

Polity, Piety, and Polemic: Giles Firmin and the Transatlantic Puritan Tradition

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Introduction and Review of Literature

“It is a slippery stage; it is a divided time, wherein there is interest against interest, party against party....I know of no party in which nothing is amiss. Nor will that measure, let you think it adviseable, to be of any, further than to unite what there is of real, true godliness among them all. Neither is there any surer rule or measure for your direction, than this; to take the course and way which are most agreeable to a state of devotedness to God. Reduce all things else, hither. Wheresoever you believe, in your conscience, there is a sincere design for the interest and glory of God, the honour or safety of your prince, the real good and welfare of your country, there you are to fall in, and adhere.”¹

The adominition of the John Howe to the Earl of Kildare is a fitting epigram to a dissertation on the life and writings of Giles Firmin (1613/14-1697). The thrust of Firmin’s entire corpus of work was to construct forms of visible unity between the factions of the godly. The central animating feature of Firmin’s thought was continuing reformation of England and New England through the purification of the churches, the unification of the godly, and the cultivation of a piety fit for the “poor lambs of Christ.” Firmin took these priorities with him from Old England to New England and back to Old England again. Susan Hardman Moore writes that Firmin’s

horizons had been set, early in life, by godly activity in Dedham, Felsted, Sudbury, and Bishop’s Stortford –that is, in northern Essex, shading over into Suffolk and Hertfordshire. This community, divided by emigration in the 1630s – not only by the Atlantic, but also by disputes about whether it was legitimate to leave – stretched in Firmin’s mind from Old England to New, and across the generations from the Elizabethan puritans to Restoration nonconformists. He hated the breakdown of understanding between colony and homeland, and among the godly in his home county. In the 1650s, this made him a natural ally of Richard Baxter of Kidderminster: Firmin promoted a common statement on pastoral ministry for divided Essex clergy to sign, following the model Baxter had put forward in Worcestershire. His interest in overcoming division showed through even in the first report of him after he returned from New England in 1644. Thomas Edwards – a

¹ John Howe, *Self Dedication discoursed*, in *The Whole Works of the Rev. John Howe, M.A.*, 8 vols. (1822), i.494.

hostile witness – reported that Firmin “exhorted to peace,” saying “how near the Independents and Presbyterians were come.”²

This dissertation is primarily about Firmin, and in particular these consistent efforts to join the godly together for the sake of the purification of the English churches from the 1650s to the 1690s, a task which included getting the godly to see that the New England divines were not divisive and not separatistic.

When I explained who Firmin was and why he was important to my mother-in-law a number of years ago when I was just beginning this project, her response was, “Oh, he’s the Forest Gump of the seventeenth century!” Her insight has stayed with me over the course of the writing of this project. Firmin was by no means a canonical figure in the Puritan tradition. He was by his own attestation a “country divine” with little clout or standing among the godly. His writings are often used to fill out the footnotes of dissertations and monographs on Puritanism. Yet Firmin’s writings appear at important and definitive junctures in the disputes internal to Puritanism in the latter half of the Seventeenth century. Approaching Firmin’s thought in this dissertation is thus also indirectly a way to talk about the changing shape of Puritanism in the later Seventeenth century. In the course of evaluating Firmin’s thought, I will also be engaging the thought of Firmin’s contemporaries on ecclesiastical polity, effectual calling, the possibility and desirability of comprehension in the English church in the Restoration, the defense of paedobaptism on federalist grounds in the 1680s, and the proper way to construe the doctrine of justification. The chapters of the dissertation are thus arranged

² Susan Hardman Moore, *Pilgrims: New World Settlers and the Call of Home* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 135-6.

chronologically, but also thematically around the controversies in which Firmin engaged.

Chapter I, which addresses Firmin's writings on ecclesiastical polity in the 1640s and 1650s, introduces the central theme of Firmin's interest in reconciliation of the godly for the sake of further reformation in England. Although Firmin sided with the English Presbyterians against the Congregational Independents, he was intent upon showing that Congregationalism *per se* was not separatist. Firmin strongly defended New England Congregationalists like Thomas Hooker, John Cotton, and John Norton from the charge of Independency in these texts. The work of Susan Hardman Moore, particularly her essay "Arguing for Peace" and sections of her impressive work on Puritans who migrated to New England and later returned to Old England, *Pilgrims*, is the most relevant research that has been done to date on Firmin's blended ecclesiology in the 1640s and 1650s.³ Moore's work highlights Firmin's deep appreciation for the New England divines and their influence upon his ecclesiology while acknowledging that Firmin nonetheless sided with the Presbyterians in his Essex context in the 1640s and 1650s. However, I go beyond Moore's research to show ways that Firmin's ecclesiology developed over the 1650s into a more robust but prudentially driven Presbyterianism. I also show that Firmin's Presbyterianism was consistent in his own view with some strands of moderate episcopacy, an element that is significant for his writings in the early 1660s. The deepening of Firmin's Presbyterianism in its hierarchical quality over the course of the 1650s meant that he became more insistent that presbyters were

³ Susan Hardman Moore, "Arguing for Peace: Giles Firmin on New England and Godly Unity," *Studies in Church History* 32 (1996): 251-61; Idem, *Pilgrims*, 66, 126-7, 135-142.

ordained to an “indefinite role” to the “visible catholic church” and thus could assist other presbyters in the purification of their particular churches.

In chapter II, I examine Firmin’s writings during the Restoration period against what he and others termed “prelatical” episcopacy. Drawing upon the distinction between Presbyterians who were favorable to moderate episcopacy and those who were “Presbyterians proper” like Zachary Crofton proposed by Isabel Rivers and Tim Cooper,⁴ I argue that there was a difference in the early 1660s between what Firmin was willing to assent to hypothetically and rhetorically, and what he was willing to accept as a practical matter. In a number of ways, especially in his defense of the Solemn League and Covenant and his repudiation of imposition of liturgy and ceremonies, Firmin resembled Presbyterians like Crofton. However, in his stated willingness to accept “primitive” bishops and to accept liturgical forms provided they were not imposed alike on all ministers, Firmin seemed much more similar to Presbyterian “reconcilers” like Richard Baxter, Edward Reynolds (who ultimately became a Restoration bishop), and John Humfrey. Geoffrey Nuttall’s description of Firmin as “no more a classical Divine than he was one of the Congregational Brethren; nor yet was he a new-style Episcopalian” thus seems more true of Firmin’s rhetoric than his actual practice.⁵ In practice, Firmin was more a “Presbyterian proper” of Crofton’s ilk in the early Restoration. By placing Firmin’s writings in their early Restoration polemical context, this chapter also makes a

⁴ Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England 1660-1780*, 2 Vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), i.91-3; Tim Cooper, *Richard Baxter, John Owen, and the Formation of Nonconformity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 22-4.

⁵ Geoffrey Nuttall, “The Essex Classis (1648),” *United reformed Church History Society Journal* 3 (1983): 199.

substantial contribution toward understanding the ecclesiologies of the badly understudied Restoration figures of John Gauden, John Humfrey, and Zachary Crofton. Crofton in particular, that “controversial and quarrelsome Presbyterian clergyman,”⁶ generated a sizable early Restoration corpus that has never been adequately anatomized. This chapter opens the discussion on these figures and invites a more adequate treatment of their works.

In chapter III, I address Firmin’s most famous treatise, *The Real Christian*, printed in 1670. This treatise has been referenced a number of times in the secondary literature, but it has never been analyzed with any analytical rigor and sophistication for the ways in which it subtly challenges and transforms godly practical divinity, especially around the “greatest case of conscience.” In the writings of Norman Pettit and David Jones, *The Real Christian* serves as the point of departure from which the Puritan tradition descended, in David Jones’s words, “into sentimentalism and moralism.”⁷ I conclude, contrary to these accounts of the treatise, that in most respects Firmin simply offered a gentle, evangelical, pastoral restatement of much that was conventional in the godly community. However, in two respects *The Real Christian* signaled a genuine innovation within the tradition of practical divinity: first, in Firmin’s prioritization of the duty to accept Christ over the duty to be prepared to accept Christ, and second, in Firmin’s assessment that self-love was an acceptable reason to close with Christ. Whereas Puritanism by and large had sided with the Augustinian tradition in arguing that only one who loved God for

⁶ Tai Liu, *Puritan London: A Study of Religion and Society of the Parishes* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1986), 113.

⁷ David Jones, *The Shattered Synthesis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 37; See Norman Pettit, *The Heart Prepared*, 2d. ed. (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 232.

God's glory rather than his or her own salvation could be considered effectually called, Firmin challenged this supposition and argued that these two ends were commensurable with one another.

Chapter IV evaluates Firmin's response to the works of four Anglican apologists in the 1670s and 1680s, Simon Patrick, Samuel Parker, William Falkner, and Edward Stillingfleet. Firmin is one of many godly Dissenters who rejected the insistence on conformity and the equation of Dissent with enthusiasm and sedition in these texts. Standard accounts of the ecclesiology of later Stuart dissent, such as those by Martin Sutherland, Mark Goldie, Jacqueline Rose, Michael Watts, and Gary DeKrey, mention Firmin only in passing if at all and focus almost exclusively on the political context of the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis, commenting on the ecclesiological dimension of the dispute only glancingly.⁸ This chapter compares Firmin's response to Stillingfleet with other godly respondents like John Howe, Vincent Alsop, Richard Baxter, John Owen, and John Humfrey, concluding that Firmin made common cause with the "Duckling" party of Presbyterians who no longer seemed to favor comprehension and had begun investing in parallel dissenting institutions. The close comparison of Firmin's response with those of other godly divines also reveals the inadequacy of the secondary literature around this controversy. Of the secondary works discussing the quarrel with Stillingfleet,

⁸ Michael Watts, *The Dissenters*, 2 Vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), i.249-262; Mark Goldie, *The Ent'ring Book of Roger Morrice*, 7 vols. (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2007), i.232-7; Gary DeKrey, *London and the Restoration, 1659-1683* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 301-9; Jacqueline Rose, *Godly Kingship in Restoration England: The Politics of the Royal Supremacy, 1660-1688* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 163-193; Martin Sutherland, *Peace, Toleration, and Decay: The Ecclesiology of Later Stuart Dissent* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 82-89; Idem, "Strange Fire: John Howe (1630-1705): The Alienation and Fragmentation of Later Stuart Dissent" (PhD Diss., University of Canterbury, 1995), 185-224.

only Sutherland's gives sustained analytical attention to the question of ecclesiology. However, as will become evident in this chapter, the crucial distinction that Sutherland draws between "invisiblist" and "visiblist" ecclesiologies does not hold up under scrutiny. All of the godly who responded to Stillingfleet were committed to the inviolability of conscience and were hostile to impositions, but only John Howe could possibly be said to hold to an "invisiblist" ecclesiology.⁹ What the sources actually reveal among Presbyterian leadership is continuity with earlier godly arguments regarding the imposition of ceremonial and set prayers coupled with a loss of confidence in both the plausibility and necessity of participation within a broader national ecclesial context. The arguments made by the godly are thus actually strongly "visiblist" but insistent that no impositions be made beyond what can be proved *jure divino* from Scriptural precedents. In the context of the late 1670s and early 80s, these arguments came to look "Congregationalist" (though hardly for that reason "invisiblist") because, among Duckling leadership, they had been decoupled from arguments for comprehension.

Chapter V examines Firmin's other set of writings from the 1680s against the "Anabaptists." This chapter argues that although Firmin was in many respects one of the more avant garde among the Presbyterians in the 1650s because of his defense of the New England divines and his restriction of baptismal privileges to the children of the godly, by the 1680s he was among the entrenched and defensive conservatives in defending the legacy of godly puritanism in a political context

⁹ Sungho Lee has refuted the charge of an invisiblist ecclesiology in the case of John Owen. Sungho Lee, "All Subjects of the Kingdom of Christ: John Owen's Conceptions of Christian Unity and Schism" (PhD Diss, Calvin Theological Seminary, 2008), 65-6.

where all godly Dissenters functioned as *de facto* Congregationalists. Firmin joined alongside godly Dissenters like Obediah Wills, Richard Blinman, Richard Baxter, Samuel Petto, and Joseph Whiston to defend the federalist rationale for baptizing the infants of the godly not only against the older anti-popish polemics of Henry Danvers, but also against the more innovative teachings of the General Baptist Thomas Grantham, who argued for the universal salvation of infants. John Essick's dissertation, "Messenger, Apologist, and nonconformist: An Examination of Thomas Grantham's leadership among the Seventeenth Century General Baptists," helpfully details the chronology of the pamphlet war between Grantham and his opponents,¹⁰ and William Brackney's essay "Thomas Grantham, Systematic Theology, and the Baptist Tradition" sketches Grantham's theology in broad contours.¹¹ However, neither work examines in detail the exegetical and theological intricacies of the debate between Baptists and the godly, nor does it situate that debate within the larger polemical context of the period. This chapter gives a much richer view of the federalist controversies with the "Anabaptists" in the 1670s and 1680s.

In chapter VI, the final chapter of the dissertation, I examine Firmin's contributions to the dispute about justification in the 1690s. This dispute, largely played out between Independents (Congregationalists like Isaac Chauncy and Baptists like Benjamin Keach) committed to orthodox Calvinism on the one hand,

¹⁰ John Essick, "Messenger, Apologist, Nonconformist: An Examination of Thomas Grantham's Leadership among the Seventeenth Century General Baptists" (Ph.D. Diss., Baylor University, 2008), 80-1, 178-179.

¹¹ William Brackney, "Thomas Grantham, Systematic Theology, and the Baptist Tradition," in *From Biblical Criticism to to Biblical Faith: Essays in Honor of Lee Martin McDonald*, eds. William Brackney and Crag Evans (Macon, GA: Mercer Press, 2007), 199-216. Brackney's essay focuses attention almost exclusively upon Grantham's *Cristianismus Primitivus*, however, and for that reason does not do justice to the range of Grantham's thought.

and Arminianizing Presbyterians or “Neonomians” like Richard Baxter and Daniel Williams on the other, actually raised the question whether the Calvinist legacy of Puritanism would continue to be an acceptable theology for late seventeenth century ministers. For Baxter and Williams, the theory of justification in Calvinism was itself productive of antinomianism, and for this conclusion they could point to its effects in the ministry of Richard Davis (a putative “hyper-Calvinist” according to Peter Toon, who, as will see, turns out to be only a rather daring Calvinist Independent). For Independents like Chauncy, Lobb, and Keach, however, the solifidian approach to justification was the only proper expression of the gospel. Firmin’s contribution to this debate is compelling in that while he remained committed to the Calvinist soteriology of the Independents, he also favored the disciplinarian moralism of Baxter and Williams.

The literature surrounding the justification controversy is sparse and limited in scope. Several accounts address only the institutional disintegration of the Pinnars Hall Lectures and the Common Fund under the strain caused by the marked theological and ecclesiological divergences between Presbyterians and Independents.¹² An older article sketches the chronology of the pamphlet warfare that broke out around the question of justification by faith during the controversy but without unpacking the substance of the theological debate.¹³ Tim Cooper helpfully analyzes Baxter’s contributions to the debate, but does not address the

¹² Anon., “The Ancient Merchants’ Lecture,” *Transactions of the Congregationalist Historical Society* 7 (1916-1918): 300-9; Watts, *Dissenters*, i.289-97.

¹³ John Colligan, “The Antinomian Controversy,” *Transactions of the Congregationalist Historical Society* 6 (1912-1914): 389-396.

broader polemical context.¹⁴ Lastly, Peter Toon's short work addressing the rise of "hyper-Calvinism" goes further in depth than many of the other works mentioned, but its analysis is unfortunately seriously flawed, particularly on the theology of Richard Davis.¹⁵ The published secondary literature on this controversy thus reveals a serious lacuna in the analysis of the theological and polemical context of the controversy that this chapter attempts to redress in the process of analyzing Firmin's contribution to the debate.

Firmin's attempt to reconcile putative opposites on the question of justification in the 1690s, at the end of his theological career, recapitulates the central theme of the dissertation as a whole. From beginning to end, Firmin was a divine who tried to avoid applying partisan labels to himself, focusing always on how to unify the godly for the sake of reforming the churches of Christ. As he wrote in *Separation Examined*, his main concern in his writings was "how to have the people reformed, and scandalous persons debarred from the seales of the covenant, and persons brought into a posture fit for discipline."¹⁶ Firmin's theological and ecclesiological positions were generated not so much by partisan alliance as by a triangulation between the available alternatives which enabled him to recognize the legitimacy of the divergent perspectives among the godly. These attempts at harmonization of putatively competing positions necessarily make the

¹⁴ Tim Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth Century England: Richard Baxter and Antinomianism* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2001), 155-180; see also Michael Brown, "Not by Faith Alone: The Neonomianism of Richard Baxter," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 3.1 (Jan. 2011): 133-152.

¹⁵ Peter Toon, *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity, 1689-1765* (London: Olive Tree, 1967), ch. 3.

¹⁶ Giles Firmin, *Separation Examined* (1652), sig. B4v.

contextualization of Firmin's thought open out into a broader study of the theology and ecclesiology of later Stuart Puritanism.

Chapter I

“Scholarly and Strangely Courteous Controversies”¹: Firmin’s Ecclesiastical Identity in the 1640s and 50s

“Hence then that Church which shall deny to the members of other Churches...occasionally desiring communion with the Church, fellowship with them in the Sacraments, because they are not of their judgments as to *Congregational*, *Classical*, or *Episcopal* principles, and will hold fellowship onely with those who are of their principles, I charge that Church with *Schism* in respect of the *Catholick Church*, by this Act declaring a breach of that bond of union which Christ requires in his Church.”²

In the early 1650s, Giles Firmin was an outsider to the English church. He spent much of the 1630s and 1640s in New England, getting to know intimately the polity of the New England churches and the character of the New England pastors. By the time he began his writing career in 1651, Firmin had returned to England, been ordained by notable Presbyterians, and been settled in a living in Shalford, Essex. In these early writings, Firmin consistently notes his outsider status as an observer from New England rather than coming down firmly as Presbyterian or Congregationalist, making it clear both that others thought of him in this way and that he thought of himself in such terms. In the preface to his 1652 treatise *Separation Examined*, for example, in which Firmin vehemently denounces separatism from the parochial churches of England, Firmin notes that that among the London Presbyterians, he “was numbred among the Independents (though I am the weakest, and most worthy the holy Lord should turne me out of his holy Work)” and that he “resolved to improve the little Talent the Lord had given me, in

¹ E. Vaughn, *Stephen Marshall: A Forgotten Essex Puritan* (London, 1907), 82-3.

² Giles Firmin, *Of Schisme* (1658), 25-6.

examining the grounds of these practices, and to stand up in the defence of such Ministers, who I saw were deare to Christ, and whom in holinesse, learning, and abilities, the Lord had honoured farre before my selfe.”³ As will become clear in this chapter, Firmin had two goals in these early writings: to advance an approach to polity inclined toward Presbyterianism with a few Congregationalist and Episcopal accents, and to defend the New England Congregationalists from opprobrium by the English godly.

Firmin’s experience to 1651

Little is known about Firmin’s early life.⁴ Firmin was born in 1613/14 in Suffolk, England to Giles Firmin, Sr., who was described as “a godly man, an apothecary of Sudbury, England,” and Martha (Dogget) Firmin. Firmin, Jr. was admitted as a pensioner at Emmanuel College, Cambridge on September 24, 1629, but his study was interrupted for an unknown reason to emigrate with his father to the New World in 1632. Firmin returned to Cambridge in 1633 to study medicine for four years, after which he returned in 1637 to New England and practiced medicine in Ipswich, MA until his return to England in 1644. His vocation in New

³ Giles Firmin, *Separation Examined* (1652), sig. B2v; see also sig. B4v-r; 81; Idem, *A Sober Reply* (1653), 6, 24. In *Of Schism*, sig. A3r, Firmin quotes a letter from John Norton approvingly: “I believe the Congregational way to be the truth, yet I think better of many Presbyterians then of many Congregational men.” Firmin consistently distinguishes between Independents and Congregationalists, something not consistently done by partisan Presbyterians in the 1650s, and I follow him in that practice in this chapter.

⁴ What little is known is primarily recorded in N.H. Keeble, “Giles Firmin,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/9481?docPos=1> (accessed Sept. 21, 2014); *Alumni Cantabrigiensis*, s.v. “Firmin, Giles,” <http://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk/cgi-bin/search-2014.pl?sur=firmin&suro=w&fir=giles&firo=c&cit=&cito=c&c=all&tex=&sy=&eye=&col=all&maxcount=50> (accessed Sept. 21, 2014); T.W. Davids, *Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in the County of Essex* (1863), 457-8; John Ward, *A Brief Memoir of Giles Firmin* (1866).

England was a source of sorrow to him, as he indicates in one of his tracts: “Being broken from my study in the prime of my years, from eighteen years of age to twenty-eight, and what time I could get in them years I spent in the study and practise of Physick in that Wildernes til these times changed, and then I changed my studies to Divinity.”⁵ Firmin, Jr. lived with his father in Boston before acquiring land in Ipswich,⁶ where he married Susannah Ward (with whom he had seven children), the daughter of Nathaniel Ward (whose influence on Firmin we will examine below), in 1639.⁷ The Church in Boston did not dismiss him to Ipswich until significantly later, a practice which Firmin describes in a response to Daniel Cawdrey:

It was the practice of divers of us in *N.E.* at the first planting we did joyne our selves to this or that Church; afterwards when other Plantations were erected, for convenience of dwelling (the former Plantations being too full) we would remove and dwell there, retaining still our membership in those churches to which we first joyned, and by vertue of it having letters of recommendation, did partake of the Sacraments in those churches where we lived, and hence divers members lived many miles, twenty or sixty from their owne churches, and from the inspection of those officers who had power to call them to account, and observe their Conversations, and yet would partake of the Sacraments sixe or eight yeeres together in another Congregation; this indeed he [Thomas Hooker] opposed, in so much that when I came away the Elders would not suffer it any longer.⁸

Firmin returned to England in 1644, leaving his family behind with the Ward family. On the way back to England, Firmin was shipwrecked and spent a short time

⁵ Giles Firmin, *A Serious Question Stated* (1651), sig. B4r.

⁶ Giles Firmin, *The Real Christian* (1670), 314-15.

⁷ Firmin was officially granted letters of dismissal from the Church of Boston on 25 December 1643. The church acknowledged that Ipswich was “where he hath long Inhabited.” *Records of the First Church in Boston*, ed. Robert D. Pierce (Boston: Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1961), vol. 1, 30.

⁸ Giles Firmin, *A Sober Reply*, 28.

in Spain. Susannah and the remainder of the Ward family returned to England as well in 1646.⁹

As mentioned above, during Firmin's time in Ipswich, he practiced "physick" or medicine and was known as a good anatomist, and this field provided the richest metaphors in his theological writings later on.¹⁰ When he was later ejected from his living in 1662 in Shalford, Essex after returning to England, medicine would again provide Firmin's principal source of income, as we will note in a later chapter.¹¹ From his time in New England, Firmin personally knew a number of New England divines including John Wilson, John Wheelwright, John Cotton, Thomas Shepard, John Norton, and Nathaniel Ward, and he knew others such as Thomas Hooker by reputation. He references all of these divines in various works.¹²

When Firmin returned to England 1644, he preached aboard the ship, and he preached again in Colchester in 1645. These incidents, of course, occurred before his ordination in 1648. Firmin saw these homiletical experiments as a legitimate "trial of his gifts" in view of the pursuit of ordination,¹³ but to some, the practice

⁹ Mary Janette Bohi, "Nathaniel Ward, Pastor Ingeniosus, 1580?-1652" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Illinois – Urbana, 1959), 204.

¹⁰ Oliver Wendell Holmes refers to a letter from John Eliot to Thomas Shepard written in 1647 that mentions Firmin's prowess in this area. Holmes, *The Writings of Oliver Wendell Holmes*, 13 vols. (Boston, 1895), ix.278, see 281, 283, 328.

¹¹ We know that Firmin practiced medicine in Ipswich from a letter he wrote to John Winthrop on Dec. 26, 1639: "The towne gave mee the ground (100 acres) upon this condition, that I should stay in the towne 3 years, or else could not sell it: now my father [Nathaniel Ward] supposes it being my first heritage (my father having none in the land) that it is more than they canne doe to hinder mee thus, when as others have no business, but range from place to place, on purpose to live upon the country. I would entreate your counsel whither or noe I canne sell it. Further: I am strongly sett upon to studye divinite, my studies else must be lost; for physick is but a meane helpe." Cited in George Chase, *The History of Haverhill* (Haverhill, 1861), 36.

¹² E.g. his relationship to Nathaniel Ward and Thomas Shepard, *The Real Christian*; his relationship to John Cotton and John Wheelwright, *Panergia* (London, 1693), sigs. A2r-B1v; his knowledge of Thomas Hooker, *A Sober Reply*, 36-9.

