: Clarendon 1971), ad loc.

of God. Yet the weight of support to prove the pedigree of Owen's theology is established.

There is one (but only one) egregious example of Owen misappropriating a quotation from Athanasius in a manner that may suggest consultation of some other source than a full text of the work cited.[52] In the appendix to *Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (1647), Owen sought to compile a brief list of testimonies from various ancient writers and councils to support his doctrine of limited atonement. Sixth in the list is this: "So also doth another of them make it manifest in what sense they use the word *all*. VI. ATHANASIUS of the incarnation of the Word of God:—Οὗτος ἐστιν ἡ παντων ζωη, και ὡς προβατον ὑπερ της παντων σωτηριας ἀντιψυχον το ἑαυτου σωμα εἰς θανατον παραδους—'He is the life of *all*, and as a sheep he delivered his body a price for the souls of *all*, that they might be saved.' *All* in both places can be none other but the elect."[53]

The words here are from Athanasius's work *de Incarnatione*, chapter 37. The context of Athanasius's writing is a section of his treatise on the nature of Christ as God and man that is directed against the objections to Christianity by contemporary Jews. He is specifically demonstrating the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in comparison with Old Testament figures, with particular reference to the manner and purpose of His death. A longer quotation (with the section quoted by Owen given in italics) will show that Athanasius's use of the word *all* here clearly does not have the meaning that Owen attributes to it:

> He was born in Judaea, and the Persians came to worship him. He it is who even before his bodily manifestation won victory over the opposing demons and trophies over idolatry. So all Gentiles everywhere, rejecting the customs of their fathers and the impiety of idols, are henceforth placing their hope in Christ and dedicating themselves to him, as one can see with one's own eyes. For at no other time did the impiety of the Egyptians cease, save when the Lord of all, as it were riding on a cloud, went down there in the body, destroyed the error of the idols, and brought all men to himself, and through himself to

52. Of the twenty-six references to Athanasius in Owen's *Works*, this is the only one that is clearly a misuse of Athanasius's meaning. Where Owen gives specific references to one of Athanasius's works, the vast majority are directly apt quotations. Footnote 26 above points to a confused reference in *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, and I discuss below a reference to the desert monk Antony in *Works*, 8:183 that elaborates an argument by implication rather than from the explicit words of Athanasius in his *Life of Antony*.

53. *Works*, 10:423.

> the Father. He it is who was crucified, with as witnesses the sun and creation and those who inflicted death on him; by his death salvation was effected for all and all creation was saved. *He it is who is the life of all, and who like a sheep delivered his own body to death as a ransom for the salvation of all*, even if the Jews do not believe.[54]

Athanasius is demonstrating, in response to Jewish denial, the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as one whose death has saving significance for people of all nations within God's creation. Therefore, Athanasius's use of *all* in context appears to refer to the universal impact of the death of Christ for people of all nations.

It is notable that in this last example Owen is in breach of the idea that he alluded to in the preface to *The Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance* (1654),[55] that we cannot expect fully fledged statements of doctrine from writers whose focus was on other controversies and whose views on this topic had not been tried in the fires of debate. It is unhelpful to look in Athanasius for a clear statement on the extent of Christ's atonement as this was not, in his day, an issue under discussion in the terms of later centuries.

Second, Owen frequently summons patristic support in situations where he wishes to contradict an opponent and establish who has the better pedigree of argument. Here the deployment of patristic reference becomes a significant weapon in his polemic armory. Indeed, some of Owen's arguments are distinctly *ad hominem* in the context of the opponent with whom he is debating. He is seeking to defeat on their own ground opponents who give weight to the evidence of the Fathers.

In *Vindiciae Evangelicae* (1655), as we have seen, Owen is dealing with Socinian teaching, which received learned backing from thinkers such as Grotius. Owen, with an academic audience in mind, finds powerful support on Christological issues from Athanasius and seems to relish demonstrating that the new teaching of his opponent is contrary to the testimony of the church over the ages, as well as being contrary to Scripture. In one instance, Owen argues against Grotius's view of Romans 9:5 by asserting not only that earlier writers disagree with his interpretation but that Grotius's view of the original Greek text is not supported by the quotations of the same text by Athanasius and others. In his discussion of John 20:28 and Romans 9:5, Owen states,

54. *Athanasius, Contra Gentes*, ad loc.

55. *Works*, 11:25.

> The learned Grotius is pitifully entangled about the last two places urged by our catechists…but coming to expound that place [Romans 9:5], he finds that shift will not serve the turn, it being not any Christians calling him God that there is mentioned, but the blessed apostle plainly affirming that he is "God over all, blessed for ever;" and therefore, forgetting what he had said before, he falls upon a worse and more desperate evasion, affirming that the word θεος ought not to be in the text, because Erasmus had observed that Cyprian and Hilary, citing this text did not name the word! And this he rests upon, although he knew that all original copies whatever, constantly, without any exception, do read it, and that Beza had manifested, against Erasmus, that Cyprian adver. Judaeos, lib. ii cap. vi., and Hilary ad Ps. xii., do both cite this place to prove that Christ is called God, though they do not express the text to the full; and it is known how Athanasius used it against the Arians, without any hesitation as to the corruption of the text.[56]

Athanasius quotes Romans 9:5, for example, in his *First Oration against the Arians*.[57] He gives the verse as, "Of whom as concerning the flesh is Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever," thus showing no hesitation about the text. Athanasius sees the scriptural reference as one of many decisive statements (in the same paragraph, he cites John 1:1, Revelation 4:1, and Romans 1:20) of the eternal deity of God the Son, as would Owen.

In his *Animadversions* and *Vindication of Animadversions*, Owen found an opponent in Vincent Canes, a Franciscan defender of Roman Catholicism, which Owen was not alone in seeing as a resurgent challenge to the established Protestant church in Restoration England. Therefore, he is ready to challenge ideas such as papal infallibility and authority on the basis of historical arguments from the fourth century, and also to assert a lack of historical pedigree on such issues as the use of images in Christian worship.[58] Owen is in no doubt that, on these issues in combat with an advocate of the claims of the papacy, the weight of history is on his side of the argument.

In the opening chapter of *Animadversions*, Owen sets out some of the principles that Canes has advanced to argue for a return of England to the Church of Rome. Among these are ideas such as: "That we, in these nations,

56. *Works*, 12:307.

57. Athanasius, *Orations against the Arians*, 1:11, in *NPNF*, 4:312.

58. *Works*, 14:234, 14:384, 14:437, 14:478.

first received the Christian religion from Rome," and, "That whence and from whom we first received our religion, there and with them we ought to abide."[59] Such arguments naturally lead to an historical rebuttal; arguments that can show that Protestant doctrine and practice is in line with that of the early church Fathers will have strong *ad hominem* force against an opponent whose appeal is to the authority of historical precedence.

When discussing Canes's assertions concerning the infallibility of the pope, Owen brings forward various examples that he thinks demonstrate errors made by popes over the centuries. "What think you of Liberius? Did he not subscribe to *Arianism*? Sozomen tells you expressly that he did so, lib. Iv cap. 15; and so doth Athanasius, Epist. Ad Solitarios, giving the reason why he did so,—namely, out of fear; and so doth Jerome, both in Script. Ecclesiast. Fortunat. and in Euseb. Chron."[60]

The Athanasian reference is to the *History of the Arians*, which is often given the extra title of *ad Monachos*. In this treatise (especially paragraphs 35 to 41) Athanasius details the various persecutions that he and other opponents of the Arians suffered and the involvement of Liberius, bishop of Rome from 352 to 366, in at first defending Athanasius and so suffering exile, but later subscribing to a statement provided by Athanasius's opponents:

> But Liberius after he had been in banishment two years gave way, and from fear of death subscribed. Yet even this only shews their violent conduct, and the hatred of Liberius against the heresy, and his support of Athanasius so long as he was suffered to exercise a free choice. For that which men are forced by torture to contrary to their first judgment, ought not to be considered the willing deed of those who are in fear, but rather of their tormentors.[61]

Owen also alludes to the church historian Sozomen, who was writing in the fifth century: "Not long after these events, the emperor returned to Sirmium from Rome; on receiving a deputation from the Western bishops, he recalled Liberius from Beroea. Constantius urged him, in the presence of the deputies of the Eastern bishops, and of the other priests who were at the camp, to confess that the Son is not of the same substance as the Father.... Liberius [and others] were induced to assent to this document."[62]

59. *Works*, 14:17ff.
60. *Works,* 14:234.
61. Athanasius, *History of the Arians*, 41, in *NPNF*, 4:284.
62. Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History,* 4:15, trans. Chester D. Hartranft, *NPNF*, *Second*

It is notable that Athanasius, while acknowledging Liberius's lapse, is keen to demonstrate his sympathy for him and to affirm that he sees Liberius as in reality a lover of the truth. It would be hard to pick this up from the more aggressive tone of Owen's reference to the pope in the midst of his controversy with Canes. However, Owen's citations and argument would resonate with a readership concerned with the political and ecclesiastical issues involved in the restored Stuart monarchy's relationship with Roman Catholicism.

In his late work *Inquiry into the Original, Nature, Institution, Power, Order, and Communion of Evangelical Churches*, Owen is defending the practice of the non-conformist community against Edward Stillingfleet's opposition in his 1680 work *The Unreasonableness of Separation*. Taking on his opponent on his own academic ground, Owen refers to "those who pretend a reverence unto antiquity in those things wherein they suppose countenance to be given unto their interest."[63]

In chapter 11 of that work, *Of conformity and communion in parochial assemblies*, Owen discusses the question of whether it is right to be in communion in a church where "great, notorious, provoking sins do abound among" those in attendance. In this context he refers to the evidence of "the discipline of the primitive churches" and states his view clearly: "Who knows not with what diligence they watched over the walkings and conversations of all that were admitted among them, and with what severity they animadverted on all that fell into scandalous sins?" Regarding early church practice, he gives a number of references and concludes, "If the example of the primitive churches had been esteemed of any value or authority in these things, much of our present differences would have been prevented."[64]

One of his references is "*Athanas. Epist. Ad Solit.*," which here seems to mean the *Second Letter to the Monks*, where Athanasius writes,

> Whereas there are certain who, while they affirm that they do not hold with Arius, yet compromise themselves and worship with his party; I have been compelled, at the instance of certain most sincere brethren, to write at once in order that keeping faithfully and without guile the pious faith which God's grace works in you, you may not give occasion of scandal to the brethren. For when any sees you, the faithful in

Series, Volume II, ed. P. Schaff and H. Wace (New York: Oxford and London: Christian Literature Company: Parker, 1886), 309.

63. *Works*, 15:353.

64. *Works*, 15:354.

> Christ, associate and communicate with such people, certainly they will think it a matter of indifference and will fall into the mire of irreligion. Lest, then, this should happen, be pleased, beloved, to shun those who hold the impiety [of Arius], and moreover to avoid those who, while they pretend not to hold with Arius, yet worship with the impious.[65]

As final examples, we should note that Owen's use of ancient witness extends to debates within the Puritan community, such as those on matters of church polity. On two occasions we find him preaching before the House of Commons at highly dramatic times in the life of the country—the end of the first civil war in 1646 and the day after Charles I's execution in 1649.[66] The tracts that he appends to the published sermons are designed to guide the political decision-making then afoot regarding ecclesiastical matters. In particular, Owen advocates a broad toleration of Reformed Protestant positions in regard to church government. He disapproves of the idea of the use of civil power unless it is necessary for the security and sound religion of the nation and would seem to be drawing a distinction between the magistrate's just intervention with things, such as banning false forms of worship, and the unjust interference with the lives and liberty of persons.[67] Such ideas could well be seen, in the context of recent English and European history from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, to be a departure from the precedents to which his audiences are accustomed, and in this matter Owen found himself separated from other Puritan thinkers, including many Presbyterians.