¹³ Firmin, *Of Schisme*, 71.

suggested that he held the Congregational view that “gifted brethren” were allowed to preach independently of ordination. Firmin was also accused by the Presbyterian Robert Harmer of insinuating that Presbyterianism was an “unjust domination.” These actions drew the attention of Thomas Edwards, the Presbyterian “*malleus haereticorum*,” as he proudly referred to himself in the preface to his hysterically anti-sectarian *Gangraena*.¹⁴ Edwards reprinted letters in the first part of *Gangraena* that described Firmin as an Independent:

Since my last, I went on Wednesday to hear Mr. *E.* to make good his challenge; but when I came he Preached not; but one out of *New England*, one Mr. *F.*, a stranger in this Town, came to confute you in point of Story. He left us to judge whether the Presbytery was not an unjust Domination; but for your saying they admitted not of Appeal, he utterly denied it befor the people, and told us many stories of their Synods by way of counsel. He cited Mr. *N.* for a Sermon he Preached, how near the Independents and Presbyterians were come.¹⁵

Firmin’s respectful utterances on Congregationalist belief and practice make these charges by Harmer seem reasonably plausible. However, in *Serious Question Stated*, Firmin protested that the first letter concerning Firmin in *Gangraena* “is all false, being merely mistakes, the next letter (half of it) concerns me also, and (excepting that I preached and was not in orders) that also is false. I believe the gentleman that wrote those letters, if they were now to be written would not do

¹⁴ This is of course a peculiarly Presbyterian kind of patristic self-fashioning. Edwards also writes that *Augustine* and *Hierom*, both of them, for preaching and writing against hereticks and schismatics, especially Donatists, suffered many reproaches, and yet rejoiced, counting their sufferings a signe of their greater glory, as *Hierome* writing to *Augustine*, congratulates *Augustine* for deserving the hatred of all hereticks, which he rejoiced was common to himself with him.” Edwards, *The First and Second Part of Gangraena* (1646), sig. C1v.

¹⁵ Edwards, *Gangraena*, i.101, see also 100. On Firmin’s protests to the characterization made of him in *Gangraena*, see Ann Hughes, *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 325-7.

it.”¹⁶ He acknowledged that he had preached without orders, which he understood was irregular, but explained this by arguing that

1. I never contemned the ordinance. 2. I would never have come into a pulpit, if I had not intended to have been ordained. 3. I did endeavour to have some ministers to ordaine me, two yeares before I could obtaine it, because of troubles. 4. The reason why I did delay it, was because I would have it in the place where I was chosen, and not in another place from my people, which I apprehended not to be so regular.¹⁷

The truth of this *post hoc* explanation of the event is supported by the fact that Firmin did receive ordination as a Presbyter in 1648 and succeeded Ralph Hilles as minister in the parish in Shalford, Essex.¹⁸ The passage characteristically demonstrates Firmin’s adherence to traditional English Presbyterianism blended with some Congregationalist themes. He believed it was irregular and would have been unlawful for him to preach if he had not been seeking ordination. It should be noted, however, that Firmin’s actions were not at all outside of the limits of what “gifted brethren” could do according to both hierarchical Presbyterians¹⁹ like Daniel Cawdrey and English Presbyterians like Stephen Marshall, even though the former was critical of Firmin’s occasional preaching. For Cawdrey and other Presbyterians, the issue was repeated or habitual preaching by those not in orders, not occasional exhortation.²⁰ Firmin also notes that he had sought out presbyters to ordain him.

¹⁶ Firmin, *Serious Question Stated*, sig. B4r.

¹⁷ Firmin, *Serious Question Stated*, sig. D1v.

¹⁸ Thomas Davids reports that the church register for 1650 states that the parish was vacant for a whole year prior to Firmin’s installation. He was described by the Committee for Plundered Ministers as “an able, godly preacher.” *Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in Essex*, 457.

¹⁹ I am using this term to distinguish Presbyterians with predilections for a church with a national system of standing classes to distinguish them from traditional English Presbyterians who were much more concerned for the rights of particular congregations.

²⁰ This was an area of disagreement among Presbyterians. In Session 361 of the Westminster Assembly, Jan. 15, 1644, Samuel Rutherford urged “that any should preach the word, or pray publicly, but only the pastor, I think will be denied by the Assembly.” Stephen Marshall, by contrast, argued, that “a gifted man may preach” but denied that “a ruling elder *qua* ruling elder, by virtue of his office,

However, he ultimately delayed the ordination because he conceived that the active election of his congregation was a central part of his installation. The latter point indicates, as we will see below, a Congregationalist theme within his thinking about ordination.

Firmin's "Interdependency" in the early 1650s

The publication of Harmer's letter by Edwards created obstacles for Firmin's ministry, which were exacerbated by some of Firmin's positions which inclined toward Congregationalism, including his preference for an explicit covenant, his defense of the New England approach to synods, his treatment of the keys in Mt. 16:19, and his strict approach to baptismal privileges. None of the positions Firmin endorsed were exclusively associated with Congregationalism, and as Hunter Powell, Michael Winship, Carol Schneider, and Polly Ha, among others, have pointed out, each had a lengthy pedigree within English Presbyterianism.²¹ Moreover, we know from a letter written to John Winthrop in 1646 that Firmin was already at that juncture critical of "Congregational Independency," the gathering of particular

may do it." *Minutes of the Sessions of the Westminster Assembly*, ed. Alexander Mitchell and John Struthers (1874), 38. In his *Vindiciae Clavium*, Cawdrey writes, "They say, a gifted Brother may (*occasionally preach, not in an ordinary course.*) But we see, they doe it *ordinarily* and constantly; wittesse all their *Lecturers*, their double and treble beneficed Lecturers; and one who takes a Benefice (but perhaps not the charge of soules, nor administration of *Sacraments*, where he constantly *preaches*.... We deny not, but *gifted Brethren*, of such abilities as are fit for Office, for for leaning and judgment, &c. may for *approbation*, exercise their gifts. But we only note the difference of these *Masters*; and that these of ours are nearer to *Brownisme*; who by their constant preaching as *gifted Brethren*, countenance and encourage *private members*, supposing themselves gifted sufficiently to preach ordinarily." Cawdrey, *Vindiciae Clavium* (1645), 47-8.

²¹ Hunter Powell, "The Dissenting Brethren and the Power of the Keys, 1640-1644" (Ph.D. Diss., Trinity College, Cambridge 2011); Carol Schneider, "Godly Order in a Church Half Reformed," Ph.D. Diss, Harvard University, 1996); Michael Winship, *Godly Republicanism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012); Polly Ha, *English Presbyterianism, 1590-1640* (Palo Alto: Stanford University, 2010).

churches out of other duly constituted true churches,²² though he revered certain Independent individuals. Although the letter does not explicitly endorse Presbyterianism, and it gives praise to Hugh Peters, Firmin is nonetheless critical about Peters's interactions with the "Opinionists," i.e. the English Independents that Firmin distinguishes from the New England Congregationalists:

Mr. Peters hath done very much service since hither hee came. I could wish hee did not too much countenance the Opinionists, which wee did cast out in N. England. I know he abhors them in his heart, but he hath many hang upon him being a man of such use. I hope God will preserve him spottlesse, notwithstanding vile aspersions cast upon him, but I perceive it is by the Presbyterians, against whom sometime hee lets dropp a sharp word.²³

However, Firmin's provenance from New England, coupled with the publication of his actions in *Gangraena* and his endorsement of positions associated with Congregationalism gave the impression that Firmin was a Congregationalist, and he found it necessary to explain himself repeatedly.

The desire to show how similar the godly were to each other, to "argue for peace" as Susan Hardman Moore has put it, led Firmin to paper over some of the central differences between Presbyterians and Congregationalists. Firmin never expressly identified his partisan affiliation, choosing instead to describe where he aligned with some feature of the Presbyterian or Congregationalist platforms and preferring to accent his provenance as an observer from New England.²⁴ He acknowledged that others classed him with the "Independents," but he protested

²² This is Carol Schneider's term from "Godly Order," 343.

²³ Firmin to John Winthrop, May 15 1646, in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, (Boston, 1865), vol. 7, 277. To be fair, Peters himself chastised the Army for its doctrinaire opposition to Presbyterianism: "I wish every one might be severely punished that spoke against either Presbytery or Independencie till they could define that aright, and distinguish about them and their ways." Peters, *Mr. Peters Last Report of the English Wars* (1646), 8.

²⁴ Firmin, *Separation Examined*, sig. B2v, 81.

that this label did not encapsulate his ecclesiastical identity. In *Of Schisme* in 1658, not only did he reiterate his criticism of gathered churches, he also noted that his abortive work to establish an association patterned after Worcestershire in Essex enraged Essex Congregationalists.²⁵ Despite opposition from Congregational Independents, Firmin forswore the general tendency among Presbyterians to lump Congregationalists together with Independents. Francis Bremer argues that “the term *Independent* became the label for the opponents of Presbyterianism in the 1640s. None were more eager to employ it than the Presbyterians, who, branding all their enemies with a label that was meant to imply insubordination and anarchy, hoped to gather to themselves all who were concerned with order.”²⁶ Firmin, by contrast, defended non-separating Congregationalists while distancing himself from separatist Independents: “Tis no wonder if Independents are unruly, for I distinguish between Independents and Congregational men.”²⁷

Firmin bore a marked resemblance in this respect to his father in law Nathaniel Ward, whose own career in the debates between Presbyterians and

²⁵ Firmin, *Of Schisme*, sig. A2v: “Were it true that *uniting with our Brethren in this Association, were a dividing our our hearts from God*, as one of our Congregational Brethren did intimate in a Sermon of his upon Hos. 10.2, then I wonder not though he so soon deserted us, and that others stand far off from us,” adding that he did nothing contrary to his own principles in joining the association: “If he means I have gone contrary to my own principles and light, he is mistaken extreamly. If he meant he and other Congregational men must do so if they Associate, how can this possibly be, when it was one of our foundations we laid for agreement, and it was professed again and again, *that we went not about to take any man off from his Principles.*” Ibid., sig. A2r.

²⁶ Bremer, *Congregational Communion: Clerical Friendship in the Anglo-American Puritan Community, 1610-1692* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1994), 139. The polemical context should signal that the terms Independent and Presbyterian should not be taken as identifying stable realities but rather tendencies and networks of clerical friendship in an unstable political climate. Nonetheless, since the terms were current in the literature we are examining, one can hardly avoid the terms altogether. Signaling the problematic nature of the terms hopefully will alert the reader that not all Presbyterians and Independents are created equal.

²⁷ Firmin, *Of Schisme*, 8.

Congregationalists is illuminating in this regard.²⁸ Ward was a nuanced Presbyterian, an identity perhaps most visible in his repudiation of all religious toleration²⁹ and his signature to the *Testimony of the Ministers in the Province of Essex* in 1648,³⁰ but he never quite completely identified with the Presbyterian party.³¹ As he wrote in his oft-reprinted *Simple Cobbler of Aggawam*:

²⁸ Ward was, of course, trained at Lincoln's Inn and was the principal author of the Body of Liberties of Massachusetts in 1641. Although Ward himself inclined to Presbyterianism, it is instructive to note that Liberty 95-11 on the "preventing and removing of error and offense that may grow and spread in any of the Churches in this jurisdiction, and for the preserving of truth and peace in the several churches within themselves, and for the maintenance and exercise of brotherly communion" allows for a monthly gathering of the "ministers and Elders of the Churches near adjoining together....to the preaching of the word by such a minister as shall be requested thereto by the Elders of the church where the Assembly is held" and devotion to "conference about the discussing and resolving of any such doubts and cases of conscience concerning matter of doctrine or worship or government of the church." However, these conferences were advisory rather than coercive: "no thing be concluded and imposed by way of authority from one or more churches upon another, but only by way of brotherly conference and consultations." *The Massachusetts Body of Liberties* (1641), <https://history.hanover.edu/texts/masslib.html> (accessed 16 September 2014). Thomas Lechford identified the anarchic tendency at the heart of the Congregational Way: "Now that the government of New-England seemeth to make so many Church-members so many Bishops, will be plaine by this ensuing Discourse: for you shall here find, that the Churches in the Bay governe each by all their members unanimously, or else by the major part, wherein every one hath equall vote and superspection with their Ministers; and that in their Covenant it is expressed to be the duty of all the members, to watch over one another. And in time their Churches will be more corrupted then now they are; they cannot (as there is reason to feare) avoid it possibly? How can any now deny this to be Anarchie and confusion?" Lechford, *Plain Dealing, or News from New England*, ed. J. Hammond Trumbull (Boston, 1867), 6. John Cotton was critical of Lechford's *Plaine Dealing* in *The Way of the Congregational Churches cleared*, insinuating that it was either a moral or doctrinal problem that had kept him out of the New England churches rather than his preference for episcopal government. Cotton, *The Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared* (1648), i.71. See Bohi, "Nathaniel Ward," 121-2.

²⁹ E.g., Ward, *The Simple Cobbler of Aggawam* (1647), sig. A4v-r; Idem, *A Religious Retreat Sounded to a Religious Army* (1647), 6, 15-16.

³⁰ A text which not only repudiated religious toleration and endorsed the Solemn League and Covenant, but also acknowledged that "the Confession of Faith, Directorie for Worship, and Humble Advice for Church Government, presented by the Reverend Assembly of Divines to the Honorable Parliament, are (as we conceive) so agreeable to the Word, that we cannot but exceedingly blesse the Name of our God, for his presence with that Assembly; Professing our hearty concurrence therein, and cheerfull readinesse to submit thereto; resolving likewise to continue humble Suitors at the throne of Grace, That our gracious God in his due time would stirre up the Parliament to establish the foresaid Confession of Faith, and Advice for Church-Government with their Civill Sanction, as they have already the Directory for Worship." *A Testimony of the Ministers of Essex* (1648), 2-3. Ward's name appears as signatory on 8. Firmin's name does not appear on the register, though his predecessor at Shalford, Ralph Hilles, does appear as the rector of the church at Redgewell.

³¹ There may be something of a "genealogical cast" to this kind of self-presentation. It is interesting to note not only the familial connections between Ward and Firmin, but also that they both attended Emmanuel College. Mary Janette Bohi notes that many of the New England divines shared this

I am neither Presbyterian, nor plebsbyterian, but an interpendent. My task is to sit and study how shapeable the Independent way will be to the body of *England*, then my head akes on one side; and how suitable the Presbyterian way, as we heare it propounded, will be to the minde of Christ, then my head akes on the other side: but when I consider how the Parliament will commoderate a way out of both, then my head leaves aking.³²

Ward preferred to present himself as a distanced observer concerned for the ongoing Reformation of England, by turns approving and critical of both parties.³³ In *An Answer to a Declaration of the Commissioners of the General Assembly* in 1648, Ward commended the zealotry of the army, but exhorted them “to bee not so bitter against the Reverend Ministers in the Land, because of Ordination.” But to the Presbyterians, he urged that “for the most part what is their religion, *Presbyterie*, they doe by it as the *Jews* did by the Temple, worship it instead of God, and though swearing, lying, and dissembling, be even nationall vices amongst them, yet by virtue of this bare badge they cry up for themselves *the people of the Lord*....From State Presbyters, *libera nos*.”³⁴ Ward also indicated that his position developed over time, after reading the salvos of the London Presbyterian ministers, toward a more

provenance: “Nathaniel Ward and Thomas Hooker’s was the first class to represent Emmanuel to the new world, the beginning of a generation of leaders who came to the infant colonies. Franklin B. Xexter, who enumerated the New England Fathers from Oxford and Cambridge, found the largest contingent (twenty-one) from Emmanuel. Among them were John Harvard, the benefactor of the college at Cambridge; Thomas Hooker, founder of Connecticut; Thomas Shepard, the beloved preacher of Cambridge; William Blaxton, the first settler of Boston; John Cotton, the Bay’s leading minister; Nathaniel Rogers, Ward’s successor at Ipswich; and Giles Firmin, Ward’s son-in-law.” Bohi, “Nathaniel Ward,” 23-4.

³² Ward, *Simple Cobbler*, sig. C4v. On Ward’s “interdependency,” Bohi writes that it was “a doctrine formulated by a lifetime of diverse experiences, a creed that could be swayed by neither the exigencies of new England nor the emergencies of Old, an idea that sprang from an era when parties did not exist.” Bohi, “Nathaniel Ward,” 247. Susan Hardman Moore acknowledges the similarity between Firmin and Ward in *Pilgrims*, 127-8, but without any substantive detail about Ward’s theological position.

³³ Bohi indicates that Ward by temperament preferred to be removed from theological debates. Bohi, “Nathaniel Ward,” 176-7.

³⁴ Nathaniel Ward, *An Answer to a Declaration of the Commissioners of the Generall Assembly* (1648), 5, 6.

fixed Presbyterian identity. Ward shared this developmental trajectory with Firmin.

From the vantage of 1650, Ward (pseudonymously) wrote that

For my religion I am exactly Orthodox, though I say it my selfe, my right Arme and left Leg were Presbyterians, my left Arme, and right Leg Independent, till I read the London Ministers late Vindication, and now I am 3 quarters Presbyterian, I keep one quarter still Independent, till I see in what quarter of the Heavens the wind will settle: my heart is for the best, and for the Truth.³⁵

Quite tellingly, Firmin was also alternatively described as Presbyterian and Congregationalist in the literature of the 1650s, depending upon who was doing the telling.³⁶ As noted above, he always averred that he was “no ranke Independent” despite his sympathies toward Congregationalism, but neither did he side completely with the “classical divines.” He stated quite clearly in 1658 that although he believed that congregational and Presbyterian pastors could and must collaborate, he was not completely at home in either party:

...congregational brethren may associate with the classical, to me there is no question, though my practice is something different from the classical brethren; yet what they allow is so candid, that I am rather thankful to them that they are so willing to associate with me.³⁷

³⁵ Nathaniel Ward, *Discolliminium, or, A Most Obedient Reply to a Late Book called Bounds & Bonds* (1650), 49.

³⁶ So, for instance, Richard Gilpin describes Firmin as a “Congregational-Brother, and one thus ordained,” despite his own description of his ordination as Presbyterian in *Separation Examined*. It is possible that Gilpin only knew Firmin through his literary works and was confused about his ecclesial identity. Gilpin, *The Agreement of the Associated Ministers & Churches of the Counties of Cumberland; and Westmerland: with Something for Explication and Exhortation* (1658), 55. Richard Baxter likewise refers to Firmin as a “Congregational man,” though one worthy of dialogue, in *Five Disputations of Church Government and Worship* (1659), 349; whereas the Baptist John Tombes associates Firmin with his Presbyterian enemies Thomas Blake, Thomas Gataker, and Simon Ford. Tombes, *Anti-Paedobaptisme, or, The Third Part being a Full Review of the Dispute concerning Infant Baptism* (1657), “To the Christian Reader,” sig. b2v. G.F. Nuttall also described Firmin as a Presbyterian because in Firmin required “imposition of hands in ordination.” Nuttall, *Visible Saints: The Congregational Way, 1640-1660* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), 160. But elsewhere Nuttall also describes Firmin as “no more a Classical Divine than he was one of the Congregational Brethren; nor yet was he a new-style Episcopalian.” Nuttall, “The Essex Classis (1648),” *United reformed Church History Society Journal*, 3 (1983): 199.

³⁷ Firmin, *Of Schisme*, 50.

Firmin thus seemed to identify with Ward's "interdependency," concluding that in disputed questions where he disagreed with divines in either side, he nonetheless saw "so much argument for them, that I am very tender towards those who goe upon these grounds; whatever arguments I have against them which carry me another way."³⁸ Though he clearly inclined more to Presbyterianism in the positions he staked out, his main concerns were to create unity between Congregationalists and Presbyterians for the sake of the Reformation of England and to rescue the New England divines from their association with the Congregational Independents.³⁹ As Susan Hardman Moore has put it: Firmin "wanted to redeem New England from its divisive role, showing Presbyterians that colonial practice was not what propagandists like [Thomas] Edwards made it out to be, and shaming Congregationalists who adopted 'New England principles' in such a manner that 'men should now say, and our posterity hereafter believe it, that independency ruined the Church of England.'"⁴⁰ His definition of schism, in reply to John Owen's defense of the gathering of pure churches out of less pure churches, reflected this priority of godly unity:

³⁸ Firmin, *Of Schisme*, 34.

³⁹ This twin commitment to the integrity of the parochial churches and their purification bears substantial resemblance to the program of Richard Baxter. See, e.g. Paul Lim, *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity, and Liberty: Richard Baxter's Puritan Ecclesiology in Its Seventeenth Century Context* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2004), 120-3.

⁴⁰ Hardman Moore, "Arguing for Peace: Giles Firmin on New England and Godly Unity," *Studies in Church History* 32 (1996): 252; Idem, *Pilgrims: New World Settlers and the Call of Home* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 135-7. Alan Sells also argues that the New England Congregationalists "were not separatists in temperament. Or, at least, their separatism was very much more a matter of separation from the world than from a particular, corrupt, State-Church. As good Puritans they were not opposed to establishments as such. On the contrary, their intention was to inaugurate a godly commonwealth in their new home." Sells, *Saints: Visible, Orderly, and Catholic: The Congregational View of the Church* (Geneva: World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1986), 29.

Hence then that Church which shall deny to the members of other Churches...occasionally desiring communion with the Church, fellowship with them in the Sacraments, because they are not of their judgments as to *Congregational, Classical, or Episcopal* principles, and will hold fellowship onely with those who are of their principles, I charge that Church with *Schism* in respect of the *Catholick Church*, by this Act declaring a breach of that bond of union which Christ requires in his Church.⁴¹

Although he received ordination by the laying on of hands from the Presbyters Daniel Rogers, Stephen Marshall and Nathaniel Ranew, Firmin never lost his affection, even as his own sense of Presbyterian identity grew, for his non-separatist construal of the Congregationalism of the New England churches.⁴² The Congregational separatists in England, Firmin argued, did not represent the New England Congregationalists, who saw the English Presbyterians as true ministers and professed not to be separatists. As Firmin understood things, the differences between New England and English polity were matters of circumstance, due to the fact that the New Englanders were starting afresh: "You must put a difference between Churches new erecting and these in *England*, which have been Churches for so long; when I raise a house new from the ground, I may then doe as I please, but if

⁴¹ Giles Firmin, *Of Schisme*, 25-6. Here he parts ways with a number of New England divines like John Cotton, who states that "I do not read that the Scripture doth anywhere acknowledge a Catholick Visible Church at all. The Catholick Church is not Visible as a Church: and the Church that is Visible, is not Catholick." Cotton, *The Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared*, ii.5; Idem, *The Way of the Churches of Christ* (1645), 10. Hooker also denied the existence of the visible catholic church: Beside if he be a particular member, he must be comprehended within the compasse of members, But all the members of the Church catholike (take it as an *integrum*) are comprehended within particular Congregations, therefore he must be a members of some of them, or else he comes not within the compasse or number of members." Hooker, *Survey of the Summe of Church Government* (1648), i.63, see also Hooker's disagreement with Hudson on i.256, where he declares that the catholic visible church as a *totum integrale* "will prove a mere *fiction*, and a conceit minted out of a mans imagination."

⁴² As Michael Winship points out in *Godly Republicanism*, 11, 134-9, 159-160, there was a difference between the self-presentation of the New England divines in print and their actual practice in New England. Apart from a few anecdotes, Firmin generally relies upon the positions of these divines in print for his defense of them.

be mending of an old house, I must doe as well as I can, repaire by degrees.”⁴³ Daniel Cawdrey argued that the practice of gathering churches must be endemic to the Congregationalists of both New England and Old England because the theological basis for both was identical. In an attack upon Hooker’s *Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline*, Cawdrey argued that despite Hooker’s protestations to the contrary, the practice of the English Congregationalists, which Cawdrey traced to the influence of Hooker and Cotton, demonstrated that the New England divines were simply being inconsistent in denying the consequence of total separation.⁴⁴

Firmin, as noted above, insisted upon drawing a distinction between “Congregationall-men” and Independents or separatists, highlighting important distinctions between the ecclesiologies of the two groups of Congregationalists. Firmin followed the typically Presbyterian line of separating visible saints within the church from the ungodly mass, but refusing to separate from the church. He claimed that New Englanders largely followed this same practice. Where he acknowledged that the New Englanders allowed for separation from a true church, he insisted that the separation was principled. Citing John Norton, Firmin stated that the separation could not occur “without due use of all means to remove the impurities;” that it could not be immediate, but “they must use prudence, patience, and long-suffering;” that it must be done “without condemning of the Church, but

⁴³ Firmin, *Separation examined*, 82. See T.D. Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension in Puritanism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 120-50.