Owen published *A Discourse on Toleration* alongside his sermon *Righteous Zeal Encouraged by Divine Protection* (1649), preached after the execution of Charles I. Owen argues that the church does not need civil intervention to protect the truth. "For three hundred years the church had no assistance from any magistrate against heretics; and yet in all that space there was not one long-lived or far-spreading heresy, in comparison to those that followed. As the disease is spiritual, so was the remedy that in those days was applied; and the Lord Jesus Christ made it effectual."[68]

65. Letter 53, in *NPNF*, 4:564.

66. *Works*, 8:5–69, 8:129–206. References to Athanasius are at 8:65, 8:66, and 8:183.

67. See John Coffey, "John Owen and the Puritan Toleration Controversy, 1646–59," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to John Owen's Theology*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Mark Jones (Farnham: Ashgate Press, 2012), 227–248.

68. *Works*, 8:183.

He quotes from Polycarp, Ignatius, Irenaeus, and Tertullian to show that, while they denounced heretics sharply and believed in excommunication, they never mention corporal action against heretics. He comes then to give this as an example: "Antonius the hermit leaves testimony when he was dying 'that he never had peaceable conference with them all his days', Vita Anton. inter Oper. Athan. Surely had these men perceived the mind of God for their bodily punishment, they would not have failed to signify their minds therein; but truly their expressions hold out rather quite the contrary."[69]

It is not clear that Owen is quoting exactly from Athanasius's *Life of Antony* here, but the reference may be to paragraph 91. This is toward the end of the *Life of Antony* where Athanasius is quoting from Antony's final advice from his deathbed to monks who lived with him in the desert: "Have no fellowship with the schismatics, nor any dealings at all with the heretical Arians. For you know how I shunned them on account of their hostility to Christ, and the strange doctrines of their heresy."[70]

In the *Life of Antony*, the hermit is shown at times speaking against Arians and others (for example in paragraph 69), but more generally his whole manner of life was as an ascetic seeking solitude. While neither Antony nor Athanasius explicitly make Owen's point about not using the civil power to punish heresy, Antony's example and advice can support the view that false teaching is countered by preaching and by non-communion. Here, it is the historical example rather than the explicit formulation of a point of view that Owen finds as the support for his proposals to Parliament and for regulating church affairs. As the Puritan leadership stood on the brink of shaping the church polity of the nation, Owen points to the course that he believes that the precedent of key figures in the early history of Christianity would map out for them.

Conclusion

Our starting point for understanding John Owen's theology is always to recognize his underlying commitment to the unique authority of Scripture. However, we have seen that Owen recognizes the use of a wide range of legitimate means at the disposal of a theologian in the work of defending and explaining the positions adopted. To this end, the deployment of patristic writings can elucidate and support the expression of theology. He

69. *Works*, 8:183.

70. *Life of Antony*, 91, in *NPNF*, 4:220.

is aware of the dangers involved in using the Fathers, both in terms of their own variety and perceived inaccuracies of expression and doctrine, and in regard to the inappropriateness for some readers of deploying academic material of this kind. In using a display of the learning of his day (usually with apt citations, but with at least one notable misappropriation), Owen earns himself a hearing with academic audiences as he shows that his theology has an historical pedigree stretching back to the early centuries of the church. Furthermore, this learning wields a significant polemic impact when Owen is able to turn the tools of his opponents against them. In debates where his adversaries—whether Roman Catholic, members of the established Church of England, or fellow Puritans—give particular recognition to the testimony of the Fathers, Owen is confident that he is able to show that the weight of history is on the side of the truth that he is committed to defending.

Book Reviews

Ryu, Gilsun. *The Federal Theology of Jonathan Edwards: An Exegetical Perspective*. Studies in Historical and Systematic Theology. Bellingham, Wash.: Lexham Academic, 2021.

The present volume is Gilsun Ryu's PhD dissertation (2020) from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Ryu's work represents a new and important contribution to a little-examined aspect of Jonathan Edwards's exegetical theology, namely, his federal theology—a critical component of Reformed, covenantal orthodoxy.[1] Ryu intends to show that, while Edwards did not publish a volume dedicated to the subject, federal theology "occupies a place of considerable significance in his biblical exegesis." He notes that Edwards discusses, throughout his exegetical corpus, all three facets of the traditional federal schema: the covenant of redemption, the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace (p. 2). He also underscores Edwards's uniformity with, as well as unique contributions to, traditional Reformed constructions of federal theology. Ryu's central thesis is that "Edwards developed his federal theology using biblical exegesis and his understanding of the doctrinal harmony of the Bible as a framework for interpreting the history of redemption" (p. 16). This proves that, for Edwards, "federal theology is not antithetical to biblical exegesis nor to the Christian life" (p. 18).

1. Regarding definitions, Ryu argues that one best understands "federal theology" within classic Reformed thinking as a "family of approaches rather than a specific set of ideas." Yet, he asserts, there are still several "unifying factors" among the different approaches to federal theology among Reformed theologians. These unifying factors include the rejection of the "Pelagian view" of the relationship of the Hebrew Bible to the New Testament, an emphasis on the principle of representative headship of the two Adams, and a clear distinction between the covenants of works and grace (pp. 1, 71).

To accomplish his task, Ryu divides his book into four parts. Part 1 (chapter two) provides the historical context for his study. He details several Reformed authors' understanding of redemptive history and its relationship to federal theology, highlighting the continuities and discontinuities of Edwards's thought with his Reformed tradition. While there are many voices within this Reformed tradition, Ryu chooses to focus on Johannes Cocceius, Francis Turretin, Petrus van Mastricht, and Herman Witsius. They had significant influence on Edwards's historical and theological understanding of the Bible, yet there are clear differences between their federal theology and his. From this survey, Ryu concludes that "many aspects of Edwards's approach to federal theology echo those of the Reformed scholastics," yet "his historical approach tends to follow the biblical narratives and is far less systematic" (p. 71).