⁴⁴ Cawdrey wrote that Congregationalists were “*Gathering of Churches out of true Churches;...which gives way to every man to separate from his own, and to joyn himself with another Church, supposed purer; with contempt of the former Congregation: The Reverend M. Hooker confesseth; (That the faithful Congregations in England are true Churches, and therefore it is sinful to separate from them as no Churches:)* And yet our brethren here practice this separation, by gathering their Churches out of ours, confessedly true Churches.” Cawdrey, *The Inconsistencie of the Independent Way* (1651), sig. a4v.

acknowledging it from whence this succession is made;" and ensuring that "communion [is] still continued with such a Church in things lawful." Thus for Firmin, New England separation, when it occurred, was partial separation, not total separation. In England, by contrast, "our men, 1. Will not communicate with the Church from which they have separated at the Lords Supper where the doctrine is sound, and the persons admitted as pure as any Congregational Church that I know of."⁴⁵

Firmin also argued that the New Englanders saw Presbyterian ordination as valid ordination. In fact, according to Firmin, New Englanders agreed even with the form of ordination used by the English churches: "Holy Hooker" had argued that the definition of ordination was "*an approbation of the Officer, and solemn settling and confirmation of him in his Office, by Prayer and laying on of hands.*" Hooker was willing to "to follow the rode" and accept the laying on of hands without explicit Scriptural precedent because "he hath no constraining reason to go aside."⁴⁶ Firmin also insisted that the efforts of the New Englanders to pursue a purer form of ecclesiastical organization did not "unchurch" other Reformed churches and thus did not entail separation from them.⁴⁷ Firmin believed that hierarchical

⁴⁵ Firmin, *Of Schisme*, 36-7.

⁴⁶ Firmin, *Of Schisme*, 122. See Thomas Hooker, *A Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline*, ii, 73-74. Firmin continued to defend the practice of the laying on of hands against English Congregationalists in *Weighty Questions Discussed* (1692), 2-4, 7. Firmin had argued in *Separation Examined* that "I have heard since I came away, that when people have chosen an Officer, and had no Officers to ordaine him, that the Ministers of other Congregations have done it, and the Confession of Church-Discipline by the Synod of *New England*, as also Mr. *Hooker*, allow as much." Firmin, *Separation Examined*, 64.

⁴⁷ Richard Mather, for instance, argued that although covenant was the formal cause of the church, he was "loathe to say, that the Congregations in *England* are utterly without a Covenant" because some may at one point or other have been founded through a covenant, because the doctrine of the Church of England was sound, and because those who subsisted in the parochial system did so because of ignorance, not obstinacy. Mather, *Apologie of the Churches in New England* (1643), 36, 40-1. He distinguished his position from the Brownists by insisting that he did not excommunicate the

Presbyterians like Daniel Cawdrey had slandered Hooker by arguing that the explicit covenant cut off communion with other churches and enclosed the catholic church within the bounds of the gathered church alone.⁴⁸ Firmin wrote against Cawdrey, “Sir, you wrong him exceedingly, and I wonder a man of your grace should doe thus when he hath so expresly declared his minde to the contrary.”⁴⁹ In fact, Firmin argued, Hooker had invited a godly minister from another church to participate in the Lord’s Supper at his church, which for Firmin proved that Hooker believed in the communion of particular churches:

A neer friend of mine in New England living divers miles from Mr. *Hooker*, had occasion to be in his Towne on the Sabbath: my friend being a Minister [I cannot tell whether at that time in Office or no to the Church, in the Towne where he lived] Mr. *Hooker* got him to preach in the forenoone in his Church; at that time there was a Sacrament in the Church; my friend when he had done preaching (being sad and oppressed in his spirits) went downe out of the Deske, and would not have stayed the Sacrament, but Mr. *Hoo[ker]* steps after him, and claps hold on his shoulder, and pulled him back againe, and made him stay the Sacrament: my friend told me it was the best Sacrament that ever he enjoyed....This practice of his clears him from Contradiction, and therefore that cannot be his meaning.⁵⁰

Firmin’s argument then, directed at both Congregationalists who were gathering churches out of godly parishes and toward Presbyterians who thought that Congregationalism inevitably led to separatism, was that the separation of Independents from parochial congregations was an innovation that began in

churches in England. One can hold to the necessity of the church covenant, Mather thought, without believing that “there are no visible Christians that stand members of the Parishes in England, and that it is not lawfull to hold any private religious communion with such persons; and that the parishionall Assemblies are none of them true Churches, and that it is not lawfull to hear any of those Ministers to preach the Word.” *Ibid.*, 44.

⁴⁸ Cawdrey, *Vindiciae Clavium*, 24; *Idem*, *Inconsistencie of the Independent Way*, sig. a3v. Hooker allowed for the validity of the implicit covenant in *Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline*, i.47-8, 83-4.

⁴⁹ Firmin, *A Sober Reply*, 21.

⁵⁰ Firmin, *A Sober Reply*, 27-8.

England rather than New England, and that the New Englanders had been willing to compromise in much the same way Firmin was.⁵¹ According to Firmin, he had never even heard of the problem of separation prior to moving back to England in 1644, suggesting that in his experience in New England, the practice of separating the godly from the ungodly happened in the same way it did among English

Presbyterians, within the context of the parochial church:

I took it for granted that our Congregational brethren did look on the Parochial Congregations where they came, and have gathered Churches as *true* Churches before they came there, and so did not lay new foundations, or gather Churches where there were none before, only the Congregations being over-grown with persons grosly ignorant and scandalous for want of Catechizing and Discipline, they did segregate such persons from Church-Communion, till they got so much as might declare them to be visible Saints. But one of these Ministers tell me I am mistaken; if I be, then I understand not our brethren all this while, nor do I know when I shall: for my part I have ever professed, I looked on the Parochial Congregations as a true Church before I came to it, though over-grown.⁵²

If English Congregationalists would follow New England precedent, then they and the Presbyterians should, in Firmin's view, have been able to cooperate with one another for the Reformation of England.

⁵¹ Firmin, *Separation Examined*, 15, sig. E3v (misnumbered). Robert Baillie contended, for instance, that Independency had come to England via New England: "when the yoke of Episcopal persecution in *England* became so heavy on the necks of most of the godly, that many thousands of them did flee away, and Master *Cotton* among the rest, to joyn themselves to these *American* Churches. Here it was when that new way began first to be dangerous to the rest of the world....For Master *Cotton*, a man of very excellent parts, contrary much to his former judgment, having faln into a liking of it, and by his great wit and learning, having refined it, without the impediment of any opposition, became the great instrument of drawing to it, not onely the thousands of those who left *England*, but also by his Letters to his friends who abode in their Countrey, made it become lovely to many who never before had appeared in the least degree of affection toward it." Baillie, *A Dissuasive from the Errors of the Time* (1646), 55-6.

⁵² Firmin, *Of Schisme*, 39.

In addition to the New England ministers, the prudential, “latitudinarian”⁵³ approach to Presbyterian polity espoused by Stephen Marshall was immensely influential on Firmin as well, as evidenced by Firmin’s printing of a sermon by Marshall on the duties of the magistrate in maintaining true religion and extirpating vice in 1657 and his publication of a defense of Marshall’s character as a godly divine after Marshall was vilified in a tract entitled the *Godly Man’s Legacy* in 1680.⁵⁴ Indeed, in *Of Schisme*, Firmin argued for a flexible form of Presbyterianism that he thought encapsulated the best features of moderate episcopacy and congregationalism: “humbly conceiving that a Church so moulded as there may be divers elders in it, and amongst these one chosen for a...*president*, (or what you will call him) for order sake, to abide so constantly, come neerest to the plat-form of the Churches in the Scripture; and in this there is something of the *Congregational*, something of the *Classical*, and something like the *Episcopal* way; such a Church for the exercise of its power, being independent, as was the Church in *Ephesus*.”⁵⁵

It should be noted here that Firmin went further than the Smectymnuans in ceding ground to the Episcopal party, because Firmin allowed that the “angel” in Revelation 2 in Ephesus and other churches might refer to the “president” or “moderator” of the church.⁵⁶ Like Thomas Gataker and Cornelius Burgess, by the late 1650s, Firmin was willing to allow that Scripture permitted even a “standing

⁵³ This is Carol Schneider’s term for the flexible, prudence based form of Presbyterianism argued for by the Smectymnuans and others. She quotes Stephen Marshall as arguing that no *jus divinum* could be found for the perfect platform of government. Schneider, “Godly Order,” 408-9.

⁵⁴ The tract simultaneously condemned Marshall for conformity and for opening the “bidding *New England* welcome into the *Old*.” Anon., *The Godly Man’s Legacy* (1680), 12-13.

⁵⁵ Firmin, *Of Schisme*, 69-70.

⁵⁶ Firmin, *Of Schisme*, 66; Firmin also allows that the Scriptures might indicate a difference between “ordinary” and “extraordinary” presbyters, the latter being the correlate of a bishop. *Ibid.*, 141-3.

moderator” or bishop, so long as that person was not seen as possessing greater authority than the Presbytery:

If you doe not make this ...*primus Presbyter, standing Moderator* (or whatever other name you will give him) a distinct Scriptural Officer from other Presbyters, giving to him a power distinct *from* and superior *to* the power of other Preaching Presbyters, whence he shall perform some Church-Acts which other preaching Presbyters *shall not* or *cannot* perform, so that it be no distinct or superiour power, but onely *order* which is contended for, I am well content to yield it.⁵⁷

In addition, although he was consistently vilified by others as an Independent in the 1640s and 50s,⁵⁸ his 1651 treatise *Separation Examined* contended that he was “no ranke Independent” and that “the government of a church never troubled me, but how to have the people reformed, and scandalous persons debarred from the seales of the covenant, and persons brought into a posture fit for discipline.”⁵⁹

Despite his preference for traditional English Presbyterianism, Firmin incorporated a number of views indicative of Congregationalist predilections, including his advocacy for explicit church covenants, narrow baptismal privileges, and a tentative belief that the fraternity was the prime subject of the keys.⁶⁰ Firmin

⁵⁷ Firmin, *Of Schisme*, 66. Gataker wrote that a “dulie bounded and wel regulated *Prelacie* joined with a *Presbyterie*, wherein one as *Preisident, Superintendent, or Moderator* (term him what you please,) whether annual or occasional, or more constant and continual, either in regard or years, or parts, or both jointlie, hath some *preeminence* above the rest, yet so, as that he doth nothing without joint consent of the rest.” Gataker, *Discours Apologetical* (1654), 24, 26. See Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 315-17.

⁵⁸ Firmin states that he is commonly “nubred among the Independents” in *Separation Examined*, sig. B2v.

⁵⁹ Firmin, *Separation Examined*, sig. B4r.

⁶⁰ Susan Hardman Moore writes that “In Shalford, Firmin worked out ways to apply as much as he dared of New England church order. He restricted admission to baptism, as well as to communion. He thought it absurd that Presbyterians would exclude half the parish from communion, yet felt it their duty to baptize all children....However, despite his strict policy on sacraments, he endorsed the value of parish ministry. He thought it schismatic to gather Christians from different parishes into a new church. New England experience showed each community should have a single church. Firmin looked on certain people as church elders (in all but name) and worked with them on matters of discipline.

was generally sympathetic with the Congregationalist belief that an “explicit covenant” was the basis for well-ordered church government, stating that “this I will affirme, though explicitnesse be not essentiall to the *esse formale* of a church, yet you will finde it almost required to the *esse* of the government of the church,” since otherwise it would be difficult to execute discipline upon notorious sinners.⁶¹ Firmin did not go so far as to suggest that without an explicit covenant the form of the church was incomplete, however. In Firmin’s view, the arguments for the separatist Congregationalist position had to rely on some defect in the parochial congregation itself, either in the essence of the church, the minister, or the execution of worship. For Firmin, both the matter, visible saints, and the form, consent to worship God with scriptural ordinances so far as they could be known, which together constituted the essence of the church, could be found in the English churches. He quoted favorably the London Provincial Assembly’s maxim that “Though we dare not make separation from a true church, yet we doe make separation in a true church.”⁶² The presence of “wicked men” in the congregation thus did not defile, so long as some visible saints were present within the mixed assembly.⁶³

To stoke up his local credibility, he invoked a prominent neighbor (and erstwhile critic of New England) as his closest collaborator: his cooperation with Daniel Rogers of Wethersfield was similar to mutual help between churches in Massachusetts. In his belief that the Church had wider boundaries than the local congregation, Firmin stood with the Presbyterians—but ‘that I am a Presbyterian, is more than I knew before, or know now.’ Firmin held onto what he valued in colonial practice, but nipped and tucked the New England Way to accommodate to his context in an English parish.” Susan Hardman Moore, *Pilgrims*, 137.

⁶¹ *Serious Question Stated*, sig. C2v; see also Idem, *Sober Reply*, 22: “But for Church-government, try you what you can doe onely by virtue of their Christianity, and implicite Covenant, I have tried it and found it not sufficient, but the other I have had good experience of.” Cf. *Ibid*, 24.

⁶² Anon., *A Vindication of Presbyterian Government and Ministry* (1649), 115; Firmin, *Separation Examined*, 39.

⁶³ Firmin, *Separation Examined*, 42.

Nor could any fault be found in the ministers, who possessed all four Aristotelian causes, the most important being formal and material. They possessed the formal cause of “election and ordination” by the congregation, even though the right of presentment often belonged to local gentry, and the power of ordination devolved upon the elders. Election, Firmin argued, appealing to Ames, could be by ratification, and likewise assent to the form of ordination could be demonstrated by a show of hands. The material cause, being a man “sufficiently qualified,” Firmin thought, was satisfied primarily by education. It was not necessary that he have “experimental” or “real” grace. On this latter point Firmin explicitly opposed one feature that seemed to be implied by Congregational polity, namely that the minister be someone who was personally regenerate.⁶⁴ Additionally, since nothing was enjoined in worship of purely “humane” invention, there was no cause for separation on that basis.⁶⁵ Thus, for Firmin no rational ground existed for separation from parochial churches in England unless it was that Independents wanted no “externall forme of church-government, but only government of the Spirit within.”⁶⁶

Firmin also tentatively held in *Serious Question Stated* (1651) that the prime subject of the keys was the church and the consequent belief that a local church with its officers could exercise the power of the keys: “when I was ordained I did declare to the Elders and the Congregation, how far I owned *Independency*, that is, *That a Church Organized and walking regularly, might execute all the power of the Keyes*

⁶⁴ Firmin, *Separation Examined*, 4-5; Cotton, *The Doctrine of the Church* (1642), 1-2; Hooker, *Survey*, i.224.

⁶⁵ Firmin, *Separation Examined*, 28-29.

⁶⁶ Firmin, *Separation Examined*, 30.

within it selfe."⁶⁷ Firmin was quick to qualify this initial statement, however, indicating that although he was sympathetic to Congregationalism, he trended toward Presbyterianism. Firmin's careful qualification of the assertion demonstrated that he was closer in belief to Presbyterians like Stephen Marshall and George Gillespie⁶⁸:

But if this were the meaning of it, viz. Here is a Church, and we have all power within our selves, therefore wee will practice thus, or *so* as we please, and wee will maintaine such or such Opinions, and will give no account to other Churches which shall desire a reason of our Opinions, and practice, and so give an account, as either to prove out what we doe by arguments drawne from the Word, or else submit to the judgement of other Churches, our practices and opinions being confuted by the Word; or if the case be more dark and cannot so quickly be determined, then to walke with suche tendernesse, and due respect to other Churches, as it may appear to be only pure conscience that is the ground of any different practice, cleaving close in the meane time to those other Churches in all other points where we agree, against Errours, Sects, &c. such Independency as deny this, I conceive it to be an invention of a white Devill, to make a religious bridge over to all errors in opinion and practice.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Firmin, *Serious Question Stated*, sigs. B1r. Similarly, John Cotton had written "if a Church of Saints, or Believers without Officers, have power from Christ to elect Officers, then have they power also much more to admit Members. And if they have power to admit them without Officers, they have like power upon just offence to exclude them out of their holy Communion without Officers." Cotton, *The Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared*, ii.10.

⁶⁸ Carol Schneider points out that "several of the leading Presbyterians supported positions ordinarily associated in the 1640s with Congregational/Independent ideology. These Presbyterians, led by John Pym's favored preacher, Stephen Marshall, sided with the Assembly Independents but against the Assembly majority in holding that an individual congregation which had a sufficient number of elected pastors and elders might be considered a complete church, and so entitled by Scriptural precedent to perform within itself the major functions of church government, including the ultimate power of excommunication subject only to a right of appeal beyond itself to higher assemblies." Schneider, "Godly Order," 14. Firmin indicates his fondness for Marshall by reprinting one of his sermons on the duties of the magistrate and by printing a vindication of Marshall's life in 1681. In the latter text, he writes, "I Loved him Dearely while he lived; I Honour him Greatly now that he is dead." Quoted in E. Vaughan, *Stephen Marshall*, 131. On Firmin's appeal to Gillespie, see *Serious Question Stated*, 10; *Separation Examined*, 96. On Gillespie's and Marshall's ecclesiology, see Hunter Powell, *The Crisis of British Protestantism: Church Power in the Puritan Revolution, 1638-1644* (forthcoming, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), chs. 1 and 2.

⁶⁹ Firmin, *Serious Question Stated*, sig. C1v.

Firmin's approach to paedobaptism also reflected the confluence of New England and Presbyterian influences on his ecclesiology. The emphasis upon a reformed, purified, visible communion of saints as the matter of the church led, as in the case of Daniel Cawdrey and Thomas Blake, some Presbyterians to draw the inference that so long as there were any such saints represented in the national church, that was sufficient to justify continued participation in that church. Firmin understood this shared axiom of Congregationalists and Presbyterians in a different way, which tended to look more Congregationalist than Presbyterian, at least from the point of view of some Presbyterians. For Presbyterians as for Congregationalists, baptism was not the sacrament of regeneration, nor - at least for most of the godly⁷⁰ - did it confer entry into the visible church. Rather, children were already members of the church by virtue of the covenant membership of their parents. The child was made "federally holy" by being organically connected to the parent as the "branch" to the parent's "root."

This axiom, shared by the majority of the godly, could be expressed in narrower or more expansive admission practices. Most Congregationalists construed baptismal privileges narrowly and only baptized those who could make suitable "profession" and evidence lives devoid of scandal. For the New England divines, this was a "*publick profession of their own faith, or repentance*" rather than adequate profession of the Christian faith.⁷¹ Firmin defended the New England

⁷⁰ Samuel Ward, Cornelius Burgess, Lazarus Seaman, and Thomas Gataker are notable exceptions here.

⁷¹ Cotton, *The Way of the Churches of Christ*, 80-1. See Patricia Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative: The Beginnings of American Expression* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Edmund Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (reprint, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963).

divines, quoting the synod of 1646 statement that “severity in examination” is to be avoided, but he was not “satisfied concerning the practices of some Congregationall Churches here, as...In that ridged examination they make of their Members.” Firmin required only that

1. A Person professing the sense of his undone condition by sinne, an utter emptinesse in himselfe to help himselfe out from that condition, and so professeth his relying upon Jesus Christ only for salvation. 2. His knowledge competent. 3. His Conversation such as doth not crosse his Profession, by living in any knowne sinne, or omitting any knowne duty. 4. His subjection to discipline.⁷²

At the same time, Firmin did vigorously probe the knowledge and “conversation” of those he admitted, and he insisted upon a “waiting period” for strangers who came into his church. Firmin also refused to make exceptions for children who had godly grandparents or other sponsors, unless the sponsor was willing to take responsibility for the child’s education.⁷³ In this practice, Firmin was mirroring the advice of some of the New England Congregationalists like John Cotton. Cotton extended advice on baptism for the reformation of the English churches that included exceptions for children who had godly sponsors:

Baptisme may orderly be administred to the children of such parents, as have professed their faith and repentance before the Church...Or where either of the parents have made such profession; or it may be considered also whether the children may not be baptized, where either the grand-father or grand-mother have made such profession, and are still living to undertake for the Christian education of the children; for it may be conceived where there is a stipulation of the Covenant on Gods part, and a restipulation on mans part, there may be an obligation of the Covenant on both parts....Or if these faile, what hindereth but that if the parents will resigne their infant to be educated

⁷² Firmin, *Serious Question Stated*, sig. B2r-B3v.

⁷³ Firmin, *Serious Question Stated*, 8-9.

in the house of any godly member of the Church, the Childe may be lawfully baptized in the right of its household Governour.⁷⁴

For a hierarchical Presbyterian like Daniel Cawdrey, who strongly believed in a mixed national political church even while holding to the axiom that visible saints were the matter of the church, Firmin's practice was an unlawful constriction of baptismal privileges. Everyone born into a realm had a right to be presented for baptism as a result of the possessing the name "Christian." Cawdrey associated Firmin's arguments, as with those of Congregationalists, with the anti-paedobaptist positions of John Tombes and Christopher Blackwood. Firmin's position, rather than giving the only Scriptural argument against "Anabaptisme" (as Firmin thought) was in fact doing the opposite. Cawdrey believed that it presupposed an *explicite* covenant, and that it would only inflame the Baptists into a more entrenched opposition to the National Church: "if we had no better ground, than an *explicite* covenant, our cause must fall. The difference is not great: the Anabaptists exclude children, because they are not able to covenant in person, in the covenant of grace: the Independents exclude children of parents not joyned together in a church-covenant, and so in their sense no members of a church."⁷⁵ Rather, with Thomas

⁷⁴ Cotton, *Way of the Churches of Christ*, 115. See also Cotton's dialogue written for an Anabaptist friend, in which Silvanus, playing the part of the paedobaptist, says to Sylvester, an anti-paedobaptist: "I doe willingly acknowledge, where the Parents of the baptized are still living, and doe intend to educate the children themselves, there the use of God-fathers and God-mothers (as they call them) in Baptisme (though it be ancient) is yet a sinfull superaddition to the institution. But when the Parents are dead or absent and the child is to bee brought up in the house of a Chrisitan friend and brother, this covenant of such a Christian brother extendeth to all that are borne in his house and brought up with his money. And his profession before the church, to bring up the child committed to him, in the way of the Covenant of Grace, it is as acceptable for the receiving of the child to Baptisme, as to the Covenant of *Abraham* was available to bring not onely his sonnes, but also all that were borne in his house, and bought with his money, under the Covenant and seale of Circumcision." John Cotton, *The Grounds and Ends of the Baptisme of the Children of the Faithful* (1646), 187-8.

⁷⁵ Cawdrey, *Sober Answer to a Serious Question* (1652), 6.

Blake, Cawdrey insisted that “all the infants of those parents that *nomine tenus* are Christians, have right to Baptism.”⁷⁶

This point was the crux of the argument for Blake and Cawdrey against Firmin just as it had been for them against Tombes and Blackwood in their earlier disputes. Firmin’s argument did have some formal similarities to the ones made against paedobaptism by Tombes and Blackwood in the 1640s and 1650s. Tombes and Blackwood both argued that baptism and the Lord’s Supper sealed the covenant of grace effectually, such that only a person who in the “judgment of charity” was regenerate should receive both seals.⁷⁷ Cawdrey and Blake got around this difficulty by claiming that baptism only “conditionally” sealed the covenant and that the efficacy of the seal depended upon the efforts of the baptized to “improve” upon the baptism by embracing the faith voluntarily at a later date. Firmin, by contrast, accepted the basic premise set out by Tombes and Blackwood that baptism sealed the covenant efficaciously, but argued that baptism was received as a passive seal, whereas the Lords Supper was an active one, that is, one used to confirm and build up one’s faith. The crucial difference drawn in this distinction was that in baptism, the infant was participating in the title that the Christian parent had to the seal rather than advancing its own independent title to the seal. Once the child evidenced signs of regeneration, he or she would then acquire title to the seal of the

⁷⁶ Thomas Blake, *Vindiciae Foederis* (1653), 449; Cawdrey, *Sober Answer*, 22, 24.

⁷⁷ E. Brooks Holifield, *The Covenant Sealed: The Development of Puritan Sacramental Theology in Old and New England, 1570-1720* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 88-91. See also the historical discussion of covenant and baptism in R. Scott Clark, “Christ and Covenant: Federal Theology in Orthodoxy,” in *The Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy*, ed. Herman Selderhuis (Leiden: EJ Brill, 2013), 403-428.

Lord's Supper, the "active" seal.⁷⁸ Considered in itself, then, the infant presented no reason for its own baptism, but considered as the branch of a regenerate root, the infant did have a worthy claim.

Cawdrey also accused Firmin of inconsistently dividing the right to baptism between that possessed by the parent and that possessed by the child. Better, Cawdrey affirmed, to affirm that the infant possessed his or her own right to baptism rather than possessing a right derivative of the parent. Against Firmin's insistence that a "mediate" predecessor, such as a grandparent, could not present an infant for baptism in case the immediate parent was not godly unless the grandparent were willing to accept responsibility for raising the child, Cawdrey and Blake insisted that the right could flow mediately from the grandparent. In Blake's example from *Vindiciae Foederis*, if an English parent in Turkish lands were to apostasize to Islam, a Christian grandparent might nonetheless baptize the parent's children, because although they are immediately "heathen," yet they are mediately holy in virtue of the grandparent's faith. Even considered in the former light, the children could be considered holy by virtue of the grandparent's adoption. Since for all of these divines, Firmin included, the model for infant baptism was Jewish circumcision, the meaning of the antitype in Genesis 17 was at issue. Blake cited Cawdrey's exegesis of the passage for his own threefold understanding of the infant's right to baptism:

One is personal upon profession of Faith in a mans own person, so Abraham entered. A second is paternal, when a man comes in by right derived from his Parents, so Isaac and Ishmael had title. A third, adoptive, being taken into the family of a Beleever according to that, Gen. 17. 12, 13. He that is eight dayes

⁷⁸ Firmin, *Sober Reply*, 48-50.

old among you, shall be circumcised, every man childe in your generations, be that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger which is not of thy seed....Sometimes this priviledge is vouchsafed to the children of Infidels, when by a secret providence they into the hands of the godly.⁷⁹ Do but change the word *parent* into *progenitors*, grandfather, or grandmother, and the plea is strong against himself: Lord, I am sure my *grandfather*, &c. was a godly man, my *grandmother*, a godly woman; thou hast made many promises to the *posterity* of such, not onely to the next, but as I think, *remote* generations, though my *next parents*, were both both wicked and profane; yet my *pro-parents* were godly....Let his own experience, in making use of these promises, teach him more *mercy* and *charity* to grandchildren.⁸⁰

There were similar implications for the children of the excommunicate.

Firmin insisted that the excommunicate had been exiled from the church, and therefore the ground of presenting their children to baptism had also been removed.

As one might guess, the expansive approach to baptism advocated by Cawdrey and Blake led them in an opposite direction from Firmin on this score as well.

Excommunication, wrote Blake, “is a sequestration, not a confiscation. He himself is suspended from present benefit, not cut off from all title.”⁸¹ Likewise Cawdrey insisted that the excommunicate person is “a member still, though diseased much, and a member under cure, (as the leper of old, shut out of the camp was) which an infidel is not.” In another analogy, the excommunicate person is a rebel, but “a Rebel is a *subject* (though not an honest Subject) till reformed, or cut off.” The rebel is only excluded from the “*outward Covenant*,” not wholly “*dis-Covenanted*.”⁸² Thus the infant of the excommunicate person could not be treated as the infant of an infidel, precisely because the excommunicated person still retained the fundamental right

⁷⁹ Blake, *Vindiciae Foederis*, 454-5; Cawdrey, *Inconsistencie of the Independent Way*, 188.

⁸⁰ Cawdrey, *Sober Answer*, 11-12.

⁸¹ Blake, *Vindiciae Foederis*, 468-9.

⁸² Cawdrey, *Sober Answer*, 18.

to the privileges of the church, even though he or she was no longer able to exercise that right until he or she repented and was reconciled to the church. As Blake argued, punishing the infant for the personal wickedness of the parent would be like putting the infant in debtor's prison together with the parent for a delinquent debt owed by the parent.⁸³

To be sanctified or made holy for Cawdrey and Blake, then, was not necessarily to become regenerate, although one's sanctification or branding with the Christian *nomen* in most cases was a necessary first stage in becoming regenerate, but rather to be brought out of gentile infidelity, to be set apart in a holy society and brought "together with their yoke-fellow to be an holy root to produce an holy seed." The holiness transmittable from parents to children was not personal regeneration, but sanctification by participation in a holy society.⁸⁴ Firmin's brand

⁸³ Blake, *Vindiciae Foederis*, 470.

⁸⁴ Blake, *Vindiciae Foederis*, 351. Baxter wrote of Blake's teaching on baptism, "When I had Replied thus far to Mr. *Blake*, I was much moved in my minde to have Replied to his answer to Mr. *Firmin* on the like subject: and also to have then proved that the children have no Right to baptism, except the immediate Parent be a believer, for the sake of any of his Ancestors: and that the children of Apostates and willfull obstinate wicked livers, should not be baptized, (as theirs): and to have answered what Mr. *Bl.* Hath said to the contrary: and this merely in love to the truth, lest the reputation of man should cloud it: and in love to the Church and the lustre of the Christian name, lest this fearful gap should let in that pollution that may make Christianitie seem not better then the other Religions of the world. For I fear this loose Doctrine of Baptism will do more to the pollution of the Church, then others loose Doctrine of the Lords Supper." Richard Baxter, *Rich. Baxters Apology against the Modest Exceptions of Mr. T. Blake* (1654), 106-7. Blake pointed out that there were some differences between Baxter and Firmin: "Mr. *F.* requires not truth of grace to make a visible Church-member, but declares himself very largely against it; he requires not truth of grace in a parent to entitle his child in the right of Baptisme. It is enough with him that he be a man of knowledge, and free from scandal, which he well knows to be the case of many in unregeneration. And though Mr. *Baxter* is thus gone beyond him in judgment, yet he sits down far short of him in practice, and says that we are bound to baptize all those that make an outward profession, and consequently their children; where Mr. *F.* upon tender, conscienciously refuses many of them. Mr. *F.* and I are, as I suppose, upon nearer terms of accord, then Mr. *F.* and Mr. *Baxter*, both of us agreeing that unregenerate men have their title, and a faith that is short of justifying may give interest." Blake, *Covenant Sealed* (1655), 180-1.

of Congregationalist-inflected Presbyterianism was fundamentally incompatible on this point with Cawdrey's and Blake's hierarchical Presbyterianism.

Lastly, Firmin's description of his ordination fused Congregationalist with Presbyterian impulses. Against English Congregationalists (Firmin distinguished them, as we have seen, from New England Congregationalists) who thought his ordination was "Romish," he asserted that the ceremony was conducted with the express consent of the people.⁸⁵ Although belief that the consent of the people was necessary was a shared concern of Presbyterians and Congregationalists, traditionally for Presbyterians, only "passive" consent was necessary. In other words, it was not necessary to consult with the church for each of the church's exercise of the keys as became normative in Congregational Independency. For Congregationalists, active ratification of decisions on the part of the people, indicating participation of the whole church, was necessary. This subtle shift, from passive to active consent, indicated a dramatic augmentation in Congregational authority, as Ha argues: "Congregational consent was thereby translated into a direct source of power and active exercise of authority rather than rendered the passive or negative role that had been taken for granted in traditional ascriptions of consent."⁸⁶ Daniel Cawdrey made this classic distinction between active and passive consent in *Vindiciae Clavium*: he allowed that the congregation must consent to the church acts performed by the elders, but argued that this consent was only a "passive consent" rather than an active affirmation. If an active affirmation were

⁸⁵ Firmin later stated that "For my part I am for the Peoples Election provided it be carried on regularly; and look upon this Imposing of Ministers by Patrons upon the People against their Consent, as cursed Tyranny." Firmin, *Weighty Questions Discussed*, 12.

⁸⁶ Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, 79, 80; See also Schneider, "Godly Order," 82, 376-394.

required, anarchy would result: “if the peoples *consent* and concurrence be necessary to every Church act, its an easie thing for them to bring in *Anarchy*, being alwaies the greater number, and so to swallow up the votes of the *Elders*, as *Brownists* doe.”⁸⁷ Firmin here seems to be affirming something more than Cawdrey - that the vote of the Congregation was an active affirmation of the decision of the elders to ordain him, and that this participatory quality of his ordination should satisfy the Congregationalists. Firmin’s view of consent, reflected in his emphasis on the people’s “suffrage” in the following passage, seems more consonant with Congregationalism:

For my owne ordination, it was in the face of my people, the day was spent in *Fasting*, and *Prayer*, those who carried on the worke were Mr. Dan. Rogers, Mr. Marshall, Mr. Ranew, with other godly ministers, who joined with them in the imposing of hands (the ministers lived about me) I never saw that ordinance carried on with more solemnity in my life, the people shewed their election by suffrage, holding up their hands; all was done according to the pattern; but yet I am as much scorned as other men, who were ordained by Bishops (I can submit to God in that scorne that these cast upon me, for I deserve it at his hands;) only there was a foule error committed at my ordination, and it is told up and downe by some of this kinde, against whom I write, and I pray what is it? This, *The Ministers imposed hands in my ordination*; this hath been talked of as a strange thing....It was no error, much lesse such a great one as you make it.⁸⁸

Some Presbyterians, including Edmund Calamy in writing for the London Provincial Assembly, denied that election was necessary for the constitution of a

⁸⁷ Cawdrey, *Vindiciae Clavium*, sig. a3r, cf. 8, 93-4.

⁸⁸ Firmin, *Separation Examined*, sig. F2r. John Cotton had acknowledged the apostolic precedent for congregational election of the church’s presbyter by the lifting up of hands as well. Cotton, *The Way of the Churches of Christ*, 42, but he had also argued that a presbyter in one church should not be ordained by presbyters from another: “Ordination by imposition of hands, is a work of Church Power, as all men acknowledge: Now *as no Church* hath Power over another, but all of them stand in Brotherly equalitie one towards another; so the *Presbytery of one Church*, hath no Power over the *Elders* of another...they none of them have *power over another*, and therefore no power of *ordination* of one anothers Officers.” Ibid., 50, see also 102.

gospel minister, but was only the designation by the people that one already constituted as a gospel minister should serve in a place with those people.⁸⁹ Firmin believed that the Scripture made both election and ordination necessary to the constitution of the gospel minister, a vision of the *jus divinum* for gospel ministry that characteristically fused themes drawn from Presbyterians and Congregationalists: “*Ars est in rebus*, and Logicke is a general Art, so that we must give some logical terms to Election and Ordination: I deny not this, onely it is good to bring Art to Scripture, and not carry Scripture to Art: If you aske, what logical Arguments are there betweene a Ministers call, and Election and Ordination what if I should answer, The Call is :*Totum integrale*, Election and Ordination are *membra* constituting this *Totum*; Thus I make Election to be essentiall, and so I speake the highest of Election.”⁹⁰ But characteristically, Firmin equivocated and tended to fall more on the Presbyterian side. Election was ordinarily necessary, but not always, and he questioned whether election was *as* essential as ordination. Ordination for Firmin was the confirmation of the internal call by God, whereas “the particular Congregation doth but give him a *Call* by their election and subjection to him, to exercise this power among them *pro hic & nunc*.”⁹¹ Thus no one could perform the functions of ministry unless he received ordination, according to Firmin, and he further believed that Thomas Hooker and by proxy the New England divines were in agreement with him. He illustrated this point, again quite characteristically, by relating a story from his time in New England:

⁸⁹ Anon., *Jus Divinum Ministerii Evangelici* (1654), 135-6.

⁹⁰ Firmin, *Separation Examined*, 55 (misnumbered).

⁹¹ Firmin, *Separation Examined*, 55.

It is frequent in *New England* to have a man elected, and preach halfe a yeare, a whole yeare, yea, I know one elected and preached two yeares to his people, and they maintained him all that while, and yet all that time he never administred a Sacrament to his people, but he and they, when they would partake the Lords Supper, went ten miles to the Church, out of which they issued, to receive the Sacrament; but this was very hard and needlesse, if he had the *forme* given him in election.⁹²

Growing Presbyterian identity in the later 1650s

In *Of Schisme*, Firmin maintained that “I am not gone back, nor advanced one step in these controversies, from what I ever manifested in those times when those letters were sent to Mr. *Edwards*.”⁹³ The reality, however, was that Firmin had been unsettled on a number of questions of moment to his ecclesiastical identity in the early 1650s, and that by the later 1650s he had come to find the Congregationalist position unpersuasive. The most important of these tentative areas were Firmin’s conviction about the “organical” or political integrity of the catholic visible church and the corollary issue of whether presbyters could combine for the sake of disciplining members of a particular church. Although Firmin does not give us the timeline of his transition to belief in the political power of the visible church catholic, we have a clue as to how he arrived at this belief in *Separation Examined* in 1651. In a passing defensive comment aimed at those Congregational Independents who said he had changed his principles and become Presbyterian, Firmin protested that “I am the same still, onely since I read Mr. *Hudson*, I do somewhat waver about the *first* subject of the *Keys*, and this is all my change.”⁹⁴ Hudson had made arguments both for a political visible catholic church and for a conception of the

⁹² Firmin, *Separation Examined*, 56.

⁹³ Firmin, *Of Schisme*, 28-9.

⁹⁴ Firmin, *Separation Examined*, sig. C1v.

keys in which the power emerged top down from the presbytery to particular churches (the *descendendo* position), rather than bottom up (the *ascendendo* position), even while acknowledging that many godly English Presbyterians (as well as Scots like Gillespie and Rutherford) held the converse *ascendendo* position on church power, in which the presbytery's jurisdiction emerged from the "consociation" of particular churches.⁹⁵

Firmin did acknowledge early in the 1650s that there was a universal catholic visible church, but he struggled with whether the universal church was "organical" or could exercise the political functions that inhered in individual congregations.⁹⁶ His position inclined, then, toward either "associational Congregationalism"⁹⁷ or to synodical minimalism, as evidenced by his wavering on the question with Daniel Cawdrey in *A Sober Reply*:

for a Catholike Church, yes I owne it, neither do I know any understanding man deny it, but I doubt you forget one word, you meane Catholike visible Church: but if you had said so, yes sir I owne that also; but whether it be *one Organicall body*, I saw some difficulties in that, and left it for further time to discover: the Congregationall men for ought I can discern owne it so as nothing, but *Nor.* and *Ex.* part you and them in the conclusion in point of Discipline. I know for administering the Seals in another Congregation, which that notion brings in, there some Congregationall men differ, and so for one Minister to excommunicate in another Congregation, that they will not owne (nor doe you but upon a call) they will goe along with other Officers, and assist them in clearing out things, and helping them what may be, onely they will not put forth such power against such to whom they are no Officers. I

⁹⁵ Samuel Hudson, *The Essence and Unitie of the Church Catholike Visible* (1645), 27-8; Idem, *A Vindiction of the essence and unity of the Church Catholike* (1650), 25. On the ascendendo position on church power, see Hunter Powell, *Crisis of British Protestantism*, 76-80, 226. On Hudson see Ibid., 77-9.

⁹⁶ Firmin later defines "organical" in such a way that makes it clear he means the same as political by that term: "By a Church I mean an *Organical* Church, investd with all the power and exercise of the Keys within it self, both *quo ad actum primum & secundum.*" Firmin, *The Questions between the Conformist and Nonconformist Stated* (1681), 76.

⁹⁷ Associational congregationalism is Schneider's term for the New England synodical process. See Schneider, "Godly Order," 343.

trouble not these holy men, in that those who will differ with such men upon these points I thinke doe not well.⁹⁸

Firmin thus believed in the visible catholic church but was unclear about whether it could exercise jurisdiction over a particular church in the early 1650s. By contrast, both traditional English and hierarchical Presbyterians believed that “though there are no distinct officers of the universal Church besides the officers of the particular Churches, or ordinary Ministers of the Word, yet every Minister hath an indefinite office, which stands in relation to his employment, which he may put forth any where in the whole Church, as occasion serveth; and he hath a call thereto, which is equivalent to a generall office.”⁹⁹ The “indefinite” character of the office of the presbyter implied that they could serve functions in parishes where they had not been installed, including church discipline. This issue, whether there were “legitimate and illegitimate forms of coercive higher church authority,” was, according to Michael Winship, the most central point in dispute between Congregationalists and Presbyterians.¹⁰⁰ Firmin was apparently still drawn to the “associational Congregationalism” of the New England divines, and his working model for discipline was a presbyter and ruling elders or godly members of the congregation working together *sans* other presbyters.¹⁰¹ But Firmin also felt that the

⁹⁸ Firmin, *Sober Reply*, 18-19. Firmin had also argued for the Catholic visible church from Matthew 16 in *Separation Examined*. Some argued, he wrote, “that *Mat. 16. To thee I give the Keyes*, must be meant the fraternity, say, that *To Thee*, here is the same with *Mat. 18*...But this is somewhat doubted, for that in *Mat. 18*. may well be meant of a particular Church, but in this place the Church must be meant of the Catholike visible Church: for it must be such a Church as must not faile.” *Separation Examined*, 75.

⁹⁹ Samuel Hudson, *An Addition or Postscript to the Vindication* (1658), 8.

¹⁰⁰ Michael Winship, *Godly Republicanism*, 178.

¹⁰¹ Firmin, *Sober Reply*, 7. Bohi notes, as does Winship, the difficulty of policing orthodoxy among advocates of the Congregational Way: “The chief weakness in the New England Way was that there

authority of the Presbytery was a moot point for him, since there were no other area presbyters willing to combine with him to help reform his parish:

Suppose there were a Church on an Island, where there was onely a Pastour, should he and his people be denyed to reforme, since there is no other Church neere him? If you will give him power, I pray give me, for it is all one to be on an *Island*, where there are no more Churhces that *can* combine, and so helpe one another, as to be in another place where there are thousands, but none *will*: it is *cannot* there, it is *will not* heare. Yet Sir, there is a Congregationall Church in the next Towne, and when need is I seeke counsel of that reverend Officer Mr. *Dan Rogers*.¹⁰²

Firmin was clearly still uncertain about higher forms of church authority by 1653. He noted that, like Hudson, Cawdrey argued that Presbyters were able through the calling of another Presbyter to assist in the discipline of particular churches other than their own. Firmin doubted that this procedure would be effective without the further election or ratification by that congregation: “suppose I stay till the *Classis* be formed and Act, shall wee have power then to reform? But suppose my people aske other Ministers of the *Classis* besides my selfe, what power they have to reforme them, who made them Rulers over the people against their wills and consent, having called none by *my self* for their Pastour? You must have a call you say to put forth your power *actu secundo* in another Church.”¹⁰³

If we can consider Firmin a Presbyterian in the sense of allowing for higher forms of coercive discipline in the early 1650s, Firmin would be associated with the traditional English Presbyterians as described by Polly Ha, *inter alia*. Ha points out

was no means of policing orthodoxy. The Anglicans and Presbyterians had a system of control, but Congregational autonomy encouraged the development of schism.” Bohi, “Nathaniel Ward,” 121.

¹⁰² Firmin, *Sober Reply*, 8. It is strange that Firmin refers to Rogers as an officer of a Congregational church, since Rogers was a well known critic of New England and of Congregationalism.

¹⁰³ Firmin, *Sober Reply*, 8. On the New England practice of shunning, see Michael Winship, *Godly Republicanism*, 163-178.

that English Presbyterians often insisted that the demand for congregational autonomy at the local level was not inconsistent with the power of synods. In polemical context, Presbyterians often insisted that the hierarchical authority of synods emerged from the “bottom up” rather than from the “top down” as did episcopal authority.¹⁰⁴ The chief difference between Presbyterians and Congregationalists seemed to be, as Ha writes, that for Congregationalists like Henry Jacob, authority terminated in the congregation, whereas for Presbyterians,

the liberty of the congregation was compatible with other levels of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, since it was only when government on the local level failed to provide a satisfactory solution that other ecclesiastical bodies were needed. This order of authority implied that even if synods ultimately exercised greater ecclesiastical authority than the individual congregation, church government within a congregation was neither derived from nor necessarily dependent on a higher ecclesiastical body. The Presbyterians' description of an aggregate power of congregations combined in a synod in effect reinforced that of the particular congregation.¹⁰⁵

Interestingly, the ecclesiology of James Noyes, who was minister in the town of Newbury, offered a Presbyterianism refracted through Congregationalism that

¹⁰⁴ Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, 58; Schneider, “Godly Order,” 58. Schneider argues that “if we consider the development of “congregational” themes in Non-conformist writings in their original polemical contexts, it becomes clear that it is premature in the early seventeenth century to treat these themes as a line of demarcation between distinctive “Presbyterian” and “Congregational” ecclesiologies. Rather, from the 1590s through the 1630s, this congregational understanding of ecclesiastical jurisdiction was consistently explored in the context of a defense of principled Non-conformity. Moreover, the theme was explored by writers who continued to identify with the Presbyterian view that the primary locus of church government should be parish presbyteries of pastors, deacons and elders. Thus “congregational” ideas jostled side-by-side with “presbyterial” views on church government without prompting any noticeable differentiation of principled Non-conformists into opposed and warring camps.” Schneider, “Godly Order,” 264. See also her treatment of John Paget’s defense of classes as being fundamentally consistent with congregational authority on 340-1.

¹⁰⁵ Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, 58. Ha describes Firmin along these lines at *Ibid.*, 70. Schneider points out that in England “circumstances had tended to mute the potentially large authority of classes and synods, and to accentuate the congregational tendencies latent from the beginning in Presbyterian ideology.” Schneider, “Godly Order,” 342.

bore interesting parallels to Firmin.¹⁰⁶ Firmin and Nathaniel Ward both resided in Ipswich during their time in New England, one town over from Newbury. Firmin clearly was acquainted personally with Noyes, as he wrote in a later pamphlet that “as for Mr. Noyes, I know him very well.”¹⁰⁷

Noyes’s Presbyterianism was clearly of the “bottom up” variety described by Polly Ha. Church power did not come from the presbyters, but from the congregation, a position marking Noyes as a devotee of Robert Parker.¹⁰⁸ The fraternity had the power of the keys “originally” and “essentially,” the officers “onely in way of Stewardship or instituted Office: the people by natural law, the officers by positive law.”¹⁰⁹ The seals of the church, i.e. baptism and the Lord’s Supper, could not be administered without the officers, but these were not part of the *esse* but of the *bene esse* of the church. The church did not have “organical” integrity but it did have “essential” integrity without them.¹¹⁰ In the early 1650s, as we have seen, Firmin was in cautious agreement with Noyes on this point.

¹⁰⁶ In a postscript to Stillingfleet in *The Questions between the Conformist and Nonconformist Stated*, Firmin notes that Stillingfleet quoted Noyes in favor of episcopacy and states that “as for Mr. Noyes, I know him very well, and know what may cause him to write for Episcopal Government.” In a turnabout from his position in the 1650s, in which he entertains the idea that the fraternity is the *primum subiectum* of the keys, he argues to Stillingfleet “that *proton pseudos* (bear with my words, for I am sure it is contrary to Scripture and Reason) of the Congregational men), *That the Fraternity* (or *Plebs*) is the subject of the power of the keys, have made such work in in the Congregational Churches to my knowledge, that their Elders have felt the need of that principle, and made them to think again.” *Ibid.*, 103. James Cooper notes that “Presbyterian prescriptions for more coercive forms of control held a certain attraction for at least a few members of the Massachusetts clergy, including Peter Hobart of Hingham and, most notably, Thomas Parker and James Noyes of Newbury. Parker and Noyes formally accepted the results of the Westminster Assembly and openly dammed that the rest of the churches of Massachusetts Bay adopt a Presbyterian form of church government. The Newbury elders had in fact harbored Presbyterian inclinations since their election in Newbury in 1635.” Cooper, *Tenacious of Their Liberties: The Congregationalists in Colonial Massachusetts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 69-70. See also 71, 74, 145.

¹⁰⁷ Firmin, *The Questions between the Conformist and Nonconformist Stated*, 76.

¹⁰⁸ On Parker see Powell, *Crisis of British Protestantism*, 38-9, 47-52.

¹⁰⁹ Noyes, *The Temple Measured* (1646), 8, 12-13.

¹¹⁰ Noyes, *The Temple Measured*, 10, 12-13.

Noyes's focus on the power of congregations led him to inveigh against diocesan structures and by consequence a standing national or regional Presbyterian system: "a diocesan-church is too big and too monstrous to be one Church for ordinary execution."¹¹¹ The rationale for Noyes's assertion relates to the exercise of discipline: an officer of one church could not act correctively (even though he had the authority to do so potentially) until the duly elected officer of the deviant church acted with him: "a Presbyter hath an united power, though not a divided power over all Churches. One Elder hath not power to act in anothers congregation absolutely, because he is but a subordinate Pastor to the Jurisdiction of other congregations, in respect of his solitary and divided power. An Elder may Preach as a Pastor out of his own congregation, and yet he must ask leave, because he is subordinate to the Jurisdiction of other congregations."¹¹² Firmin's remarks in the early 1650s indicate that this bottom-up style of Presbyterianism was beginning to be persuasive to him, but that he still had his doubts.

In the early 1650s, Firmin was in any event eager to demonstrate that the differences between Congregational and classical divines on the authority of synods was minimal. In *Separation Examined*, he urged that both "classical" or Presbyterian and congregational divines believed in the power of synods, citing John Cotton and John Norton for the position.¹¹³ Firmin understood that there were differences

¹¹¹ Noyes, *The Temple Measured*, 7.

¹¹² Noyes, *The Temple Measured*, 57.

¹¹³ Firmin, *Separation Examined*, 102. It must be said that this is an overly generous reading of Congregational treatment of the disciplinary power of synods, since the New England divines univocally denied that they had any coercive authority. See, e.g., Thomas Hooker: "If the Churches combined have no more power, then they had before they were combined; then they can exercise no more jurisdiction then before: and therefore have no Presbyterial power; are not distinct Presbyterian Churches. But they have no more power after their combination, then before. Thereofre

between the two approaches to synods, but he saw them as having much the same effect. It may be that Firmin saw in the power of synods to admonish, the ability of surrounding churches to shun, and the power of the civil magistrate to prosecute heresy that disturbed “*Godly peace*” in New England a combination of civil and ecclesiastical authority that would have the same result as the classis system.¹¹⁴

John Cotton had argued similarly in his riposte to Samuel Rutherford, *The Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared*, that the divergent approaches to churchly authority between Congregationalists and Presbyterians did not produce different effects:

I demand further, if any Presbytery in a Church, were suspected to be too remisse in proceeding against such Delinquents, would not the Presbytery of the neighbor Churches have taken the matter in hand, and so gathering into a

no Presbyterian jurisdiction: and so are no Presbyterian Churches.” *Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline*, i.99, 238-9.