In Part 2 (chapters three, four, and five) Ryu unfolds the broad structures of Edwards's understanding of the Bible's description of redemptive history and its bearing on his covenant system. He investigates the ways in which Edwards's articulation of federal theology and the covenants of redemption, works, and grace reveal his understanding of the Bible's unfolding historical-redemptive narrative. Ryu underscores that "the redemptive-historical theme plays a crucial role in Edwards's approach to the Bible" (p. 16).

Part 3 (chapters six, seven, and eight) investigates how Edwards interprets Scripture to justify his understanding of the covenants of redemption, works, and grace. Throughout these chapters, Ryu emphasizes that Edwards "seeks to listen to the biblical witness about redemptive history" and "selects texts and exegetical methods that result from his belief that Scripture is harmonious" and shares an "inner unity" (p. 272). Ryu documents how Edwards grounded his federal theology upon an exegetical foundation and held it together with a focus on redemptive history.

Part 4 (chapters nine and ten) draws Ryu's study to a close. He explores how Edwards's historically informed and exegetically founded federal theology shapes his ecclesiology and pastoral concerns for the Christian community. Edwards's concepts of justification, the conditions of the covenants, and the Lord's Supper highlight the practical ways in which his federal theology informed his ecclesiological thinking and practice. "Edwards seeks the essential unity between faith and piety through his ecclesiological perspective on federal theology within his perception of the doctrinal harmony of the Bible" (p. 279). Ryu concludes his work by providing a brief sketch of the interrelationship between Edwards's exegesis and his understanding of

redemptive history and ecclesiology. The purpose is to show how Edwards's view of doctrinal harmony serves as his main interpretive lens for understanding redemptive history.

Ryu's *Federal Theology of Jonathan Edwards* is a splendid volume that makes an important contribution to Edwards studies in three respects. First, it adds to the growing body of literature related to Edwards's exegesis—a subject that had been largely neglected up until the last decade. Second, it shows how Edwards draws from, and contributes to, the Reformed tradition's understanding of federal theology. Ryu helpfully explains how Edwards emphasizes the federal theology and covenant schema of his forbearers without accepting it uncritically. Edwards strengthens his tradition's understanding of the covenant schema by further rooting it in biblical history and exegesis. Third, contrary to Stephen Stein's well-known thesis, it demonstrates that the Bible serves as the "source" and "theological norm" of Edwards's theology—in this case his federal schema.[2] Ryu documents how Edwards developed his federal theology "from an exegetical perspective" as he tried to understand the text in view of "the biblical authors' intended meaning," interpreted "in terms of canonicity," and allowed "Scripture [to] interpret itself" (pp. 271–272). Ryu's volume challenges those who assert that Edwards's theology is "imaginative" or "unconstrained" by the biblical text.

The Federal Theology of Jonathan Edwards makes an important contribution to our understanding of one of the church's most influential theologians, while also contributing to discussions related to the historical development of federal theology.[3] For this reason, it deserves a wide readership among scholars, pastors, and students alike.

—Cameron Schweitzer
Independent Scholar

2. Stephen Stein, "The Quest for the Spiritual Sense: The Biblical Hermeneutics of Jonathan Edwards," *Harvard Theological Review* 70 (January-April 1977): 99–113, 113.

3. For another important work, see Paul J. Hoehner, *The Covenant Theology of Jonathan Edwards: Law, Gospel, and Evangelical Obedience* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications, 2021).

Hampton, Stephen. *Grace and Conformity: The Reformed Conformist Tradition and the Early Stuart Church of England*. Oxford Studies in Historical Theology. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.

Historians seem never to tire of investigating the theology and history of the Puritan tradition and its foil, Laudianism. Although this ecclesiastical dichotomy is clean cut for many, Stephen Hampton demonstrates that it does not account for the true theological breadth of the Church of England in the early modern period. Rather than a polarized two-party system, some of the seventeenth-century's most significant figures in the established church belonged to the Reformed Conformist tradition.

The Reformed Conformists included those clergy who were adamantly committed to the doctrine of the Reformed tradition but were also dedicated to the structures of the established church, including its liturgical forms and polity. Hampton's thesis is that this tradition was not only prominent within the early modern English church but was the mainstream. Admittedly, Puritanism has received the bulk of attention in secondary literature, but perhaps that is because of its inherent controversial nature, since it grows out of debates within the established church and is fostered by the full social upheaval of the English civil war. By contrast, Reformed Conformity followed the set patterns of English divinity, striving to promote Reformed orthodoxy from within the confessional and ecclesiastical commitments of the Church of England.

This study focuses on ten Reformed Conformist figures—including John Prideaux, Daniel Featley, John Davenant, and George Downame—who exemplify various features of this tradition. Hampton explores a handful of events and topics that masterfully demonstrate the strength of the Reformed Conformist tradition under the reigns of James I/VI and Charles I. He shows how the main university commencement lectures were dominated by the promotion of Reformed theology and the doctrines of grace, formulated carefully to display their coherence with the confessional heritage of the Church of England. Further, as various controversies unfolded throughout the seventeenth century, even with the differences among these various theologians, the Reformed Conformist leaders maintained a strong front that the Reformed understanding of grace, justification, and the sacraments does justice to Scripture and the patristic tradition as well as the divinity expressed in the Thirty-nine Articles, Book of Common Prayer, and canon law.

One of Hampton's most astounding observations is the resilience that characterized the Reformed Conformist tradition. Its adherents did not passively accept the English style of divinity and polity, nor accidentally remain committed to it or Reformed orthodoxy. Rather, through a series of pointed debates, they produced strident and sophisticated formulations of their tradition, arguing that it is the most fitting expression of Reformed theology and churchmanship. The Synod of Dort is perhaps the most well-known example of this, as Reformed Conformists composed the British delegation sent to the gathering and contributed several overt defenses for specifically English views, making sure that room was left for their position in the Synod's final documents.

On the other hand, although experts in the period will be aware of it, a lesser-known instance that reveals the strength of the Reformed Conformist tradition is the Richard Montagu affair. Montagu released several controversial publications that many interpreted as having Arminian leanings. Although Montagu's publications may be somewhat unknown, Hampton explores the lasting effects of this controversy in shaping the plethora of publications by Reformed Conformists who responded to Montagu not just on the issue of grace and human will but also on the sacraments. Montagu's provocative contribution left a lasting mark on English divinity, even to some degree prompting the suppression of predestinarian teaching that began in 1626 and intensified in 1628. Montagu's works and the Reformed Conformist responses, therefore, occupy a more significant place in the early modern English context than has been previously noted. This is of course relevant not only for further studies of this Conformist tradition but for investigations into Puritanism, Laudianism, and seventeenth-century politics.

In sum, Hampton's study is a tour de force of early modern Reformed theology. Whereas the early chapters demonstrate how the theologians in question were thoroughly Reformed in their theological commitments, the final two chapters unpack how they coupled this with a loyalty to episcopacy and the established liturgical practices of the Church of England. These final two chapters perhaps break the newest ground for the field, exploring more richly the intersection between Reformed theology and a diversity of ecclesiastical practices.

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Lynch, Michael J. *John Davenant's Hypothetical Universalism: A Defense of Catholic and Reformed Orthodoxy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.

The heart of the argument is this—*Christ died sufficiently for all, effectually for the elect*. John Davenant found himself caught between the Remonstrants and Contra-Remonstrants. Michael J. Lynch asserts,

> From Davenant the supralapsarian to Davenant the Arminian-leaning delegate to Dordt, readings of his hypothetical universalism have been relatively diverse. Because of the dogmatic intrigue the question of the extent of Christ's work often garners among theologians, it is not altogether surprising to find many theological judgments pronounced on Davenant's theology—either positively or negatively. (12)

Lynch masterfully analyzes the terms, concepts, events, and individuals related to John Davenant's hypothetical universalism. Lynch is a leading scholar on hypothetical universalism and the thought of John Davenant.

Chapter 1 offers an introduction, highlighting several of the reasons scholars place Davenant outside Reformed orthodoxy: (1) They define Reformed theology too narrowly, (2) They fail to understand the doctrine of the extent of Christ's death historically and developmentally, (3) They are sloppy, inconsistent, and unnuanced in their terminology, and (4) They incorrectly merge pre–Moïse Amyraut varieties of hypothetical universalism with French Amyraldianism, arguing that Davenant's "moderate" Calvinism was a step toward Arminianism. Lynch supplies a *Survey of Literature* and a helpful *Definition of Terms*. He affirms that his thesis will

> examine Davenant's hypothetical universalism in the context of early modern Reformed orthodoxy. In light of the various misunderstandings of early modern hypothetical universalism (including English hypothetical universalism), as well as the paucity of studies touching on Davenant's theology in particular, this study will (1) give a detailed exposition of Davenant's doctrine of universal redemption in dialogue with his understanding of closely related doctrines, such as God's will, predestination, providence, and covenant theology, and (2) defend the thesis that Davenant's version of hypothetical universalism represents a significant strand of the Augustinian tradition, including the early modern Reformed tradition, over and against the popular—albeit inaccurate—thesis that his hypothetical universalism was a *via media* between Reformed orthodoxy and Arminianism. (18–19, 161–162)

Chapters 2–4 trace the historical debate from the patristics (esp. Augustine) through the early medieval period to scholasticism (esp. Lombardian Formula). Lynch follows Davenant's own history as recorded in *De Morte Christi* (1). Davenant reveals how English hypothetical universalists understood various patristic and medieval theologians, serving to prove the catholicity of his theology (2). He illumines the fundamental categories of his Augustinianism, supplying the patristic origins for his view (3). He supplies a thorough doctrinal history of his own (4). He furnishes his own explanation of this history, thereby setting the stage for the first early modern controversies relating to Christ's death (20).

The focus of chapter 3 is the impact the Lombardian formula had on the debates on the extent of Christ's atonement during the first early modern era. It offers the important context for the Remonstrant controversy and the Synod of Dordt, while providing the background for Davenant's views. Davenant believed his view was not "substantially different from those earlier Reformed, medieval, and patristic theologians who confessed that Christ died sufficiently for all, but efficaciously for the elect" (68).

The ascent of English hypothetical universalism is the subject of chapter 4. It focuses on Davenant's role at Dordt and his resultant treatise, *De Morte Christi* (21). Davenant's view is not some insipient form of Arminianism: "To the degree that the Canons of Dordt teach definite atonement, to that same degree Davenant…also taught the doctrine of definite atonement" (99).

Chapter 5 delivers a meticulous exposition of hypothetical universalism as expressed in Davenant's *De Morte Christi*. Lynch shows the continuity and discontinuity with earlier theological understandings of the death of Christ, revealing a significant trajectory of Augustinian and Reformed orthodoxy (21, 130–131). Davenant never saw his view as Reformed orthodoxy-lite, but as an apologetic (and reclamation) of an earlier form of the Reformed tradition (Augustinianism) reflecting the truth of an *ordained sufficiency* (21, 113–122, 124).

Lynch examines Davenant's covenant theology in chapter 6, particularly as it supplies the framework for God's saving mercy toward humanity, proving his theology does not (or necessarily) lead to certain conclusions such as limited atonement (21, 145). Lynch argues, "Davenant's federal theology is not nearly as unique as certain scholars have argued when viewed within the wider theological world in which Davenant was a part…It simply will not do to read Reformed theology in light of one figure, such as Calvin, Beza, or Perkins" (146).