¹¹⁴ John Cotton, *The Result of a Synod at Cambridge in New-England, Anno. 1646* (1654), 64-5. The synod of 1646 worried about how far such power could be extended but contented itself that it would not undermine the unity of the godly: “Will not this *Thesis* arme and stir up the Civill power in Old *England*, against godly Orthodox ones of the Congregationall way: or exasperate the Civill power in *New England*, against godly, moderate, and Orthodox Presbyterians, if any such should desire their liberty here? we conceive no, except the civill disturbance of the more rigidly, unpeaceably, and corruptly minded, be very great; yet betwixt men godly and moderately minded on both sides, the difference upon true and due search is found so small, by judicious, Orthodox, godly, and moderate Divines, as that they may both stand together in peace and love; if liberty should be desired by either sort here or there so exercising their liberty, as the publick peace be not infringed: the state of the Question in the explication thereof, will rather quench then kindle any such coales against either: if indeed persons professing either the Congregationall or Presbyteriall way, will shelter or close, either with other Blasphemous, Hereticall, or Schismaticall Tenents, which tend to break the peace of the Congregationall way there were a Presbyteriall way is authorized to be the generall way of the Churches, or the Presbyteriall way here, where the Congregatioanll way is authorized to be the generall way of the Churches, there they may be strained by the power of the Civil Magistrate, as disturbers and breakers of godly peace, the conservation whereof is the Civil Magistrates end and work, unto which He is to attend.” *Ibid.*, 18-20. Michael Winship indicates that the Roger Williams controversy was the first test to discern whether the combination of civil and ecclesiastical power could replace the Presbyterian system of discipline: “The Williams controversy was the first serious test run for a foundational and critical unresolved question about puritan congregationalism: was congregationalism, with its independent local groups of saints in hot pursuit of purity and salvation, compatible with the puritan goals of national reformation and religious unity? Could coercive ecclesiastical structures like bishops’ courts or Presbyterian synods be adequately replaced by the voluntary cooperation of the churches and the civil supervision of godly magistrates.” Winship, *Godly Republicanism*, 218.

Synod, first convinced such errors, and then condemned them, and the maintainers of them too, if they were guilty of them, and persistent in them? Thus farre also the Presbytery of our neighbor Churches did proceed as to gather into a Synod, and both convinced and condemned the errors. And though they did not proceed to condemn or censure the maintainers of them; yet when they had gotten proof thereof, they proceeded in their own congregations to the censure of their own erroneous members (after all other meanes to recover them used in vaine:) And besides, they dealt with the Presbytery of our Church to doe the same. And wee hearing their complaints and their proofs, wee respectively hearkned to them, and proceeded to the like censure in our Church, as they had done in theirs.¹¹⁵

In the context of his own emerging Presbyterianism, Firmin wanted to present the New England way as suitably disciplinarian and anti-anarchic.

By the later 1650s, however, it is possible to see in Firmin's writings and actions a growing edge of Presbyterian identity. Some of Firmin's movement can perhaps be traced to his impatience with Congregational Independents. Much of it was likely driven, however, by his fear of the menace of the sects, especially the Quakers. Where Firmin had been tentative about the political power of the visible church catholic in the early 1650s, in 1658 he was fully convinced:

as *all true* believers make up but one spiritual body, to which Christ is a saving and spiritual head; so all the particular Churches in the world are but one body visible, of which Christ is the Political Head....these meetings of this great body being in a manner accidental to the Church-Catholick, by reason of the numerosity of its members, for could we conceive that all the members

¹¹⁵ John Cotton, *The Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared*, i.92, cf. i.102-3. Against Cawdrey's censures, Cotton also states that in his assessment that the keys were given first to the fraternity, he did not mean to exclude the church with its officers from exercise of the keys, nor "was it my intendment in that Proposition, to exclude lawful Synods (gathered, and proceeding according to the pattern, Acts 15.) from all participation in some part of the power of the Keyes. For they have a power to decide controversies from the Word, and to appoint a course for the preventing and healing of offenses, and for agreement in the Truth according to the Word. But these Synods are not the ordinary standing Judicatories of the Church: neither do they convene, nor exercise their directive Power, but when the particular Churches lie under variance or offence, or are not yet settled in a way of Truth and Peace." *Ibid.*, ii.20; *Idem, The True Constitution of a Particular Visible Church* (1642), 12.

of this Church could meet in one place, and partake the same numerical ordinances orderly, this meeting in several places should cease.¹¹⁶

The recognition of the political authority of the visible church catholic also gave Firmin confidence to accept that presbyters, upon the call of the officer of a particular parish, could combine for the purification of that parish:

I pray let us consider whether it will not more answer the Scripture-patterns, to have divers of our smaller Villages to unite, and make up but *One Church*, though every Minister continue in his station, taking care especially (though not onely) of those who live within his own Parish, and to preach to these, administer Sacraments, exhort, rebuke, &c. as he findeth cause. But yet as to the exercise of *all Church-power*, they are but *One Church*.¹¹⁷

Additionally, Firmin more clearly owned the legitimacy of the parochial system as the best way to account for “vicinity” of visible saints, the true matter of the church:

But let us see what we shall do when Parish bounds are broken down: Vicinity is requisite, this is agreed upon by all, how then shall we agree upon *Vicinity*? What will *this Church* call *Vicinity*? I doubt if there be a rich person who would joyn, and the Officer with members have a mind to him, they will stretch *vicinity* very largely to fetch him in. Some of our brethren oppose Parochial boundings, because they are so great, I doubt our brethren will not bring their *Vicinity* into a narrower compass; nay, we see how far they go for members: should we go about to alter Parishes, I think few would be pleased in the manner of doing it, nor will agree upon *Vicinity*: wherefore I think we had better bear with some inconveniences, then while we seek to mend them create worse.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Firmin, *Of Schisme*, 19-20.

¹¹⁷ Firmin, *Of Schisme*, 60. Firmin continued to hold this position in his later theological writings. In 1692, for instance, Firmin defended the “indefinite role” to which Presbyters were ordained: “Surely, the Lord hath not confined the Ministerial Power of a Pastor, to his own particular Church; so that if a Neighbour-Church have no Pastor, that the Pastors near to this Church may not help that Church to a Pastor, and in that way which his Word hath declared.” Firmin, *Weighty Questions Discussed*, 15. See also *Ibid.*, 28.

¹¹⁸ Firmin, *Of Schisme*, 45. Firmin here defends parishes not on the idea that civil and ecclesiastical spheres are interlocking, but on the sole ground of vicinity. So he would still have agreed with Thomas Hooker that “Parish precincts, or the abode and dwelling within the bounds and liberties of such a place, doth not give a man right, or make him matter fit for a visible Congregation.” Hooker, *A Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline*, i.13. Firmin had been rather more reserved about parish boundaries in *Sober Reply*: “how doe I and this Church in particular more then another come to have power over another in respect of Discipline, but by his covenanting, consenting (call it what you will)

Firmin also seemed to allude to criticism he was receiving from Congregationalists for taking sides in the later 1650s. In *Of Schisme*, after criticizing John Owen's definition of schism, he protested that he had not changed any of his principles since he came from New England:

I cannot be of Mr. *Ca.*[wdrey's] mind, if by the title of his book (as I find it quoted by the Doctor, for I never saw Mr. *Cawdrey*) *Independencie is a great Schism*, he means that *congregational principles will necessarily conclude a man Schismatick*. Certainly from the principles as our Divines in *New-England* hold them forth, such a necessity of Schism will not be forced; but whether *all* in *England* can quit themselves I doubt it. What some may think of me who find me in Mr. *Edwards* gang amongst the *Independents*, and now read this, I know not. Possibly they will say either Mr. *Edwards* wrote what was false, or that I am changed from my principles (as some have said).¹¹⁹

Despite his protests, however, Firmin was more regularly coming down on the side of the Presbyterians in these later pronouncements. The London Presbyterian classis wrote that

...consider, what a sin it is, to separate from Churches, which you your selves acknowledge to be true Churches of Jesus Christ; and that, while they are endeavouring more and more after a reformation according to the Word; and to set up Churches of another constitution; Is not this to set up Church against Church?...And whereas you should rather joyn with us, and put your helping hand to reform the Nation, and to bring our Churches into the order of the Gospel, do you not rather weaken our hands, by dividing from us, and dividing of us; and thereby obstructing and hindering the glorious work of Reformation? For what with the Prelatical on the one hand, that will not come up to a Scripture-Reformation; and with You on the other, that will not joyn with us whilst we are endeavouring after a Scripture-Reformation, The

with me and this Church, and not with another? For else he will say, though I doe owne Church-Discipline, yet who gave you power over me more then another Officer or Church?...For me to say you dwell in my *Parish*, is a silly answer, unlesse it can be proved that Parishes were by divine institutions to such an end: there are those in my parish that come not to heare me, nor ever chose me to be their Officer, nor will owne the Church in this time of reforming, but I should think it absurd to tell them you dwell in this *Parish*, therefore you are bound to hear me, &c." Firmin, *Sober Reply*, 22-3.

¹¹⁹ Firmin, *Of Schisme*, 28-9.

building of Gods house ceaseth, in most parts of the Kingdome; and instead of a Reformation, we see nothing but deformation and desolation....You gather Churches out of our Churches, and You set up Churches in an opposite way to our Churches, and all this you do voluntarily, (not separated, but separating, *non fugati, sed fugitivi*) and unwarrantably, not having any sufficient cause for it; and notwithstanding all this, yet you acknowledge Us to be the true Churches of Jesus Christ, and Churches with which Christ holds communion. May we not therefore most justly charge you as guiltie in making a Schism in the Bodie of Christ?¹²⁰

In a strikingly similar, but characteristically more “courteous” passage, Firmin concluded that

the summe is, I wonder at our differences, well might that worthy Divine say in his letter to me from *New England, It is the wonderment of this side of the world, that you that are godly, and may agree, yet will not!* Surely the cause lyeth more in the *Will*, then any thing else. Give me leave therefore I pray, to make my humble request to our Reverend Divines, the *Congregational-men*, that they would please to close in with the *classical* brethren, and not suffer these groundlesse differences to trouble the churches any longer....I cannot think the cause lyes onely in the Ministers; nay I have heard long since there had been an agreement among the Ministers, had not some others that live by divisions, broken it; but whether all Ministers are of the same minde I know not: nay, I have observed the spirits of some *Congregational-Ministers* carried with more eagernesse against the *Classical-brethren*, then *e converso*, and I am sure, if there be any blame among the Ministers, it is charged most upon the *Congregational-men*, whether justly or no, it concerns you to cleare your selves.¹²¹

This transition to a more strident Presbyterian clericalism makes sense in light of Firmin’s ongoing commitment to a godly Reformation in England. Although moderate, non-separating Congregationalists in England were committed only to limited toleration, not toleration of all sects, in Firmin’s view they were not

¹²⁰ Anon., *Vindication of Presbyterian Government*, 129-30, cf. 12. Similarly, Robert Baillie had written that the partial separation of the Congregationalists was worse than the total separation of the separatists because they acknowledged that the Presbyterian churches were true churches: “it is a greater sinne to depart from a Church which I professe to bee true, and whose ministry I acknowledge to be saving, then from a Church which I conceive to be false.” Baillie, *Dissuasive*, 104.

¹²¹ *Separation Examined*, 106-7, 110.

sufficiently committed to the purging of heresy and blasphemy in England.¹²² In 1654, Firmin complained to Richard Baxter about Thomas Blake's open approach to admission to baptism, wishing that "some other men would have taken it up who were Congregational," since they would be more likely to oppose Blake's position than other Presbyterians. However, Firmin's pleas fell on deaf ears, "because I have opposed them in rending of churches, & some other things, they little regard me."¹²³ This frustration with English Congregationalists likely drove Firmin's further movement into Presbyterianism to some degree.

Firmin also believed that both civil and ecclesiastical resources had to be committed to the extirpation of sects. Firmin's increasing approbation of the combination of presbyters to purify congregations was intimately related to Firmin's broader commitment to reformation. Firmin's participation in the Essex Association makes sense within the context of reformation as well. Firmin began thinking about an Association in Essex at least as early as 1654, as he mentioned it in a letter to Baxter.¹²⁴ In 1653, Baxter published his *Church Concord*, which contained a platform for agreement, which informed the formation of the Worcestershire Association. The goal of the Associations was to equip and encourage ministers to engage in a program of discipline of congregants that would purify the parishes. Since the laity would be likely to resist such disciplinary action,

¹²² John Coffey helpfully distinguishes between "anti-tolerantists," led by Presbyterians opposed to liberty of conscience, "conservative tolerantists" led by moderate Independent clergy who wanted limited toleration, and "radical tolerantists," who denied that magistrates had any power to enforce religion. Coffey, "The Toleration Controversy during the English Revolution," *Religion in Revolutionary England*, eds. C. Durston and J. Maltby (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 41-3.

¹²³ Firmin to Baxter, 24 July 1654, Letter 192 in *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter*, 2 vols., eds. NH Keeble and Geoffrey Nuttall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), i.150.

¹²⁴ Firmin to Baxter, 24 July 1654, Letter 192 in *Calendar*, i.150.

support from other clergy committed to a disciplined parish, ostensibly drawn from the ranks of Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Episcopalians, would engender courage to carry out the pastoral task where this was lacking. Baxter's aim was to have England "become a Land of Saints, and a Pattern of Holiness to all the World, and the unmatched Paradise of the Earth."¹²⁵

Firmin also wanted to see a united front of godly ministers exercised for purification of their churches. By 1656, Firmin lamented to Baxter that "Essex is in an ill posture. Mr. [Matthew] Newcomen is going to Ipswich, as I heare, and another is going, one who is one of our chiefs, Mr. (John) Warren, whom you know I look on as one of the ablest men we have, but I think there is no county in England where there is lesse work done in conversion."¹²⁶ T.W. Davids indicates that Firmin, spurred on by zeal, was able to collect over fifty seven clerical signatures agreeing to participation in the Association, even though these signatures did not make it into the final publication of the Agreement of the Essex Ministers. It seems as though the program, similar to Worcestershire's, was predominantly attractive only to Presbyterians and (moderate) Episcopalians. Firmin protested, however, that "*it was professed again and again*, that we went not about to take any man off from his Principles."¹²⁷ The platform of the agreement actually proposed nothing beyond what the New England ministers would have accepted. Clerical combination was

¹²⁵ Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696), i.97. J. William Black indicates that the efforts for "unity among the godly were not "the noble but frustrated pursuit of an ecumenical ideal" but rather should be placed "squarely within the context of... concern for the reformation of the English Church and its ministry." Black, *Reformation Pastors; Richard Baxter and the Ideal of the Reformed Pastor* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 158.

¹²⁶ Quoted in Davids, *Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in the County of Essex*, 458.

¹²⁷ Firmin, *Of Schisme*, sig. A2r.

limited to “brotherly union, and assistance,” and discipline was limited to admonition and shunning:

If any Minister, or particular Church, shall obstinately, after many endeavours, much waiting and patience, reject the counsel or admonition of the Association, in things manifestly agreeable with the Word of God, then we resolve to withdraw from that Minister, or Church, the Right hand of Fellowship.¹²⁸

That so little cooperation was forthcoming from the Essex Congregationalists seems to give some weight to Firmin’s assessment that they were different in their polity and ethos from the New England divines.

Sects, Quakers, and the power of the Magistrate

Firmin’s increasing Presbyterianism and his energy for the Association Movement can be partially explained by the twin commitment to purification of the church and the combatting of the schism and heresy of the sects. Firmin’s commentary on the duties of the magistrate in matters of religion are also explicable against this social horizon, especially in his encounter with the Quakers, whom he regarded, as did many other godly ministers, as seditious. Like his ministerial colleagues, Firmin despised the Quakers and initially thought them unworthy of his time and energy. When other ministers in Essex kept fasts against them, Firmin thought this excessive, since they were “a generation not worthy the taking notice of.”¹²⁹ The Quakers were theologically illiterate upstarts in his mind, and were *prima facie* unworthy of his time. But, Firmin noted in the preface to his sermon

¹²⁸ Anon., *The Agreement of the Associated Ministers of the County of Essex* (1658), 17.

¹²⁹ Firmin, *Stablishing against Shaking* (1656), sig. A4r.

printed in 1656, *Stablishing against Shaking*, the Quakers made it impossible for him to keep silence: "but I saw at last, when I would not trouble them, they would trouble me, sent divers of their Books into our Town, invited my people to come and heare, and prevailed with some to hear."

Twelve of their books were apparently circulating around Shalford, which disturbed Firmin, and he was prevailed upon by John Dury to speak out against them as well.¹³⁰ Thus Firmin preached a sermon against the Quakers and had it published, and over the course of the next few years published a number of other pamphlets against them, including a sermon that had been preached to Parliament on the power of the magistrate in matters of religion by Stephen Marshall. Marshall's sermon was addressed to the views of Roger Williams in *The Bloody Tenet of Persecution for a Cause of Conscience*, but since there was substantial overlap between Williams and the anti-clericalism of the Quakers, Firmin clearly thought it relevant in the context of his controversy with them in Essex. Marshall's sermon strongly condemned toleration of sects, and Firmin extended this sentiment to the activities of the Quakers: "As for the clamour of *Persecution*, when the Magistrate puts forth his power to repress Heresies, our Author hath given a full answer to it: He may as well be charged with Persecution for punishing and labouring to repress Drunkenesse, uncleannesse, &c. which are works of the flesh, and so is Heresy, *Gal. 5.20*."¹³¹

Both Presbyterians and Congregationalists were agreed on the need for the civil magistrate to extirpate the sects. Although some of the more radical

¹³⁰ Firmin, *Stablishing against Shaking*, sig. a4r.

¹³¹ Marshall, *Power of the Civil Magistrate in Matters of Religion* (1657), 44.

Independents, such as the Arminian John Goodwin and Baptists such as John Tombes, advocated for full liberty of conscience, most Congregationalists advocated only a restrained toleration of the limited disagreements on ecclesiastical polity and theology that occurred among the godly. Sarah Mortimer is correct in her assessment that

While the Independents proclaimed their respect for ‘tender consciences’, they did not want to tolerate all errors and opinions either within the Church or within the state. Most Independents maintained that they sought liberty only for conscientious Protestants who differed from others in disputable matters of ceremony or doctrine. Indeed, they were vehemently opposed to the free expression of ideas which were atheistical, blasphemous or destructive to religion itself. They were particularly conscious of the need to reiterate this point because there was a small but vocal minority of men who did want to see a much broader toleration of religious opinions, who sought liberty even for men whose religion might be considered false.¹³²

Moderate Congregationalists such as Jeremiah Burroughs and Thomas Goodwin agreed with Marshall and Firmin that the magistrate had a duty to enforce not only universal religious affirmations but also particularly Christian ordinances, such as laws against blasphemy against the Trinity. Burroughs made it clear that his arguments for toleration were quite limited in scope. “I did not preach for a universall, an unlimited toleration of all Religions, of all things, as both my selfe and others are very sinfully reported to do....For my part, as I never was, so I am not for a toleration of all things, nay I should be loath to live in England if ever it should be here,” Burroughs preached in a sermon in 1645, and Goodwin argued similarly in a sermon preached in 1644: “there is a great outcry against toleration of all religions,

¹³² Sarah Mortimer, *Reason and Religion in the English Revolution: The Challenge of Socinianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 184.

& we are willing to join against such toleration.”¹³³ Here as in debates over schism in the church, both Congregationalists and Presbyterians argued that both general and special revelation cohered in giving a place to the magistrate in the enforcement of matters of religion. Burroughs wrote for instance that “we have the candle of the light of nature; if we sin against that, our darknesse can be no plea for us; and if he be a professed Christian, and sinnes against the common light of Christianity, which he cannot but see, except hee will shut his eyes, he is to be dealt with as a man that sinnes against the light of nature.”¹³⁴ It is clear that for Burroughs, not only the dictates of natural reason, but also those of Christianity, were to be enforced by magistrates in a Christian country. There may have been a tension between the political theology and the ecclesiology of the Congregationalists, but they found it expeditious to allow the magistrate some role in coercing those who would subvert the foundations of Reformed Christianity.¹³⁵ Firmin, then, would have expected a

¹³³ Jeremiah Burroughs, *A Sermon Preached Before the...House of Peers* (1645), 45; Thomas Goodwin, *The Great Interest of States and Kingdomes* (1645), 53. Peter Toon also records an incident that shows that John Owen was of the same mind: “In June 1654 Oxford was visited by a group of Northern Quakers, whose missionary zeal was pushing them into Southern England. Two brave but eccentric girls, Elizabeth Fletcher and Elizabeth Homes, sought to preach to the students and reveal to them the unchristian nature of University learning and their need for the inner light of the Holy Spirit. The rough treatment they received from the excited undergraduates so moved Miss Fletcher that she felt God was calling her to be a living testimony for Him. Accordingly, in the style of an Old Testament prophet, she took off her clothing and walked semi-naked through the streets, proclaiming the terrible day of the Lord. For the young men this was at best a great joke and they drove her into the grounds of St. John’s College where they pumped water over her and her friend. On the following Sunday, seemingly unaffected by their rough ordeal, the young ladies visited an Oxford church and in Quaker fashion interrupted the service in order to utter a warning from heaven. They were arrested and put in prison. Next day, since the city authorities were hesitant to punish them, the vice-chancellor was called. He accused them of speaking blasphemy and abusing the Spirit of God. He ordered that they be whipped and driven out of Oxford. They were punished not for being Quakers but because their behavior incited civil disorder, being aimed at the downfall of the University.” Peter Toon, *God’s Stateman: The Life and Work of John Owen* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 77-78.

¹³⁴ Burroughs, *Irenicum* (1645), 35.

¹³⁵ Justin Champion has noted, crucially for Presbyterians and Congregationalists in this period alike, that “in a culture which posited a necessary connection between the divine and the natural, between political order and social hierarchy, and between authority and obedience, any break with the

sympathetic audience among both Congregationalists and Presbyterians in his publication of Marshall's sermon in 1657.

Firmin's works against the Quakers highlighted, as with other Congregationalists and Presbyterians, both the destruction of the special revelation of God in Christ and the Scriptures and the supreme irrationality in Quaker belief and practice. For Firmin, the inner light of the Quakers extinguished both luminaries, reason and revelation. He asserted that the Quakers, represented by polemicists like James Parnell, argued that individuals should follow neither the light of nature nor the Scriptures, but rather conscience. But since conscience was a *regula regulata*, not a *regula regulans*, it could err if not captive to right reason and Scripture. Thus Quakers like James Parnell and James Naylor were advocating a standard of judgment that would conduce to arbitrariness and undo both Scripture and reason.¹³⁶ Firmin's works against the Quakers highlighted many of the dangers that many among the godly saw in them. Since they "would not put off their hats before the highest Authority,"¹³⁷ refused to recognize the dignity of titles, and insisted upon egalitarianism in social station, they encouraged a dangerous anarchy

traditional worldview was subversive. One of the powerful stories about this process might describe how the early modern state eventually acclimatized itself to the existence of heterodoxy within its boundaries by the painful and contested development of the various theories of toleration evident in the period. The continuing anxiety about the impossibility of a political society operating without reference to an underpinning deontology suggests that it is not clear when the state became comfortable enough with managing a society composed of a diversity of communal values." Champion, "'The Kingdom of Darkness': Hobbes and Heterodoxy," in *The Intellectual Consequences of Heterodoxy 1600-1750*, eds. Sarah Mortimer and John Robertson (Leiden: EJ Brill, 2012), 98.

¹³⁶ Firmin, *Stablishing against Shaking*, 29.

¹³⁷ Thomas Underhill, *Hell Broke Loose; or an History of the Quakers Both Old and New* (1660), 31; Francis Howgill, *The Mouth of the Pit Stopped and the Smoke that Hath Arisen out of It Scattered by the Light of Truth* (1659), 12-13. See also Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 161, 165, 198-9, 241.

in the social order.¹³⁸ They failed to recognize the validity of ordained ministry by insulting clergy as “hirelings,”¹³⁹ refused to pay tithes,¹⁴⁰ insisted that sacraments were products of priestcraft,¹⁴¹ interrupted church services, engaged in unlearned, insubordinate theological disputations with pastors, and encouraged the people to engage in disordered worship practices, such as shaking and worshipping with hats on. They undermined the moral order in the same way as had Ranterism and Familism by proclaiming the doctrine of the inner light and preaching moral perfectionism.¹⁴² Firmin's 1656 sermon *Stablishing against Shaking* as well as his 1659 tract *Tythes Vindicated* revolved around the theme that the inner light of the Quakers was a Satanic light, opposed to the natural light of conscience and the revelatory light of the Scriptures. Firmin's anti-Quaker rhetoric positioned them

¹³⁸ Firmin, *Stablishing against Shaking*, 27-28.

¹³⁹ Firmin, *Stablishing against Shaking*, 2-7.