Chapter 7 stresses Davenant's doctrine of the divine will and how it bolsters his view of the extent of Christ's death, as well as his differentiation between three aspects of God's will (*Complacentiae*, *Providentialis*, and *Beneplaciti*). Lynch explains how Davenant avoids theological contradiction in suggesting both a universal and particular outcome of Christ's death (21–22, 154–159).

Chapter 8 recaps Lynch's thesis, asserting Davenant's hypothetical universalism as Reformed and catholic (22, 162). Lynch insists, "Instead of depicting Davenant's hypothetical universalism as a softening of the Reformed tradition, it is perhaps better explained as a defense of the older, even ancient language of Christ dying for all sufficiently, in the elect efficaciously" (161).

Lynch provides a great example on how to do historical theology. His precision with the historical and theological data is impressive. One does not have to agree with Lynch's conclusions to appreciate his fair and rigorous methodology. His views are clear, and he argues his thesis in a compelling way. He does all the heavy lifting, consulting an abundance of resources. Of the 450 resources cited, 229 are primary. Lynch synthesizes all these down to a cogent and condensed work, which ultimately stimulates the reader's interest in *De Morte Christi*.

To be sure, Lynch's work is challenging and requires time and focus. Nevertheless, the reward is worth the effort. There are many encouraging insights along the way:

> The gospel offer, which ministers are called to proclaim indiscriminately, must include the proposition that *God is, according to his divine justice and on account of the personal work of Jesus Christ, able to forgive any person of his or her sins*. For this proposition to be true, it must antecedently be the case that God in Christ made a remedy for every person. (109)

Immediately, thoughts go to the Reformed Baptist pastor Charles Spurgeon, who many viewed as a Reformed anomaly given his indiscriminate offer of the gospel. Could it be that Davenant's view of an ordained sufficiency in some way found a resting place in his fellow-Englishman's hermeneutic of *crucicentrism* and *conversionism*?

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Milton, Anthony. *England's Second Reformation: The Battle for the Church of England 1625–1662*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Anthony Milton is Professor of History at the University of Sheffield and the author of books that cover early modern English church history. His latest book, *England's Second Reformation*, explores the years and events where theologians and officials sought to cement the character and nature of the Church of England. In common narratives of the seventeenth-century Church of England, the 1640s and 1650s were a period where a minority of forward-thinking individuals sought to reshape the church while others waited out the storm (509). Milton proposes a different story.

Milton argues that the events of the 1640s and 1650s are far more complex and require contextual history from both before and after these tumultuous decades. There are two chief features of Milton's overall thesis. First, we must set aside notions that participants sought to abolish the Church of England. In the early seventeenth century, English church officials and theologians spoke of "reforming" the church (1–2). Milton therefore proposes the rubric of an English "second reformation" (4). This term might suggest connections with the Dutch *Nadere Reformatie* ("second," or "further reformation"), but he does not employ the term this strictly. Rather, he suggests that the term represents events that chronologically follow the sixteenth-century English Reformation under the various Tudor monarchs (5).

The second feature of Milton's argument rests on the premise that, in spite of the existence of the Thirty-nine Articles and the Book of Common Prayer, there was no clear settled idea of orthodoxy in the Church of England (2). Different parties were trying to reform the church according to their own theological convictions. Milton sets forth the various efforts to reform the church under five different periods: the Laudian (34–100), the Abortive (101–216), the Westminsterian (217–334), the Cromwellian (335–78), and the Carolinian (479–506) (507). Laud sought to change the church by removing its Puritan elements and restoring a liturgy marked by beauty. The Abortive Reformation refers to the series of proposals that did not involve the abolition of Episcopacy. The Westminster Reformation refers to the series of reforms enacted by Parliament (9). The Cromwellian and Carolinian reforms were those efforts to change the church under Cromwell's Protectorate and later under the restoration of the monarch, Charles II.

Milton delivers significant evidence to corroborate his thesis. In short, he paints a detailed account of the political, theological, and ecclesial chaos that marked seventeenth-century England. For example, both Conformists and Puritans co-existed under the auspices of the Thirty-nine Articles and Book of Common Prayer, but they understood and used these documents in different ways. Laud wanted to restore a sense of beauty and holiness in the church and the people and was concerned that Puritan Reformed doctrine was an impediment (64). On the other hand, Reformed Puritans preached against Laud's efforts (69) and launched broadside attacks on Laudian practices and policies (80). What made the difference between the two warring parties? Whoever had the power to implement their beliefs (511). In the 1620s and 1630s, Laud had the power until the tides shifted under the Westminsterian Reformation.

However, power-dynamics marked this phase of reformation as the royalists and parliamentarians, Presbyterians, Erastians, and Episcopacy proponents all vied for their respective convictions. At no point did any one party sit on the sidelines—all sides played a role in the unfolding religious revolution. Moreover, Milton also convincingly demonstrates that upheavals of the 1640s were not an aberration in the Church of England's history. The doctrines and practices of the Westminsterian Reformation were anticipated in the reforms of earlier periods (509).

The strength of Milton's work rests in his exhaustive primary source research. There appears to be no stone left unturned. He rightly roils the waters of earlier historical accounts that present the 1640s in overly simplified terms. He expertly captures the messiness of English church history that shows the compromises, negotiations, and middle-path successes in each period, which helps explain why the attempt to institute Presbyterianism and the Solemn League and Covenant ultimately failed.