¹⁴⁰ Firmin, *Stablishing against Shaking*, 8-12; Firmin, *Tythes Vindicated from Anti-Christianism* (1659), 10-28. On the Quaker position on tithes, see Stephen Kent, “Hand-Maids and Daughters of the Lord’: Quaker Women, Quaker Families, and the Tithe Petition in 1659,” *Quaker History* 97.1 (2008): 32-61; A.W. Braithwaite, “Early Tithe Prosecutions: Friends as Outlaws,” *Journal of the Friends’ Historical Society* 49.3 (1980): 148-56.

¹⁴¹ See, e.g. Edward Burroughs, *Truth Defended* (1654), 6-7; John Camm and Francis Howgill, *This is the word of the Lord which John Camm and Francis Howgill was moved to write...* (1654), sig. A5v; Francis Howgill, *An Answer to a Paper* (1654), 1-3; A.W. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 16, 80, 84, 113, 119, 136, 220, 225, 327, 328, 337, 345, 346, 387, 414, 442, 451, 458, 459, 517; Richard Vann, *The Social Development of English Quakerism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 91-2, 97, 111; Barbour, *Quakers in Puritan England*, 22, 25, 154, 163. On the similarities between Quaker and later freethinker argumentation on the issue of priestcraft, see Justin Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: The Church of England and Its Enemies, 1660-1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Justin Israel, *Enlightenment Contested* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), part ii, ch. 4; Paul Lim, *Mystery Unveiled: The Crisis of the Trinity in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 119-20.

¹⁴² James Parnell complained that “We are accused to be at one with the Ranters....we abhor their Principles in our Hearts, and deny any Liberty to the Flesh, or any light or loose or vicious Conversation, which they live in.” Quoted in Spufford, *Contrasting Communities: English Villages in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 281n.40. Cf. Nesta Evans's assessment that “some of the Quaker tenets, initially propounded by Fox, were identical with those of the Family of Love.” Evans, “The Descent of Dissenters in the Chiltern Hundreds,” in *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520-1725* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 289; Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 86-7, 104-11.

together with the Familists, Antinomians, Ranters, and other groups with quasi-perfectionist tendencies, as subversive sects ready to overthrow orthodox Reformed Protestantism. They sought to be “Christed with Christ and Godded with God,” which was explicitly Familist language, but often extended in heresiographical literature to other sects that preached something with a family resemblance.¹⁴³ This polemical elision was fairly easy to make, since as Christopher Marsh has described it, the core of Niclaes’ theology

was a process within the godly individual whereby he/she underwent a monumental spiritual transformation to become, ultimately, one of the mysterious ‘elders’. This mystical transformation was characterised by Niclaes in a number of ways. It was often referred to as a ‘pass-over’ from the flesh to the spirit. With equal frequency it appeared as a process of ‘illumination,’ and as one of ‘resurrection,’ ‘renewal,’ or ‘rebirth.’ It was also a triple baptism, in the name of the Father, son, and Holy Ghost...Another favoured description was of the mutual incorporation or implanting of God and human, to the point where an effective unity was achieved. The individual became “godded with god.”¹⁴⁴

Quakers, Ranters, and Antinomians all used language suggesting a sort of realized eschatology in which the believer was united to Christ (not always, as in the case of some Quakers, the salvation-historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth), and since the Familists were already feared as a societal menace, as Marsh notes, associations were often made between these later groups and the Family of Love: “The terms ‘Familist’ and ‘Family of Love’ were also applied with increasing regularity in the seventeenth century to groups of individuals suspected of holding crudely perfectionist or libertine beliefs....Their connection with Hendrick Niclaes is likely to

¹⁴³ Firmin, *Stablishing against Shaking*, 34.

¹⁴⁴ Christopher Marsh, *The Family of Love in English Society, 1550-1630* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 20.

have been rather tenuous.”¹⁴⁵

According to Firmin, the Quakers destroyed the priority of right reason and conscience, the "candle of the Lord," substituting a false, Satanic light in its place. These criticisms revolved around the transgressive language and practices adopted by Quakers and their putative undermining of the moral order. Thus Firmin's sermon contributed to what Barry Reay and others have described as a kind of "moral panic" surrounding them.¹⁴⁶ One can see a kind of hysteria about the descent into the irrational in Quaker worship in *The Quakers Dream*, published in 1655, which began:

An infallible relation of their several Meetings, Shriekings, Shakings, Quakings, Yellings, Howlings, Tremblings in the Bodies and Rising in the Belly...The Strange and Wonderful Satanical Apparitions, and the appearing of the Devil unto them in the likeness of a Black Boar, a Dog with Flaming Eyes, and a Black Man without a Head, causing Dogs to bark, the Swine to cry, and the Cattle to run, to the great admiration of all that shall read the same.¹⁴⁷

The anxiety about Quaker subversion was in fact nothing new. Earlier sectarian groupings such as the Familists, the Seekers, and the Ranters commanded hysteria from the godly as well. Each of these groups was treated as a "poisonous cocktail of older heresies," absolutizing one part of the orthodox teaching and thereby redefining it in transgressive ways.¹⁴⁸ Firmin's printing of Stephen Marshall's sermon on the power of the magistrate in matters of religion highlighted the close, positive relationship between reason and revelation. Marshall maintained

¹⁴⁵ Marsh, *Family of Love*, 237. See also, A.L. Morton, *The World of the Ranters* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1970), 126-134; for the perfectionist tendencies of the Quakers, see Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1964), 135-6.

¹⁴⁶ Barry Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1985), 77-78.

¹⁴⁷ Anon., *The Quakers Dream, or The Devils Pilgrimage in England* (1655), 1.

¹⁴⁸ Marsh, *Family of Love*, 53.

that even the heathen understood that the civil magistrate was appointed by God to regulate matters of religion. Christians would be remiss if they abused the Scriptures to remove this God-given role from the province of the magistrate. To the objection that Christians learn duty not from the "light of nature" but from the Scriptures, Marshall answered that "In the matters of faith, things which we know onely by Divine Revelation, As about mans Redemption, the Trinity, &c. there indeed we cleave onely to the Scripture, natures light can shew us nothing here. But if we come to other moral duties, certainly they doe not understand what Natures light is that make so little of it: (though Scripture light doth not crosse natures light in this, for the Scriptures also are clear to prove the Magistrates Care, &c.)."¹⁴⁹

Recent studies of Quakerism have demonstrated that this panic about the sects was virtually groundless, especially as concerns the Quakers. Rosemary Moore has recently written that although the Quakers engaged in some practices that were startling and symbolically undermining of the social order, "Quakers were in fact successful at attracting and holding many people with a clear interest in maintaining the economic and social status quo....the main political interest of the Quaker leadership, and indeed for most Quakers and for many other radicals, was church reform, and specifically the abolition of tithe and other church dues."¹⁵⁰ This is clear from the fact that Quakers did not uniformly oppose impropriated tithes - in other words, those tithes whose right to collection had been sold, often to a

¹⁴⁹ Marshall, *Power of Civil Magistrate*, 13.

¹⁵⁰ Rosemary Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences: The Early Quakers in Britain 1646-1666* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 65.

layperson.¹⁵¹ William Sheppard, for instance, astutely observed in 1654 that proposals to abolish the tithe opposed "only the Tithes in the hands of Ministers, and in relation to their Maintenance, and not the tythes in the hands of other men."¹⁵² The much decried threat to social order, then, more accurately reflected Quaker anti-clericalism. Quaker anti-clericalism undoubtedly contributed to the motivation of clergy to misrepresent the teachings of the Quakers. Firmin's insistence that Quakers taught people to rely on conscience ignored the fact that the Quakers' primary teaching was resignation to the Holy Spirit rather than self-will. As Hugh Barbour has argued, "Their attack on self-will meant that for them the power of God displaced the human will and personality permanently, so that a man saw himself as possessed by the spirit of god almost as a demoniac is possessed by an evil spirit."¹⁵³ However, for proponents of the national church and the parochial system, it would have been impossible to separate the economic and religious aspects of the Quaker challenge to public order. The abolition or secularization of tithes and the privatization of the ministry would have been seen as of a piece with the anarchic impulse to level social distinctions and overturn conventional mores.

As with many of the other controversies in which Firmin found himself involved, he played only a bit part in the moral panic over the Quakers, even though his work was praised by others as a penetrating contribution to anti-Quakeriana.¹⁵⁴ But his part is illustrative of a broader range of concerns shared by

¹⁵¹ Moore, *Light in Their Consciences*, 118.

¹⁵² William Sheppard, *The Parson's Guide* (1670), Epistle to the Reader.

¹⁵³ Hugh Barbour, *Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 143.

¹⁵⁴ See, e.g. Thomas Hall, *A Practical and Polemical Commentary, or, Exposition upon the Third and Fourth Chapters of the Latter Epistle of Saint Paul to Timothy* (1658), 277.

both Congregationalists and Presbyterians who had an interest in the continued trajectory of the English Reformation in the 1650s. That Firmin's publication of these treatises occurred at roughly the same time that he wrote his treatises urging the cooperation of the Congregationalists and Presbyterians and at the same time that he began his work to organize the Essex Association indicates that anti-sectarianism was a central motivation for both efforts.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined Giles Firmin's hybrid ecclesiastical identity in the 1640s and 1650s and the exigencies of his biography that produced it as a means to discuss the broader theological controversies, specifically on the vexed issue of ecclesiastical polity, during those crucial decades. Giles Firmin was far from being a canonical figure in 1640s and 1650s England, but his presence in the polemical battles of the day aids in illuminating many of the controversies, especially the ideological similarity of the parties involved. The idiosyncrasy of Firmin's position, combining elements of Congregational, Presbyterian, and moderate Episcopal elements, was part of a broader tendency of partisans in these debates to see their own positions as a kind of moderate and reasonable *via media* which nonetheless happily coincided exactly with the divine law given in the Scriptures. The questions between the Congregationalists and Presbyterians were to a great degree irresolvable, precisely because so much was at stake. Not only were all convinced that the divine authority of the Scriptures were at stake, but also the integrity of the English nation and the visible church catholic. For most of the godly, Firmin

included, the threat posed by sects like the Quakers required a response from the true churches, but the godly disagreed amongst themselves about what that response should be. Firmin's progression in the later 1650s was, as we have seen, probably due in large part to the intransigence of the Congregationalists in their practice of separation from true constituted churches and their refusal to participate in the Essex Association movement. In the next chapter, we will examine the flexibility of Firmin's Presbyterianism in conversation with episcopal divines such as John Gauden during the Restoration.

Chapter II

“Nor Yet a New-Style Episcopalian”: Firmin’s Writings in the early 1660s

G.F. Nuttall has described Firmin as an idiosyncratic character, “no more a classical Divine than he was one of the Congregational Brethren; nor yet was he a new-style Episcopalian.”¹ As we have already seen, Nuttall’s description does not quite accurately describe Firmin, since by any measure Firmin was in the Presbyterian camp, particularly by the later 1650s. However, we noted several dimensions of Firmin’s ecclesiology and practice that reflect the influence of Congregationalism and moderate Episcopacy. Firmin was securely in the Presbyterian fold by the Restoration period, as evidenced by the fact that Zachary Crofton wrote the preface to one of his works against John Gauden in 1661, *The Liturgical Considerator Considered*. But if Firmin was more distinctively Presbyterian by 1660 than he was in the early 1650s, he could also present himself as close in spirit to the group of Presbyterians known as the “Reconcilers.” The term Presbyterian was problematic as an identifier in the early Restoration and even beyond the Act of Uniformity in 1662, but as Isabel Rivers and Tim Cooper have both helpfully noted, the term could be used in the 1660s in a narrow or broad sense. In a narrow sense, it could refer to uncompromising “Presbyterians proper,” but in a broad sense, it was a “slightly misleading catchall for garden-variety Puritan members of the Church of England” that were less strident on matters of ecclesiastical polity, and the term could encompass the godly who advocated

¹ G.F. Nuttall, “The Essex Classis (1648),” *United reformed Church History Society Journal*, 3 (1983): 199.

“primitive episcopacy” who were interested in comprehension.² Firmin, as we will see, rhetorically positioned himself among those Presbyterians in the broader sense, also called “Reconcilers.”³ However, in terms of his willingness to make concessions to the Episcopal party, he was closer to the Presbyterians taken in a narrow sense like Zachary Crofton, whose early Restoration *oeuvre* we will examine in some detail in the course of contextualizing Firmin’s work.

In 1660, he published *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, a pamphlet that staunchly defended his own Presbyterian ordination and confuted arguments that insisted upon the necessity of re-ordination of those ordained by presbyters only, and which argued against the requirement of using set prayers on the basis that part of the discernment process for ministry involved a judgment that the ordinand was gifted in prayer. He argued in the preface to that work that he was not opposed to judicious use of set prayers, but urged that it was a tragedy that “humane inventions in the Worship of God” were being imposed tyrannically again.⁴ In 1661, he published a pamphlet against John Gauden, continuing his diatribe against the requirement of set forms in prayer and taking other exceptions to their proposed imposition in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Humanly contrived ceremonies were not unlawful in themselves, but they became unlawful when imposed. In 1660 he wrote to Baxter, agreeing with his Essex clerical friend John Warren that “we shall quite

² Tim Cooper, *Richard Baxter, John Owen and the Formation of Nonconformity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 22-24; Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 2000), i.91-93.

³ Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696), ii.386-7; R. Thomas, “Presbyterians in Separation,” in *The English Presbyterians: From Elizabethan Puritanism to Modern Unitarianism*, eds. CG Bolam, Jeremy Goring, HL Short, and Roger Thomas (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968), ch. 3; Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, i.91.

⁴ Firmin, *Presbyteriall Ordination Vindicated* (1660), sig. A2v.

undoe our ministry if we shall yield to any thing which men now putt upon us, if wee cannot convey it directly from the *Word*, which wee tell our people is our *Rule*.”⁵ At the same time, however, when Firmin became aware of the appointment of Baxter and other “Chief Presbyterians” as chaplains to Charles II on 25 June 1660,⁶ he wrote to him that he was pleased that Baxter found “such favoure in the eyes of oure King that you are so neere unto him.” He hoped that Baxter could achieve concessions for the non-conformists and wrote that he would willingly submit to a form of modified episcopacy because, as he put it, “some episcopacy I own.”⁷ Firmin’s work recognized that the ecclesiastical tide was against comprehension of the Presbyterians, and in general he seemed content to receive concessions from the bishops rather than to push for a settlement more agreeable to non-conformist divines or adopt a more resolutely non-conformist position. He did, however, lament the “unkind dealings” that many “godly and able ministers” had gone through in recent days, citing as an example how an unnamed “great Doctor” of *jure divino* episcopal persuasion told a colleague of his that because his ordination was by presbyters, “*Your Ordination and Institution is not worth a Fart*.”⁸ Edmund Calamy’s assessment of the situation captures Firmin’s point of view well:

⁵ *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter*, 2 vols., eds. NH Keeble and Geoffrey Nuttall, Letter 660, ii.9-10.

⁶ Robert Bosher states that “ten or twelve of the moderate Puritan clergy were appointed Royal chaplains, including Reynolds, Spurstowe, Woodbridge, Wallis, Manton, Bates, Calamy, Ashe, Case, and Baxter.” Bosher, *The Making of the Restoration Settlement, 1649-1662* (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1951), 151.

⁷ Letter 660, in *Calaendar* ii.10. In *Of Schime*, as we mentioned in the past chapter, Firmin saw warrant from scripture for a “standing moderator” who was the equivalent of a bishop, so long as the bishop’s authority was not construed as being greater than the other presbyters. Firmin, *Of Schisme* (1658), 66-7.

⁸ Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, sig. B1r.

The general stream and current is for the old prelacy in all its pomp and height, and therefore it cannot be hoped for, that the presbyterial government should be owned as the public establishment of this nation, while the tide runneth so strongly that way; and the bare toleration of it will certainly produce a mischief, whilst papists, and sectaries of all sorts, will win in themselves under the cover of such a favour: therefore no course seemeth likely to secure religion and the interests of Christ...but by making presbytery a part of the public establishment; which will not be effected but by moderating and reducing episcopacy to the form of synodical government....This is all we can for the present hope for.⁹

However, Firmin was unwilling to compromise at the expense of his conscience, and he tended to speak out of both sides of his mouth, theoretically allowing some concessions to Episcopacy and liturgy, but in all particulars hewing more closely to the “ancient” Presbyterians decried by Richard Baxter.¹⁰

John Spurr states that the number of non-conforming clergy who were willing in principle to serve under restored bishops in the Restoration church approached 2000.¹¹ Of these 2000, A.G. Matthews tells us that due to the “liberality” of Charles II’s settlement and the compromise formulas proposed by conciliatory bishops, 420 of the ministers ultimately ejected on “Black Bartholomew’s Day” in 1662 received episcopal ordination in the early years of the Restoration.¹² At the same time, the majority that did not conform had a number of scruples that prevented their comprehension within the church. Spurr conveniently highlights these difficulties:

⁹ Edmund Calamy, *An Abridgment of Mr. Baxter’s History of His Life and Times* (London, 1702), i.187; see Richard Greaves, *Saints and Rebels* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1985), 49-50.

¹⁰ Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, ii.167.

¹¹ John Spurr, *English Puritanism, 1603-1689* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 1998), 130.

¹² A.G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), lxi. David Appleby notes that many “bishops suspected, many of those who remained within the ministry of the Church of England after 1662 were as much Puritans as those ejected from it.” Appleby, *Black Bartholomew’s Day: Preaching, Polemic, and Restoration Nonconformity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 4.

For those with Presbyterian orders who had worked as ministers during the 1640s and 1650s the demand that they should submit to an ordination by a bishop was tantamount to “reordination,” and they simply could not repudiate their own ordinations and past ministries. Puritan ministers also objected to declaring their “unfeigned assent and consent” to the Prayer Book with all its deficiencies and offensive ceremonies; and they resented a set form of worship which totally excluded the use of their own spiritual “gifts” in extempore prayer. Swearing to the imperfect government of church by bishops was a further difficulty. A fourth—and for many an insuperable—obstacle to conformity was the renunciation of the Solemn League and Covenant. As a solemn oath before God the Covenant was inviolable, but the terms of the renunciation were also unacceptable since the conformist had to promise not “to endeavor any change or alteration of government either in church or state.”¹³

Alongside of the moderates who hoped for comprehension, though not at the expense of capitulating on these scruples, there was a remarkable revival in the early years of the Restoration of pro- and anti-Laudian sentiments among the clergy and Parliament. Several severe but popular anti-Episcopal tracts from the 1630s were reprinted, including William Prynne’s *The Unbishops of Timothy and Titus*, Henry Burton’s *Jesu Worship Confuted*, Constantine Jessop’s *The Angel of Ephesus no Bishop*, and *Smectymnuus Redivivus*. Laudians republished avante garde and provocative tracts like Eleazar Duncon’s *De Adoratione Dei*, and divines like Simon Gunton and Edward Wakeman published Laudian defenses of liturgy and episcopal ordination. Despite Firmin’s conciliatory rhetoric, the arguments he advanced in both *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated* and *The Liturgical Considerator Considered* shared a considerable amount with the anti-Laudian tracts. The responses of the godly to these two issues, reordination and set prayers, as we will see, was highly variegated, and Firmin found himself on the conservative side of those divines interested in comprehension within the national church.

¹³ John Spurr, *English Puritanism*, 130.

Laudians, moderates, and the problem of re-ordination

The ecclesiastical settlement of the Restoration Church of England produced a crisis of conscience for many of the godly ministers who had been ordained in Presbyterian fashion during the Interregnum. A number of these ministers had sworn to the Solemn League and Covenant in 1643, and they felt themselves bound by conscience to oppose rule by Bishops. Some, like Firmin, had never taken the oath but still felt bound by it since the oath purported to covenant the entire nation to these purposes.¹⁴ However, a number of ministers felt that they had never been bound by the oath, and others who had taken the oath found faults within it that excused them from obedience to it. Among these godly ministers who were Presbyterially ordained but amenable to episcopal oversight, a principal (though not the only) remaining reservation concerned the requirement imposed by the Restoration bishops of re-ordination.¹⁵

Crucial to this question of conscience was the issue of sacred history. What did Scripture proclaim about ordination and bishops, and did the early centuries of the church uphold or defect from the biblical testimony? John Spurr has put the issue succinctly: "Continuity with the primitive church was at a premium. Although the pure first age of the church had been succeeded by dark centuries of superstition and papal tyranny, God had never allowed the light of the Gospel to be

¹⁴ Firmin, *The Liturgical Considerator Considered* (London, 1661), sig. b3r, 2.

¹⁵ See Robert Bosher, *The Making of the Restoration Settlement*, 151-3; Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, ed. Matthew Sylvester (London, 1696), i.230-2. John Spurr has argued that there may have been as many as 2000 Presbyterians who, given certain allowances, including exemption from re-ordination, would have accepted Episcopal oversight. *English Puritanism*, 130.

extinguished.”¹⁶ It was thus the task of church historians to sort through the mass of apostate ecclesial practices for the thin thread of authentic ecclesial succession. The Presbyterians believed that the New Testament made no distinction between the office of presbyter and bishop, such that the ministerial power of both was identical.¹⁷ A number of Presbyterians (taken in a narrow sense) equated Episcopacy with “Prelacy” and popishness and printed a number of tracts insisting that the Solemn League and Covenant bound the nation to extirpate all vestiges of Episcopacy. These Presbyterians, with whom Firmin had some affinity, will be discussed below. However, a significant number of Presbyterians (taken in a broad sense) acknowledged that there could be degrees of eminence among presbyters, such that one presbyter might rule over the rest, though not in opposition to the rest.¹⁸ Those Presbyterians who allowed such a distinction often tended to distinguish between “primitive” and “prelatical,” or “apostolical” and “apostatical” Bishops, arguing that Reformed Bishops like Edmund Grindal, George Abbott, and James Ussher, who were opposed to grasping “prelacy” could serve as exemplars for bishops in the Restoration era.¹⁹ Ussher was especially revered among these

¹⁶ John Spurr, “A Special Kindness for Dead Bishops’: The Church, History, and Testimony in Seventeenth-Century Protestantism,” in *The Uses of History in Early Modern England*, ed. Paulina Kewes (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 308.

¹⁷ Zachary Crofton, *Analepsis Anelephthe* (1660), 79-80.

¹⁸ The parity between bishops and presbyters was a claim that animated, among other tracts, the reprint of William Prynne’s 1636 *The Unbishopsing of Timothy and Titus* (1660). The scheme of “reduced episcopacy” was advocated by the party of the “Reconcilers,” as Richard Baxter called them. See, e.g. R. Thomas, “The Rise of the Reconcilers,” in *The English Presbyterians*, 46-72.

¹⁹ See, e.g. James Ussher, *The Reduction of Episcopacie* (London, 1660); I.R., *A Peaceable Enquiry into that Novel Controversie about Reordination* (London, 1661), 5; Giles Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 3: “I had thought the *Reduction of Episcopacy*, &c published by that Reverend, Learned, Humble, Holy and Peaceable Bishop, Dr. Ussher would have given content to the Bishops, if they were as Gracious, and loved the Peace of the Church (though not so learned) as he: Not only Dr. Holesworth; but I heard also Dr. Brownerig, and two other Episcopal Doctors consenting to it; had it pleased the Bishops (as I doubt not but it doth Dr. Reynolds; whom, though I scarce ever saw, I must

Presbyterians, as he proposed a “primitive” or “reduced” episcopacy “balanced and managed with a due commixtion of presbyters therewith,” rather than prelatical or “popish” bishops who arrogated power to themselves. Ussher’s scheme approximated what many Presbyterians saw as the pattern in the New Testament and early church.²⁰ Firmin, as we will see, was sympathetic to a limited extent with reduced episcopacy and publicly endorsed it as a model he could potentially accept. However, his reservations about it, in particular the geographical reach of the bishop’s diocese, violated Firmin’s scruples about the importance of “vicinity” for godly discipline and rendered his acceptance of it largely rhetorical.

Many of the Restoration bishops, by contrast to the putative “primitive” or Reformed bishops, were of what we might anachronistically refer to as a “high church” persuasion (contemporaries thought of them as “Laudians,” so named after the catholicizing Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud, who was a plague to

ever Reverence for his pious, Gospel-like, and Learned Labours:) I doubt not but it would have pleased our King, it being that Form which moderate men would not have opposed: And had the Liturgy been thoroughly purged from what is offensive in it, with other prayers added in Scripture-phrase (and not so imposed to take away the use of our gifts in any Ordinance) a strict law made and prosecuted for ejection of scandalous and insufficient Ministers, Men placed in Government, Orthodox, and acquainted with the power of Godliness indeed (which His Majesty declares he will promote) An act established for sanctifying the Sabbath, and other things; for which His Majesty hath excellently declared, the Church had been in a *recovering way*, blessing the Lord for our Physician, as we have blessed Him, and do bless Him for his Gracious Moderation; His easing us off the Burden of Humane Ceremonies, and what He hath declared concerning tender Consciences.” Paul Lim, in discussing Richard Baxter, has shown that the godly also used a confessionalized hermeneutic for church history to substantiate this claim: “just as [Baxter] would bifurcate the Anglican bishops between the Grindal and Abbot type in one camp and the Laudians on the other, he did the same with the bishops of the fourth and fifth centuries, lest he tarnish all bishops with the same brush. So Baxter extolled “Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory Nyssen, Basil, Chrysostom, Augustine, Hillary, Prosper, Fulgentius, &c.” who made a mental inward separation “from the Councils and Communion of the prevailing turbulent sort of the Prelates, to signifie their disowning of their sins.” Here in Baxter’s description, moderate Puritans of his own type found their forebears in the Cappadocians and Augustine. Thus, with the bishops of Cappadocian and Augustinian sensibilities, true piety flourished. Conversely, with the avaricious bishops only in name, “hereticating was in fashion.” Paul Lim, *Mystery Unveiled: The Crisis of the Trinity in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 250.

²⁰ Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, i.232ff.

Puritans in the 1630s and was imprisoned and executed in 1643). They saw the office of bishop as part of the apostolic deposit and so necessary to the structure of any legitimate church. Most of these divines would agree with the judgment of Nathaniel Hardy, one of the few unsequestered Laudian ministers in London preaching during the Interregnum, who flayed the godly in a sermon in 1660: “There hath been a *generation of men* among us, whom (without *breach of charity*) I may justly *charge* to be of the *Synagogue of Satan*. Indeed they say they are the *godly Party*, and their *Conventicles* the *purest Churches*; but *they are not, and do lie*.”²¹ For the Laudian bishops and their clergy, the right of ordination belonged solely to the bishop, such that presbyterial ordination was *per se* unlawful and null. Among this group of Laudians, which included Brian Duppa, Matthew Wren, John Cosin, and Gilbert Sheldon, the Archbishop of Canterbury, among others, there was a resolute insistence that episcopal ordination was not “re-ordination,” but first ordination, because the ordination by presbyters was invalid.²²

These bishops, of course, were not the natural conversation partners for the godly, but there were other conciliatory bishops such as Edward Reynolds, John Gauden, and Thomas Sydeserff (despite his earlier Arminian and Laudian commitments in the 1630s, for which he was deposed on 13 December 1638), who

²¹ Nathaniel Hardy, *The Hierarchy Exalted and Its Enemies Humbled* (1661), 22.

²² See, e.g. Richard Alleine, *Cheirothesia tou Presbyteriou* (London, 1661), 6-7; Zachary Crofton, *Analepsis, or St. Peters Bonds Abide* (1660), 24; Edward Wakeman, *The Pattern of Ecclesiastical Ordination or Apostolick Separation* (London, 1664), 22. I.R. wrote, “Who can produce any one suitable solid instance of reordination?...it is said, the former ordination was no ordination, and therefore there is no need to instance in reordinations.” *Peaceable Enquiry*, 148. See also, Thomas Morton, *Confessions and Proofs of Protestant Divines of Reformed Churches that Episcopacy Is in Respect of Office according to the Word of God, and in Respect of the Use the Best* (1662), 7-11, 32-26, 50-3.

insisted upon episcopal ordination,²³ but were willing to allow compromise formulas that attempted to preserve the conscience of Presbyterians. A.G. Matthews notes that Sydserrff, the Bishop of Galloway, “required of candidates for ordination no more than a general promise that they would not contravene the discipline of the church.”²⁴ John Humfrey noted that at the Conference at Savoy, another formula was discussed that phrased the episcopal ordination in hypothetical terms: “In a Conference (as I have heard between the Presbyterian and present Bishops, it was proposed for an Accomodation in this case, that an Hypothetical forme might be used, *Si non ordinatus sit, &c.*”²⁵ It was also proposed among at least some of the godly that, regardless of what the Bishop thought, ordination might be thought of as external confirmation or acknowledgement of an internal call by the Holy Spirit, or perhaps as a kind of licensing to practice one’s calling as a minister.²⁶ As a result of these discussions, at least 420 of the clergy ultimately ejected in 1662 (and, it may be supposed, a number of others not ejected) were persuaded to be episcopally ordained in the early years of the Restoration.²⁷ It was thus the engagement with these conciliatory bishops that produced difficult soul-searching among the godly about whether conformity with the episcopal settlement was possible.

²³ Church of England, *Articles of Visitation and Enquiry...by the Right Reverend Father in God, John, Lord Bishop of Worcester* (1662), tit. iii, art. 1; but Reynolds’s articles omit any reference to episcopal ordination, requiring only that the minister be “licensed.” Church of England, *Articles of Visitation and Enquiry within the Diocese of Norwich* (1662), 3.

²⁴ Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, lxi.

²⁵ John Humfrey, *A Second Discourse about Reordination* (London, 1662), 25; Ian Green, *The Re-Establishment of the Church of England 1660-1663* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 130-1, 150-1.

²⁶ John Humfrey, *The Question of Re-Ordination* (London, 1661), 81-2.

²⁷ Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, lxi.

Conciliatory bishops like Reynolds, Sydserff, and Gauden likewise did not join the resurgence of Laudian posturing among the Restoration episcopacy and sought to enlist Presbyterians interested in comprehension within the national church. Reynolds and Gauden had in fact both been persuaded to swear to the Solemn League and Covenant and had taken livings as Presbyterian ministers during the Interregnum, though they accepted bishoprics after the Restoration. In 1660, Reynolds became the leader of “Reconcilers” (as Baxter termed them), or the “moderate” party, mostly composed of Presbyterians and advocates of Ussher’s “reduced episcopacy” who sought comprehension of Episopalians and Presbyterians within the national settlement. Along with Baxter, Reynolds was also appointed as a court chaplain to Charles II. The terms on which these Bishops offered comprehension to Presbyterians were in general more conciliatory, even if still beyond what many godly ministers could accept. Thus many among the Reconcilers negotiated in respectful and non-polemical terms with these bishops, even as they strenuously opposed Laudian bishops. Like these Reconcilers, Firmin had a working typology of “good” and “bad” bishops drawn from contemporary experience, which like Richard Baxter and others, he read back into antiquity. Paul Lim has recently shown that Baxter’s criticism of the heavy-handedness of certain bishops could be traced back to precedents like Cyril of Alexandria among the ancient fathers, who insisted upon their own personal authority in the form of the decrees of ecclesiastical councils rather than the Scriptures.²⁸ Baxter associated the tendency to insist on conciliar authority as a mark of popishness, and he asserted

²⁸ Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 247-52.

that this substitution began with what contemporary theologians often call “Constantinianism.”²⁹ Prior to Nicaea and among the best bishops after Nicaea, only Scripture was the *regula regulans* according to Baxter’s account, and hence these bishops practiced primitive episcopacy rather than prelacy:

The Papists have set up whole volumes of Councils and Decrees, for the Rule, forsooth because the Scripture is dark, and all Hereticks plead Scripture. And what have they done by it, but cause more darkness, and set the world and their own Doctors too, in greater contentions, so that now Councils crosse Councils, and they can neither agree which be true approved Councils, and which not: nor when they intend a Decree to be an Article of faith, and when not, no nor what sense to take their words in, and how to reconcile them. And thus men lose themselves, and abuse the Church.³⁰

One can see a similar dynamic in Firmin’s work. While acknowledging that Scripture and the ancient church described a role for the *episkopos*, this was a very different office than it became under the corrupting influence of the papacy. It was in the Scriptures that one could find the norm or pattern for the office of bishop: “To the Scriptures then let us go, which speak so clear in this controversie, that all men, even the Papists, who call those men *Heretick*, that deny the superiority of Bishops, yet are forced to yield it, that in the Apostles time, the *Bishop* and *Presbyter* were the same.”³¹ Firmin denied that simply because one found warrant for the office in the fathers, one should therefore practice it now if there were not also warrant for it in the Scriptures. Firmin maintained that although “I am not a man versed in the fathers as others are, yet some of them (the most ancient) I have read, and in them I

²⁹ See, e.g. John Howard Yoder, *The War of the Lamb*, ed. Glen Stassen (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009), 45; Stanley Hauerwas, *Dispatches from the Front: Theological Engagements with the Secular* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 188n.2.

³⁰ Richard Baxter, *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter*, 4 vols. (1830-1838), iv.747; see Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 246.

³¹ Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 5. See also I.R., *Peaceable Enquiry*, 118-20.

find so many strange humane mixtures in the Worship of God, that I cannot yield to this consequence, *The Fathers say it, or did it, ergo, It is lawful.*"³² Firmin, like Baxter, thus made a distinction in his writing between the ancient bishops, worthy of respect and imitation to a limited degree (though not when they conflicted with the pattern set forth in the Scriptures), as well as contemporary bishops who followed the pattern of ancient episcopacy, on the one hand, and the corruptions of that office under papal authority in later eras, which set the pattern for grasping and tyrannical bishops among the Laudians and certain Restoration bishops, on the other. So long as a Bishop was not considered as a separate office, one with greater dignity or power than presbyter, Firmin could assent to it. He was comfortable with regarding the bishop as *primus inter pares* among the presbyters, which could be seen as meriting greater honor and maintenance, so long as the authority exercised by the bishop was enacted in concert with the presbyters.

But in sober words I beseech you, What kind of Bishops were fifteen hundred years ago? (if you begin to reckon from the Apostles times) Bishops distinct from Presbyters in *Power* and *Offices* and that by *Divine Right*? Verily you fall short in proving it. Or were they such Bishops that extended their power for forty miles space or more, over many hundred Presbyters, and over many hundred thousand of persons, whom they never saw? I beseech you name us such Bishops in the three or four first Centuries, else you know what Bishops do not answer. I have read in a Learned Author, that in *Augustines* time, there were in *one* Province under *Carthage*, of the *Catholicks* and *Donatists*, above nine hundred Bishops, the Author sums up how many of each; surely these Bishops did not extend their power much further than some great Parishes in some Countryes, or some such Towns as *Ipswich, Bristol, Colchester, &c.* If you will have such Bishops, and give them no more power than Christ hath given them, for *Order sake* I will yield to them, and give them the *Honour*, and if more maintenance be conferred upon them by the King, than other Presbyters who joyn with them, I shall be very willing and glad of it. So that I

³² Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 3-4.

am not against an Imparity in *honour* nor *maintenance*, neither would I be in *power* and *office*, if Christ had given more to them than others.³³

In various places Firmin extolled bishops like Ussher, Abbot, Grindal, Brownrigg, Davenant, and Holesworth, and he explicitly mentioned Ussher's *Reduction of Episcopacie* as a model of episcopal authority that he could endorse. He added the encomium that "this learned *Davenant, Hall, Brownrigg*; I do much reverence their names now dead and gone, and no man upon earth have I so much honoured as that Archbishop *Usher*; but what talk I of him? He was in all Respects, for Learning, soundnesse in the Faith, Humility, and Holinesse, a *None-such*: In what an ill time (as to us) was he taken away! But God is wise."³⁴ He did not say so, but it seems clear that it was Ussher's judgment that "with the Bishop who was the chief President (and therefore stiled by the same *Tertullian* in another place *Summus Sacerdos* for distinction sake) the rest of the Dispensers of the Word and Sacraments joyned in the common government of the Church" that made Firmin among other moderate godly clergy favorable both to his person and to his plan.³⁵ Among the Restoration bishops, Firmin had particular respect for Reynolds, who he "must ever Reverence for his Pious, Gospel-like, and Learned Labours."³⁶ Oddly, however, Firmin seemed to dislike in the extreme John Gauden despite commonalities between them, including the fact that Gauden did not think of the Bishop as a separate order from Presbyter. Firmin seems to have characterized Gauden, as we

³³ Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 3. The same point is made in almost all of the Presbyterian tracts during this period. See, for instance, Smectymnuus, *Smectymnuus Redivivus* (1660), 44, 66-7.

³⁴ Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 23.

³⁵ James Ussher, *The Reduction of Episcopacie*, 4.

³⁶ Firmin, *The Liturgical Considerator Considered*, 3.

will see, as a Laudian.³⁷ Despite his restrained respect for primitive episcopacy, however, Firmin found it necessary to dissent from the proposals of these conciliatory bishops for reconciliation, since all of them required both the re-ordination of presbyters and the use of set prayers in the liturgy, which undermined the exercise of the gift of prayer by the minister. Firmin's considerations of the liturgy will be examined in greater detail below.

The Restoration Bishops and clergy had, just as much as the godly, drawn their own dividing lines between good and bad Bishops. Both the Presbyterians and the Episcopal party believed in the necessity of subordination as a mark of apostolic ecclesiastical polity, but they disagreed about who was subordinate to whom. All Presbyterians believed that the Scriptures required subordination of the laity to the clergy, and some hierarchical Presbyterians like the London ministers went further and argued that "*Jesus Christ our Mediatour hath not made the Community of the faithfull, or Body of the people, the immediate Receptacle, or first Subject of proper formall power for governing of his Church.*"³⁸ The Bishops and their clergy by contrast believed that Christ and the apostles posited subordination between different members of the clergy, though this subordination was conceived of distinctly by different bishops. Gauden, unlike most Restoration Bishops, was willing even to concede that although the office of bishop was part of the apostolic deposit, Bishops and Presbyters were not fundamentally different clerical orders. Rome's

³⁷ Ken Fincham and Nicholas Tyacke, *Altars Restored: The Changing Face of English Religious Worship, 1547-c. 1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 307; R.A. Beddard, "A Reward for Services Rendered: Charles II and the Restoration Bishopric of Worcester, 1660-1663," *Midland History* 26 (2004): 61-91; Firmin, *Liturgical Considerator Considered*, 19.

³⁸ Edmund Calamy, *Jus divinum Regiminis Ecclesiastici* (1646), 105.

deficiency lie in its being “swoln by secular Pride and Usurpation so much beyond its pristine comeliness and honor, that in stead of an holy and humble Apostolick *Bishop* of the same Order and Authority with his other brethren, he must be owned in a *superecclesiastical*, and a *superepiscopal*, and a *superimperial height*, as Lord and Sovereign, and Prince.”³⁹ Conciliatory Bishops like Reynolds, Gauden, and Sydserrf attempted to persuade presbyters to accept episcopal ordination by arguing that it was necessary to the exercise of the office, but that it did not abrogate but rather “reiterated” and enhanced their previous presbyterial ordination. Reynolds and Gauden also both attempted to practice “reduced episopacie” in the first years of the restoration by ordaining only with the assistance of presbyters within their diocese, allowing the moderates among the godly to infer from the practice that the power was shared and that bishops and presbyters on this view differed only in eminence.⁴⁰

The “preaching bishop” as an aspect of primitive episcopacy, urged in some quarters in the early Restoration, was also appealing to the moderate godly who were tempted to accept Episcopal authority. In a sermon preached 22 September 1661, Reynolds exhorted the bishops to “preach Christ,” not themselves, urging that preaching themselves was to “make themselves *Lords over the flock*, and exercise *dominion* over the consciences of those that hear them, as if a Ministry were a *Sovereignty*, or as if the sheep were their own, to be ordered and disposed as they

³⁹ Gauden, *Hiera Dakrya, Ecclesia Anglicanae Suspiria* (1659), sig. **r, 84-5.

⁴⁰ See Mark Chapman, *Anglican Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 146-7; Gauden *Hiera Dakrya*, 30-1, 33, 36.

please.”⁴¹ Similarly, the publication of selections of sermons by Hugh Latimer, *The Preaching Bishop Reproving Unpreaching Prelates*, offered a vision of an apostolic or preaching bishop over against lazy “prelates” whose only concern was ruling and pomp. The preface by Hugh Worcester urged Restoration bishops that “your pious Brother pleads very heartily for the Ordinance of Preaching, lifting it up above all other parts of Worship, and tells you more then once, Take away Preaching, take away Salvation.”⁴²

Simultaneously, moderate episcopal divines like Edward Stillingfleet, who were influenced by the Cambridge Platonists and who would eventually be considered “latitudinarian,” proposed yet another rationale for which the godly could accept Episcopal ordination. Stillingfleet’s immensely popular *Irenicum* attempted to demonstrate that only the fact of ecclesiastical polity was *jure divino*, but that no particular form of polity could be construed as *jure divino*, such that one could accept episcopacy for the sake of the prudential ordering of the church.⁴³ A number of divines among the godly like John Humfrey were persuaded by the combination of reduced episcopacy and arguments for the prudential ordering of the church, as we will see below, but divines like Crofton argued strenuously against them. Firmin found himself in the middle, unpersuaded to move to a purely

⁴¹ Edward Reynolds, *The Preaching of Christ* (1662), 19, cf. 40.

⁴² Hugh Latimer, *The Preaching Bishops Reproving Unpreaching Prelates* (1661), sig. a4r. Cf. 32-3: “for the fault of unpreaching Prelates, me-think I could guess what might be said for excusing of them....They are so troubled with Lordly living, they be so pleased in Palaces, couched in Courts, ruffling in their ruents, dacing in their Dominions, burdened with Ambassages, pampering of their panches, like a Monk that maketh his Jubilee, mounching in their mangers, and moiling in their gay Manors and mansions, and so troubled with loitering in their Lordships that they cannot attend it.” See also *Ibid.*, 63-4, 85, 96, 100-1.

⁴³ Edward Stillingfleet, *Irenicum, or a Weapon Salve for the Church’s Wounds* (1660), 4, 10, 177-8, 220-2, 347-8, 385, 416-417.

prudential understanding of the role of Bishops, unwilling to reject primitive episcopacy altogether, and yet unsatisfied with the exemplars of primitive episcopacy on offer from the likes of Gauden and Reynolds.

John Humfrey was one of the godly who was persuaded to receive episcopal ordination. After the Restoration, Humfrey was invited by John Piers, Bishop of Bath and Wells, to assist him in the ordination of new Presbyters. While assisting Piers, however, the Bishop convinced Humfrey to accept re-ordination, a decision which Humfrey defended in print and for which he received sustained criticism from among the godly.⁴⁴ Humfrey argued in two tracts that re-ordination could be conceived of as public recognition or licensing of ordination already received. Richard Alleine, writing pseudonymously, pointed out that no bishop saw the matter this way: "Let Mr. *Humfrey* but procure us to be ordained in such a way, as shall only license us to exercise that Ministerial Authority we already have...and then he need not doubt, but we shall most readily and thankfully accept of it."⁴⁵ The anonymous I.R. agreed: "Were the expressions in the book of *Consecration* so lax, that they would admit such a construction and use of ordination only, then there would be more to be said...Or if our reverend Bishops were so free to an accommodation, as to omit or alter those (as to this new end) cross-grain'd expressions, which will signifie nothing lesse then a new investiture, then much more might be conceded."⁴⁶ I.R. also concurred with Alleine that since no bishop agreed with Humfrey's interpretation,

⁴⁴ See E.C. Vernon, "John Humfrey," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, eds. HCG Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/14153?docPos=2> (accessed Sept. 22, 2014).

⁴⁵ Alleine, *Cheirothesia tou Presbyteriou*, 66.

⁴⁶ I.R. *Peaceable Enquiry*, 90, 123-9.

his point of view was impossible to sustain.⁴⁷ Humfrey acknowledged that he was annoyed “to hear that some of our bishops do expect not only that a man should be Re-ordained, but that we should think our former ministry to be null too, until that be done,”⁴⁸ but he protested that if the bishop would allow the presbyter to voice his understanding that his first ordination was not nullified by episcopal ordination, then the bishop’s intention in the matter was not an issue. In such a case, the bishop’s silence would act by *estoppel*, the legal maxim meaning that if one does not assert one’s legal right against an action at the appropriate time, one is foreclosed from asserting it later.⁴⁹ Humfrey admitted in his second defense that his conscience was unsettled about the matter, and especially to the application of his analysis in his own case:

I must crave liberty...to divide between my Opinion and my Fact. There is no necessity, when I justifie Re-ordination, and my Brethren in their submission thereunto; that I should therefore become the Pharisee, and justifie my self: I may acknowledge a culpability in my performance, and condemn it, through the failing of Circumstances, when yet I maintain my cause, and my Brethren, who in the uprightness of their hearts may have done this thing & have peace in it. I dare not really say this was well in me....There is no man, as well as I, but when a thing in the main seems to him lawful, may be mistaken in the application thereof to his own condition....I confess I did not doubt in the least when I did this, but that my former Ordination was valid, and in the taking this new upon me, I find it is like a double garment put on for the fashion, and experiencedly proves uneasie to be worn. I must needs say, I could never imagine, so small a matter would have run so in my thoughts, as this hath done; it is indeed methinks to me, like a heavy Rug upon my bed in the Summer, that to be under it makes me sweat, and I cannot well go to my rest till I have fairly jostled it off again, when others perhaps, of a complexion more cool, may be glad they have it on....My judgment is still as large as it was, but my heart is afraid.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Ibid., 17-19.

⁴⁸ Humfrey, *A Second Discourse*, 97.

⁴⁹ Humfrey, *Question of Reordination*, 52-55; Idem, *A Second Discourse*, 99-100, 115; I.R. *Peaceable Enquiry*, 123.

⁵⁰ Humfrey, *A Second Discourse*, 96.

The excruciating difficulty that many of the godly felt in this matter is evident in the fact that Humfrey eventually found that he could not live with himself and recanted his re-ordination and was ejected from his living at Frome Selwood in August 1662.⁵¹

The majority of the godly disposed toward primitive episcopacy, by contrast to Humfrey's position, concluded that re-ordination meant renunciation of their previous ordination, which would in effect "unchurch" the Reformed churches of Europe, which accepted and practiced Presbyterian ordination. *Smectymnuus Redivivus* framed the argument succinctly: "If those Churches that want Bishops, want nothing essential to a Church; then what *Essential* want was there in the Ordination of those *Ministers* that received imposition of hands in those Churches, that might deserve a *Re-ordination*, more than if they had first received their ordination at *Rome*?"⁵² Likewise, I.R. in response to Humfrey wrote "what a lamentable blow would be the nullifying of Presbyterian ordination unto the Church of God, especially the Reformed Churches? It is well known that in the Reformed Churches their ordination is but Presbyterian; no not any better in *Denmark*, or those other countries where they have Superintendents; for those Superintendents have all their authority under Christ from the *Magistrate* and *Presbyterie*, without any Diocesans at all."⁵³ In other words, the practice of re-ordination of Presbyters by

⁵¹ Vernon, "John Humfrey."

⁵² *Smectymnuus Redivivus*, 51.

⁵³ I.R., *Peaceable Enquiry*, 143.

bishops implied at best a denigration of Reformed churches without bishops and at worst their outright repudiation. Giles Firmin explained that

if it comes to this, that I must renounce my Presbyterial Ordination and be ordained by a Bishop, or I must silenced, I shall desire grace from the Lord, and resolve to lay down my Ministry, before I will my Ordination: for in being re-ordained by Bishops...I must plainly condemn all Ministers of other Churches, who are ordained only by Presbyters: how abominable is this? To null all other Ministers that have not Episcopal ordination.⁵⁴

It was not, as we have seen, that Firmin and others could not see a place for bishops within the ecclesiastical economy. Firmin wrote to Baxter that if “they will not force me to owne their power as being of Divine Authoritie, I will not oppose them.”⁵⁵ But where they insisted upon reordination, it appeared that they were arrogating authority to themselves and asserting the illegitimate lordly pretensions of the *episcopus princeps*, as he argued much later in the 1680s in response to a sermon by Edward Stillingfleet.⁵⁶

Firmin’s *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated* was clearly motivated by the arguments for episcopal re-ordination being proposed by conciliatory bishops like Reynolds, Sydserff, and Gauden but, somewhat unusually, proceeded by arguing against John Davenant’s *Determinationes Questionum Quarundum Theologicarum*, which had last been published in 1639. Davenant himself died in 1641 and so had nothing to do with the present dispute, but according to Firmin, the reason for picking Davenant was that he argued from the Scriptures, which no one in the

⁵⁴ Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 29; For a comparable conclusion, see Zachary Crofton, *A Serious Review of Presbyters Reordination by Bishops* (1661), 6, cf. 11, 15, 21, 27, 29, 38. Although couched with exceptions, Richard Baxter also agreed that “re-ordination morally and properly so called, is unlawful: for...it is (or implieth) a lie, viz. that we were not truly dedicated and separated to this office before.” Baxter, *Practical Works*, i.642.

⁵⁵ Letter 660, in *Calendar*, ii.9-10.

⁵⁶ Giles Firmin, *The Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist Stated* (1681), 103-4.

contemporary debate seemed to be doing, and because he was both thorough and conciliatory, “not filling his Papers with such scorns, jeers, and bitter Invectives, as the Episcopal men have done.”⁵⁷ Like the moderate Presbyterians such as Baxter and Henry Hickman, Firmin worried about the resurgence of high-church ceremonial among Episcopalians and the focus on the ancient fathers to the exclusion of the Scriptures. Ken Fincham has noted that “[a]lthough the polemical literature of the early 1660s has never been thoroughly studied, even a preliminary survey shows how the debates of the 1630s resurfaced as the religious settlement was hammered out.”⁵⁸ Although the conditions that gave rise to Laudianism in the 1630s were not in place (most notably, the Episcopal party could not trust Charles II to be reliably on their side, and there was considerably more lay influence and power in the church than there was in the Laudian regime⁵⁹), many of the same arguments resurfaced, and the godly worried about a reprise of imposed ceremonies. Firmin’s debate with a long dead but unimpeachably Calvinist bishop may thus have been itself a form of anti-Laudianism. The implication was that although Davenant was wrong, at least he held to Scriptural substantials in theology and based his arguments for polity in Scripture, whereas the present Laudians only appealed to tradition and were thus no better than papists.