There are three minor quibbles, however, with Milton's work. First, in spite of the undesirability of the term *Calvinist*, Milton still opts to employ it. He acknowledges that the term has prompted justified criticisms because it presupposes the normative status of Calvin's writings. He nevertheless opts for the term in its popular meaning (10). *Reformed*, however, seems preferable, especially since Milton often pairs *Calvinist* with *Lutheran*, which gives the impression of their similarity (i.e., Calvin and Luther are the fountainheads of their respective traditions). A second nit is that Milton does not lay out the structure of his argument in greater detail in his introduction so that the reader knows how the specific subsequent sections fit within his overall case. A roadmap to proving his thesis would

help frame his case. A third issue relates to Milton's claims regarding the Westminster Confession's stance on the imputation of the active and passive obedience of Christ. Milton writes, "Justification is by the imputation of Christ's righteousness (while side-stepping divisions over whether it is Christ's active or passive obedience that is involved)" (225). Milton rightly acknowledges that the question of the imputed active obedience of Christ was a matter of debate at the assembly, but he doesn't factor the Confession's statement against the background of theological works of the period. The Confession speaks of the imputed "obedience and satisfaction of Christ" (in 11.1), which before and during the assembly was a common way to refer to the active and passive obedience of Christ in works such as John Downame's *Christian Warfare* (1634), William Perkins's *Clowd of Faithfull Witnesses* (1607), Francis Cheynell's *The Rise, Growth, and Danger of Socinianisme* (1643), George Walker's *Socinianisme* (1641), and James Ussher's *Body of Divinitie* (1645). After the assembly, theologians continued to employ the phrase to this effect, such as in Giovanni Diodati's *Pious and Learned Annotations* (1651), Francs Roberts's *Mysterium & Medullam Bibliorum* (1657), John Owen's *Doctrine of Justification* (1677), and John Brown's *The Life of Justification* (1695). In fairness to Milton, his main point is not to address this specific issue but to give examples where the Westminster divines compromised on various debated points of doctrine. The assembly undoubtedly hammered out concessions but not on this particular issue.

These minor criticisms do not detract from the overall quality and excellence of Milton's work. His book is a considerable contribution that will go a long way to improving understanding of the early modern English church and should be read by anyone with interest in how the English church evolved during the tumultuous decades of the seventeenth century.

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Como, David. *Radical Parliamentarians and the English Civil War*. Oxford University Press, 2018.

As in other areas of his scholarly work, David Como has chosen a much-needed locus of study. The sheer complexity of the civil wars has resulted in both a glut of scholarly assessments and reassessments and an increasing number of unexplored threads and back alleys. Como's work is an

examination of radical Puritan printings surrounding these events, primarily between 1640 and 1646. The work is divided into five chronological sections, beginning with the Personal Rule and ending with the English Revolution.

Como's research includes an array of underground stories and rumors to account for the shifting allegiances of the day, though these are convincingly presented alongside well-known texts. Particularly interesting is the path the story takes through secret presses and anonymous pamphlets, all building to a crescendo of revolution. Though dense in its presentation of so much material, all is woven together to build a readable story of the events. The depth of research and the scope of analysis is impressive, and anyone interested in the period will find the work compelling.

The richness of Como's work is punctuated with a host of manuscripts, newspapers, and diaries to demonstrate the various trends and ideas at play in the story. Alongside almost cultic visions of the worthiness of parliamentarian deeds were those individuals who gave increasing voice to the rights of those groups that were cast out of the mainstream. The fluctuations of the freedom of the press, especially during the convening of Parliament, are also explored. Of notable interest is the tracing of the influence of the Marjory Mar-Prelate Press and the various disaffected groups that were churning out their published materials with hopes of turning both public and parliamentarian alike. The ground swelling of favor toward the pamphleteers and the general disdain for prelacy is not lost on the reader as each of these trends is followed in Como's story. In fact, Como's foray into the production numbers and the wide distribution of a long list of pamphlets suggests their popularity is more than is often admitted by historians.

Helpful excursions take the reader on a tour of events, mostly behind the scenes through otherwise forgotten meetings and hidden drama. From the chaotic streets of London in the late 1641 riots, through smoke-filled pubs, and into the inner squabbles within the chambers of the Commons, Como somehow brings order and purpose to all the unrest in the city of London.

The underlying premise of the book is to demonstrate how the civil wars developed into a full-scale revolution. To accomplish this, Como is careful to listen to all accounts as he contextualizes the various unorthodox groups in their relationship to radical Puritanism. Pluralism and toleration are central themes throughout the age, and both played into the revolution itself. As such, Como is able to focus more so on the "kaleidoscope" aspect of the age than others, as opposed to seeing only chaos and persecution as central themes. It is a refreshing and positive read, though requiring a lot from the reader to follow the various characters along the way.

Como deals with a significant list of different ideologies, with a focus on their evolution over time. A great deal of helpful research is provided, focusing on Independents, Presbyterians, and Levellers (or anti-formalists), a constantly shifting and diverse field of players that he covers so well. Particularly pivotal events are well noted: Parliament's taxation without the king's blessing to fund the war, key battles that altered the balance of power, the publication of obscure pamphlets, the midnight movements of secret presses, and the swaying back and forth of public opinion. Surprising elements include the revelation of just how dysfunctional the squabbling factions in Parliament were and how that related to the religious differences that were boiling over in London. Como reminds us that the war was not simply with the king, but it was among the members of Parliament itself, and inner concerns toward Lord Essex created further factions over time. Easily forgotten or overlooked petitions for peace and the awkward exchanges of money are further pieces of the puzzle. Como places Pym and other Presbyterians in the dock as pressing for conditions that Charles would never accept, like the total abolition of Episcopacy. As such, Como's analysis recognizes that conditional elements for peace were intentionally a bar that would never be reached by both sides. Overall, the book is a helpful survey of the ups and downs of parliamentary power, leading to its sustained plateau in the late 1640s. The gradual rise of public disdain for the king's activities is also well covered, in addition to the various views of public blame for the war itself.

The work also delves deeply into movements such as Antinomianism and Anabaptism. Of particular importance is the recognition that the vacuum of church discipline was partly to blame for the unrest of the day. Ironically the purging away of the problematic elements of prelacy created a means for the almost uncontrollable nurturing of unorthodoxy. Even the war effort itself, in the hands of godly elite to bring about stability, became a means to enflame apocalyptic radicalism. Como focuses his emphasis on print propaganda in the rise of these groups. Especially interesting is Como's tracing of competing underground printing collectives, which laid the groundwork for the rise of the Levellers, and a fascinating early survey of their interactions with Cromwell. Along with these movements arose more and more pleas for toleration of various views. In the wake of concern over orthodoxy and freedom of the press, several important unions among these outcasts are discussed.