Davenant was clear that hierarchy was necessary for order, and Bishops were necessary for hierarchy: “order is nothing else than the arrangement of equals and unequals, assigning to each its place. Take away the inequality, and, by the same

⁵⁷ Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 2.

⁵⁸ Fincham and Tyacke, *Altars Restored*, 309.

⁵⁹ Fincham and Tyacke, *Altars Restored*, 307-10.

act, you will overthrow all order among the Ministers of Religion.”⁶⁰ However, Davenant’s argument did not rest with the prudential necessity of order in the church, but rather he also insisted that the bishop was typologically and exemplarily represented in Scripture and thus that the office as a distinct order was a *jus divinum*. The Jewish high priest set over the Levitical priesthood was a clear type for Davenant of the bishop, and Christ himself instituted a hierarchical relationship between the twelve apostles and the seventy disciples. The Presbyters continued the work of the seventy, whereas the bishops continued the work of the twelve. Firmin responded that the type of the Levitical high priest had a christological rather than ecclesiological antitype, such that it found its consummation in Christ rather than the bishop. The twelve and the seventy, Firmin noted, was “much insisted upon by others” and thus needed to be addressed. John Gauden insisted, for instance, that “the blessed *Apostles* did, during their lives, *preside* as *Bishops*, either in their persons, or by those *faithful Apostolick* men whom they (as *St. Paul* did *Timothy, Titus, Archippus* & others) appointed as *Rulers* or *Bishops* under them.”⁶¹ Even some Presbyterially ordained divines like Humfrey employed this reasoning in their arguments in favor of re-ordination.⁶² For Firmin, the analogy was inapposite because the seventy received their authority directly from Christ rather than from the bishop, and more importantly their charge was identical to that given to the twelve. Most importantly of all, the argument assumed what it set out to prove, namely that bishops were the successors of the apostles. For the proof that the

⁶⁰ John Davenant, *Determinations, or The Resolutions of Certain Theological Questions*, in *A Treatise of Justification*, trans. Josiah Allport, 2 vols. (London, 1846), ii.438.

⁶¹ Gauden, *Hiera Dakrya*, sig. *3r.

⁶² Humfrey, *The Question of Re-ordination*, 66.

bishops were the successors of the apostles, Davenant had only appealed to the fathers, “and those not the most ancient neither,” and this authority was insufficient to make it a *jus divinum*.⁶³ And it was clear to Firmin that other authorities could be cited to show that bishops were not *jure divino* in authority over presbyters, but were so placed as a matter of order, convenience or custom.⁶⁴ This indicates that Firmin identified with the Reconcilers on this point rather than the “rigid” Presbyterians in believing that only the parity between bishops and presbyters was required *jure divino*, and that some eminence could be accorded to bishops so long as this fundamental equality and shared power were acknowledged. Against Davenant’s position that Bishops were a separate order, however, Firmin believed that 1 Peter 5:1 offered a devastating blow:

Writing to the *Presbyters*, [Peter] calls himself a *Presbyter*: Had the Apostle written thus, *The Bishops which are among you I exhort, who also am a Bishop*, this would have been cried up for an invincible Argument to prove that Bishops were the Apostles Successors, for he writes to Bishops, and calls himself a Bishop. Gentlemen, give us fair play I beseech you, the Argument is ours, to prove Presbyters are the successors of *Peter* the Presbyter.⁶⁵

Davenant also insisted that the apostles “placed in the great cities a Bishop, in authority superior to and in power great than, the other Presbyters.”⁶⁶ While Davenant argued that other non-biblical privileges accrued to bishops by virtue of

⁶³ Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 9, 11.

⁶⁴ Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 14. Constantine Jessop also argued that “when the Bishop began to be distinguished in name from the Presbyters, and the forementioned Priestship and Priority was granted him, yet was he not thereby advanced to an order distinct from, and superior to the order of Presbyters, but only to a higher degree within that Order.” Jessop, *The Angel of Ephesus no Bishop of Ephesus* (1660), 59. The same point is made in *Smectymnuus Redivivus*, 44.

⁶⁵ Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 9. See also William Prynne, *The Unbishops of Timothy and Titus*, which was originally printed in 1643 and reprinted in 1660; Zachary Crofton, *Analepsis, or Saint Peter’s Bonds Abide*, 2-4, 17-18.

⁶⁶ Davenant, *Determinations*, ii.438-9.

the nobility of the office, bishops *jure divino* possessed authority distinguishable from and superior to presbyters: “this very singleness of the Episcopal succession, always joined with a certain amplitude of authority is sufficient, in itself, to crush the modern error of the parity of all Ministers.”⁶⁷ Firmin, of course, disagreed. The idea that “the Apostles did ordain but one *Scripture-Bishop* in a great City, is an assertion point-blank against the Scriptures, which shew the contrary.”⁶⁸ Paul did not mention a bishop over Corinth in his epistles, and he argued that not all those whom Davenant called bishops were bishops “*proprie dicti*.” He mentioned Prynne’s *Unbishops of Timothy and Titus* as offering an irrefutable argument against referring to them as bishops in the contemporary sense. Moreover, against Davenant’s argument that bishops were “placed” in one city, that many of them in Scripture were actually classed as evangelists, and thus they were mobile.⁶⁹ He found others arguing that the bishops were initially evangelists and subsequently consecrated bishops, but the difficulty was that “after that time, when you say they were made Bishops, we find them sent up and down by *Paul*.”⁷⁰ For Firmin it could not be proved according to the Scriptures that bishops were something other than Presbyters, nor that there was but one bishop placed over each city. On all of these points, Firmin was rehearsing godly polemic that had been repeated from Cartwright through the Westminster Assembly, which confirms Fincham’s argument that polemic in the 1660s reprised arguments from the 1630s and before.

⁶⁷ Davenant, *Determinations*, ii.440-1.

⁶⁸ Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 15.

⁶⁹ Daniel Featley added to this an argument drawn from Apocalypse 10:20: “The Angels of the seven Churches...were no other in the judgement of the best Learned Commentators both Ancient and Later, then the Bishops of those sees.” Featley, *The League Illegal* (1660), 49.

⁷⁰ Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 10-13, quote on 13.

The enhanced authority attached to the office of bishop as distinct order from Presbyter that Davenant insisted upon manifested itself supremely in the work of ordination. Davenant quoted a letter from Jerome with the rhetorical question, “What does a Bishop do, ordination excepted, which a Presbyter does not?”⁷¹ That this power could only be episcopally exercised meant that ordination by presbyters was not only unlawful but “null and void,” although it might be valid in schismatic times or times of necessity.⁷² As for the argument that the terms *presbyteros* and *episkopos* were used interchangeably in scripture, Davenant argued that this was from “promiscuous use” of the terms given the equality of presbyters and bishops “in respect of humility” and given that both were called to “keep watch, and superintend the promoting of the salvation of souls.”⁷³ This promiscuous usage did not imply the absolute parity of presbyters and bishops in New Testament times, however. Firmin responded to Davenant by quoting Jerome back to him. Jerome had also declared rhetorically, “Doth any one think it is our own opinion, and not the sentence of the Scriptures that a Bishop & a Presbyter are one?” and he explained the quoted section from Davenant’s disputation by saying that “*Jerom speaks de facto*, the Bishops had engrossed this power, but he does not say *de jure*, it ought to be so, for he had strongly proved the Bishop and Presbytery from several Scriptures to be the same.”⁷⁴ On this point, Firmin was in negative agreement with Edward Stillingfleet, who argued as well that Jerome was speaking *de facto* rather than *de*

⁷¹ Davenant, *Determinations*, ii.442. See also Idem, *Exposition of the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians*, trans. Josiah Allport, 2 vols. (London, 1831), i.lvii-iii.

⁷² Davenant, *Determinations*, ii.443.

⁷³ Davenant, *Determinations*, ii.446.

⁷⁴ Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 15, 17.

jure and took this to be an argument in favor of the prudential acceptance of bishops.⁷⁵ In *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, then, Firmin was opposed, like Henry Hickman, to the Laudian vision of Peter Heylin and Thomas Pierce, among others, and his logic in the tract was thus nearly identical to that of Hickman's: "The question is not whether Antiquity had Bishops, but whether Antiquity did believe a Bishop to be of a Superior order to a Presbyter; and if that were proved, it would be a second question whether that superiority of order were founded on humane or Divine institution; and if it could be proved that there is a Divine Institution of and for a Bishop, it may still be questioned whether that divine Institution do make him necessary and essential to Ordination, that any Ordination which is made by meer Presbyters is *in natura rei, null and void.*"⁷⁶

Firmin also agreed with Presbyterians (in the narrow sense) like Zachary Crofton that, if Davenant's argument for the *jus divinum* of bishops held, then Presbyterian ordination would be nullified. To accept episcopal ordination in such a case was to disavow their former ministry and to "unchurch" the other non-Episcopal Reformed churches. Some pro-Episcopal divines in the early Restoration such as Richard Hooke and Peter Heylin attempted to respond to this charge by suggesting that Beza and Calvin, and even the Scottish churches, approved of bishops: "Will you Appeale to Mr. *Calvin* and *Beza*, the Patrons and Erectors of Presbyteriall Government?...when they speak the words of sobriety, they speak Honourably of Bishops, and acknowledge Episcopacy to be agreeable to the Scriptures....[in the Church of Scotland] before the Presbytery was established, they

⁷⁵ Stillingfleet, *Irenicum*, 277-8, 283.

⁷⁶ Henry Hickman, *Laudensium apostasia* (1660), sig. a4r; see also 58-62.

set up Superintendents, whose Stipend they make larger, and Power greater, than Ordinary Ministers.”⁷⁷ Similarly, Gauden argued that Calvin’s advocacy of Presbytery was prudential and did not oppose episcopacy, but that Beza had moved beyond Calvin to endorse Presbytery *jure divino*.⁷⁸ It was not a problem that the English church “came not behind the very *best Reformed Churches*” because “it is and hath been the *joint suffrage* of all *eminent Divines* in all forraign Reformed Churches, who have written and spoken of the *Church of England*, ever since its *settled* reformation, not with *commendation* onely, but *admiration*.”⁷⁹ These claims, if they could be verified, would have dealt with the concerns about unchurching the other Reformed churches, but not with the concern that reiteration of one’s ordination did not add to or enhance one’s former ordination but rather nullified it, effectively unchurching ministers in one’s own nation. Not all viewed the matter this way, but Gauden and others had no issue admitting this point, since they saw Presbyterians and Independents who refused to conform most basically as seditious and power hungry purveyors of “folly, pride, levity, ignorance, lukewarmnesse, lazinesse, deadnesse, hypocrisie, malice, presumption, rebellion, covetousnesse, ambition, sacriledge, profanenesse, coldnesse, Atheism, Apostasie, uncharitableness, disorderly walking, disobedience [and] unthankfulness to God.”⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Richard Hooke, *The Bishops Appeale, or An Adresse of the Brethren of the Presbyteriall Judgment...wherein among other things is manifested, That the Reformed Churches, both Lutheran and Calvinist; yea, Calvin, Beza, and the Church of Scotland it self, have given their Suffrages for Episcopacy* (1661), 17, 20. Peter Heylin, *Ecclesia Restaurata, or The History of the Reformation in the Church of England* (1661), 79-80; Anthony Milton, *Laudian and Royalist Polemic In Seventeenth-Century England: The Career and Writings of Peter Heylin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 83ff.

⁷⁸ Gauden, *Hiera Dakrya*, sigs. **2v-**4r.

⁷⁹ Gauden, *Hiera Dakrya*, 70, cf. 86.

⁸⁰ Gauden, *Hiera Dakrya*, 61-2, 74-5, 80-1.

Zachary Crofton was a “Presbyterian proper” who vehemently held that no one had ever been re-ordained who had been validly ordained the first time, and as such also argued that to accept re-ordination was to accept that one’s first ordination was invalid. Were anyone to accept re-ordination, then, this would in effect be visibly proclaiming that no Presbyterian ordination anywhere was valid. Where, as for instance in the provisions of the Council of Nicaea, laying on of hands was provided for schismatically ordained priests who were received back into the church, this was not “*Re-ordination properly so called, but first ordination, supposing what they had received, was null and void.*”⁸¹ And by analogy, all ordinations performed in a similar matter to the voided ordination would likewise be null and void. Firmin agreed with Crofton’s conclusions, explaining that

if it comes to this, that I must renounce my Presbyterial Ordination and be ordained by a Bishop, or I must silenced, I shall desire grace from the Lord, and resolve to lay down my Ministry, before I will my Ordination: for in being re-ordained by Bishops,

1. I must plainly condemn all Ministers of other Churches, who are ordained only by Presbyters: how abominable is this? To null all other Ministers that have not Episcopal ordination.
2. I must establish an officer in the Church which Christ never did, nor his Apostles, yea, and this the chief Officer.
3. Episcopal Ordinations have other Appendices, of subscriptions which the Lord delivers us from. I omit the flightiness of Bishops in their Ordinations, above that I have seen among Presbyters.⁸²

Firmin was convinced that presbyter and bishop were the same office exercising the same power, such that if Episcopal ordination was valid, Presbyterian ordination was valid: “If the Scripture hath now invested any others with the power of Ordination, they are persons either of an Inferiour or Superiour Order, but neither:

⁸¹ Zachary Crofton, *A Serious Review*, 6, cf. 11, 15, 21, 27, 29, 38.

⁸² Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 29.

Ergo. Not Inferiour is granted, not Superiour, the whole Discourse before proves, by the judgment of the Scriptures, and many agreeing thereto; Presbyter and Bishop are the same.”⁸³

Firmin’s arguments in favor of Presbyterianial ordination thus allowed some limited room for Episcopal oversight but adamantly denied the possibility of Episcopal re-ordination. Firmin rhetorically belonged with the party of the Reconcilers but as a practical matter, he was closer to someone like Crofton, whose commitments disallowed the possibility of Episcopacy.

Gifted ministers and the imposition of the liturgy

John Gauden⁸⁴ (1599/1600-1662), whom we have already discussed, was one of the most conciliatory of the Restoration bishops in his dealings with the Presbyterians who petitioned for prayer book revisions and primitive episcopacy in the interest of an ecclesiastical settlement broad enough to encompass their scruples. As one of the appointees to the 1661 Conference at Savoy, Gauden showed himself the most willing to compromise on revision of the liturgy, and for this leniency he found himself distrusted and opposed by the then Bishop of London and future Archbishop of Canterbury Gilbert Sheldon. Sheldon was not only suspicious of Gauden for his role in the Savoy Conference, but also because of his actions during the Interregnum. Gauden was persuaded by several moderate Presbyterians to cease using the Book of Common Prayer and adopt the Reformed pattern of the

⁸³ Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 24. See also Crofton, *A Serious Review*, 13, 17, 19, 23, 31.

⁸⁴ For the following see Bryan Spinks, “John Gauden,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/10456?docPos=1> (accessed Sept. 22, 2014); Beddard, “Reward for Services Rendered,” 61-91.

Directory of Worship, and a number of the godly pled his earlier non-conformity against him in the post-Restoration pamphlet literature.⁸⁵

Archbishop Sheldon's suspicion of Gauden seems not to have been entirely justified, however. Gauden protested the execution of Charles in *Cromwell's Bloody Slaughter House*, which though only published in 1660, was reported by the stationer to have been "pen'd many years ago, and sent over from the *Hague* to be Printed here, for his Majesties service; but was hindered hitherto upon this occasion. The Printer to whose care it was commended, fell into som trouble, for som Acts of *Loyalty*, which were then call'd *Treason*, such as were the Printing of the late King's incomparable book, entituled *Eikon Basilike*."⁸⁶ This claim receives some credibility from the fact that Gauden seems to have been charged with the "ghost writing" of *Eikon Basilike*, a hagiographic martyrdom account of Charles I, and authoring the preface to the account.⁸⁷ This work elicited "a reward for services rendered" from Charles II in the form of preferment to the bishopric of Exeter in 1661.⁸⁸ As Ken Fincham and Nicholas Tyacke have pointed out, the appointment of Gauden for Exeter reflected Charles's desire for "a broad range of churchmanship," since he was far from the hardline Laudian that Robert Bosher has suggested were

⁸⁵ Zachary Crofton, *Altar-Worship, or Bowing to the Communion Table* (1661), sig. a7r; Idem, *Analepsis, or St Peters Bonds Abide*, 37; Firmin, *Liturgical Considerator Considered*, 25.

⁸⁶ Gauden, *Cromwell's Bloody Slaughter House* (1650), "The Stationer to the Reader," sigs. A3r-A4v

⁸⁷ Anon., *Eikon Basilike* (1649). On the problem of the authorship of this work, see Hugh Trevor-Roper, "Eikon Basilike: The Problem of the King's Book," *History Today*, 1:9 (1951), 7-12; Ernest Sirluck, "Eikon Basilike,' 'Eikon Alethine' and 'Eikonoklastes,'" *Modern Language Notes* 69 (1954), 497-502.

⁸⁸ Beddard, "Reward for Services Rendered," 61. Gauden complained, however, that the revenues were only £500 a year and asked to be preferred instead to the vacant bishopric at Winchester. He was ultimately preferred to the see at Worcester, but was never able to occupy the throne there nor take advantage of its revenues due to his death in 1662. See Spinks, "John Gauden."

the great victors in the Restoration.⁸⁹ Despite these post-Restoration *bona fides*, his accommodation to the godly during and after the Interregnum forced him to defend his reputation in print after the Restoration. On top of Gauden's sins in the Interregnum, unlike the Laudians Wren, Sheldon, Sterne, Walton, Duppa, Frewen, Cosin, and Lucy, Gauden's churchmanship was comparatively "low." He edited Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiasticall Politie* in 1662 and argued in his preface to the work that although bishops were part of the apostolic deposit and therefore *jure divino*, only a reduced or primitive form of episcopacy was acceptable.⁹⁰ He also argued that Hooker judiciously maintained a reserved approach to ceremonial and that after his defense of it, "the strength of the Church of *England* was much decayed and undermined, before it was openly battered; partly by some superfluous, illegal, and unauthorized innovations in point of Ceremony, which some men affected to use in publique, and impose upon others, which provoked people to jealousie and fury, even against things lawful."⁹¹ That he did not wholly approve of Laudian churchmanship made Gauden suspect to those who like Sheldon favored *jure divino* Episcopacy and lavish ceremonial.

At the same time, his comparatively low churchmanship made him an agreeable dialogue partner for moderates among the godly who hoped for

⁸⁹ Fincham and Tyacke, *Altars Restored*, 307.

⁹⁰ John Gauden, "The Life and Death of Mr. Hooker," in *The Works of Mr. Richard Hooker* (1662), 4, 13-16, 18-19, 24-25, 28, 39. On the matter of ecclesiastical polity, Gauden seems to have been enamored with the myth of Hooker as defender of the Church of England as the *via media* between Rome and Geneva in its polity: "He was onely to repair and fortifie those parts of its *outworks*, as to Order, Decency, Polity and Government, which either the Romish Arts and Policies or *Schismatical* *discontents* and factious designs sought to undermine and overthrow. For this end, he like an excellent Engineer, lays out his work or line of *circumvallation* by that exact method, that every one of his *eight Books*, like so many *Sconces* and *Bulwarks* well placed, aptly coresond and serve both to adorn and defend each other." *Ibid.*, 18, cf. 40, and see also Gauden's analysis of the dispute with Travers concerning the legitimacy of the Roman church on 29-31.

⁹¹ Gauden, "Life and Death," 4, see also 16, 18.

comprehension within the national church. The publication in 1661 of Gauden's *Some Considerations Touching the English Liturgy*, which was a short and pointed rejoinder to those among the godly who wanted not only to revise the liturgy but to abolish it in favor of free prayers led by a gifted minister, must as a result have been somewhat disappointing to moderate Presbyterians. Gauden acknowledged that the liturgy had a number of "venial" flaws touching its language and organization, but that these did not amount to an argument against its lawfulness.⁹² The most contentious of these issues, Gauden realized, related to the use of set forms of prayer, especially the collects, which inhibited gifted ministers from praying, and the language of baptismal regeneration that appeared in the liturgy. He argued, however, that these minor flaws should not keep anyone from subscribing to the Book of Common Prayer.

Gauden asserted that he esteemed "the *real and useful gifts of learned and discreet Ministers in Prayer*...when used with *humility, gravity, discretion, devotion, and sincerity*," but he believed that the liturgy allowed ample space for free prayer by ministers "before and after their Sermons." To desire more than this "were *pride in Ministers so to prefer their own, as to reject the other; so it were a great folly in people, and an injury to their souls, to be content with one when they may have both; or to dote on any Ministers private spirit and abilities in prayer, as to neglect the publick Spirit in the Liturgy.*"⁹³ He viewed those who wanted to abolish liturgy in favor of free prayer as enemies of the church, especially since they depreciatingly referred to the *BCP* as the "Romish missal," when in Gauden's view the *BCP*

⁹² Gauden, *Considerations Touching the Liturgy* (1660), 5.

⁹³ Gauden, *Considerations*, 19, 39.

separated the true and ancient in the liturgy from the “*Romish corruption in Doctrine, or Superstition in Devotion*” as the “*wheat from chaff*.”⁹⁴ Moreover, the number of flaws were certain to be less, given the number of godly divines who collaborated to compose the liturgy than in extemporaneous services composed by “private ministers.”⁹⁵ Even for those Presbyterians opposed to set prayers, the sound doctrine and suggestions for prayer contained in the *Book of Common Prayer* compared favorably with the *Directory of Worship* that the Westminster Assembly created, which was “*uselesse, suppositious, loose and illegitimate*.”⁹⁶ Since the abolition of the *BCP*, Anabaptism had increased and knowledge of Christian doctrine had declined among the laity.⁹⁷ Lastly, Gauden asserted, if the godly desired knowledge and holiness in the laity, the liturgy was the best means for accomplishing this task: “To the advance of all which excellent duties, uses and ends, nothing (save *the grace* of God on mens hearts) will more contribute then Ministers grave, reverent, deliberate, pathetick, devout, and constant using of the Liturgy (with and before their own prayers) as an excellent means by little and little to edifie common people by frequent inculcations in *faith* and *charity*.”⁹⁸

The language of baptismal regeneration, Gauden recognized, was also a stumbling block for non-conformist ministers. The *BCP* tied the impartation of the Holy Spirit, and hence regeneration, to the act of baptism, and therefore required the baptism of every child in the realm. In the Savoy Conference of 25 Mar. 1661, the

⁹⁴ Gauden, *Considerations*, 18-19.

⁹⁵ Gauden, *Considerations*, 7.

⁹⁶ Gauden, *Considerations*, 6.

⁹⁷ Gauden, *Considerations*, 18, 39.

⁹⁸ Gauden, *Considerations*, 43.

participating non-conformist ministers submitted a particular exception to the requirement of baptism of all children, arguing that “There being divers Learned, Pious, and Peaceable Ministers, who not only judge it unlawful to Baptize Children, whose Parents both of them are Atheists, Infidels, Hereticks, or Unbaptised, but also such whose Parents are Excommunicate Persons, Fornicators, or otherwise notorious and scandalous Sinners; We desire they may not be enforced to Baptize the Children of such until they have made due Profession of their Repentance.”⁹⁹ They also argued against the use of sponsors or Godparents in the ceremony for the same reason, namely that the infant’s right to baptism was tied to the parent’s right.¹⁰⁰ Lastly, they argued for an agnostic position on infant baptism, claiming that “we cannot in Faith say, that every Child that is baptized is *regenerated by God’s Holy Spirit*; at least it is a disputable point, and therefore we desire it may be otherwise expressed” and also argued that it was empirically clear that many did not have the Spirit of Christ and evidenced no signs of regeneration.¹⁰¹ The bishops took a hard line against the non-conformists on each of these points, defending the exact formulations of the *BCP*. On the first point, they concluded that not to extend the right to all infants would “very hard and uncharitable, punishing the poor Infants for the Parents sakes” and also giving the pastor too much power of judgment over who deserved baptism. In responding to the rejection of sponsors, the bishops flatly countered that “it is an erroneous doctrine, and the ground of many others, and of many of your Exceptions, that children have no other right to Baptism than in their

⁹⁹ *The Savoy Conference Revisited: The Proceedings Taken from the Grand Debate of 1661 and the Works of Richard Baxter*, ed. Colin Buchanan (Cambridge: Grove Books Unlimited, 2002), 52.

¹⁰⁰ *Savoy Conference Revisited*, 54.

¹⁰¹ *Savoy Conference Revisited*, 56, 64.

Parents right” and rested on the antiquity of the practice of sponsorship. Lastly