Como recognizes the shift from less press restriction to the instability caused by such openness by 1644. The remaining analysis covers more

underground publishing efforts, chaotic night raids, letters back and forth among the Independents and Presbyterians, and the various reasons for the rise of Cromwell and the Independent party. Some helpful reference appendices are provided, with analysis of various press ornaments and types—not the kinds of things that will appeal to every reader, but they provide a significant resource for researchers. This volume is a needed addition to the field and should be welcomed by all with interest in the British civil wars, Puritans, or print culture.

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Elliot Vernon, *London presbyterians and the British revolutions, 1638–1664* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021).

The London Presbyterians were central religious and political actors from the rise of Caroline non-conformity to the restoration of Charles II. But they have never been subject to a monograph-length enquiry. Elliot Vernon's work on this significant movement in British history provides an excellent remedy to this neglect.

Vernon considers that failed movements are often the most interesting and rewarding subjects of historical study. The monograph follows the Presbyterians as an evangelical movement within the Church of England for further religious and political reformation. In chapter 1, we encounter the conformist clergy of the 1630s as they navigated opposition to Laudian religious policies. This sparked a burgeoning religious and political movement and led to rejection of their former conformity in pursuit of new ecclesiological forms. Chapter 2 examines the influential Smectymnuus group and anti-episcopal movement centred on Edmund Callamy's Aldermanbury House in 1640–1641. The group was tied to parliamentary criticisms of Charles I's personal rule. Scholars generally cite political reliance on Scotland as a source for the rise of Presbyterian ideas in England. But the shape of these early efforts to replace Laudian structures show that versions of presbyterian ideas were already present before political reliance on the Scottish Covenanters became necessary.

Chapter 3 covers the movement's emergence in 1642–1643 as it formulated and spread its political foundations of limited monarchy, mixed constitutions, the right to bear defensive arms, and the obligation of the

three kingdoms to the Solemn League and Covenant. These points would form the ideological backing for their agenda of religious and political reform in the coming years, supported by dominance in institutions such as Sion College and the Westminster Assembly. Following the collapse of censorship, the movement's concern for new regulation was sharpened by the explosion of print and the threat of public conflict between the varying agendas of the godly. Chapter 4 builds on Hunter Powell's work in examining the collapse of the congregational-presbyterian accord in 1644–1645. While ideas of presbyterian polity coalesced at the Westminster Assembly, the developing two-kingdom account of ecclesio-political relations was less welcome in Parliament. With the splitting of Parliamentary factions and rejection of the Scottish alliance, Vernon argues the London Presbyterians represented a "Scotified" grouping. This identification came to undermine their goals in the shifting political environment. Chapters 5 and 6 analyze their role in 1645–1647 during Parliamentarian struggles to outline the goal of the Civil Wars. Presbyterian desire for settlement with the king backfired, and the resultant political ascendancy of the New Model Army ended hopes of a presbyterian religious and political settlement.

Departing from a strictly chronological approach, chapter 7 views the attempt at presbyterian government within London between 1646–1660 more broadly. Despite the national vision's collapse, Vernon argues that great personal commitment produced efforts to build a voluntary presbyterial government. Chapter 8 suggests that the war goals of a tempered monarchy and church reform meant the Presbyterians almost achieved their political aims through the 1648 Treaty of Newport. Facing an increasingly radical Army, their willingness to trust themselves to the king ultimately left them out in the cold, as the purged parliament began Charles I's trial. Chapter 9 examines the movement's struggle with the reality of the new republic from 1649–1651. It had no political foothold at Westminster and was uncertain of how to respond to the new authorities in the Engagement Controversy. Along with the execution of Christopher Love for resisting the invasion of Scotland, the Covenanters' defeat at Worcester brought the end of English presbyterian resistance to the Commonwealth. This proved the path to rehabilitation.

In chapter 10 from 1653–1659 the Presbyterians worked in positions of authority alongside magisterial congregationalists, such as John Owen, to protect Reformed orthodoxy against sectarianism and calls to abolish state-established religion. Chapter 11 examines the presbyterian role in the restoration of Charles II, in which they hoped for a return to the plans of

the 1640s. But the final chapter finds the movement outside of the national church. For the Act of Uniformity 1662 solidified the defeat of Presbyterianism as an evangelical reform movement within the Church of England. There would be no second reformation, and the movement was left to the old dilemma of conformity or separation.

The book highlights many important themes. The variety and plasticity found in Presbyterian belief and practice of the period appears clearly throughout. This is an important corrective to broader historical discussions of Presbyterian religious identity, polity, and accounts of church-state relations. These have tended to conflate Presbyterianism with a Scottish variety. It is also helpful for confessional historical theologians discerning the theological context and parameters of their own confessional and denominational histories.

Another major aim is to demonstrate the fusion of politics and religion across the common distinction between high versus popular politics. This mobilization required the effective building of institutions, including commercial and aristocratic patronage. The effective use of oral networks in coffee houses, clerical clubs, and local councils provided key hubs of communication. Deployment of media through the explosion of print culture was a major strategy. While they controlled the elite publishing world of the 1640s, Presbyterians engaged religious and political adversaries at every level of print, including anonymous works.

Lastly the development of a two-kingdoms theory—a state supported church but each with separate spheres of jurisdiction—demonstrated the deep connection between theology and politics. This view was a continuous source of friction, Parliament highlighting the porous divide between theology and politics in this period.

Vernon's meticulously researched and engaging book deserves wide reading and will serve as a necessary foundation for any future work on the religious and political history of the Civil Wars and Interregnum. It also deserves close reading by contemporary Presbyterian scholars interpreting their confessional heritage.

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4. Produced with the support of the Northern Ireland Department for the Economy Research Studentship in partnership with Queen's University Belfast, School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics.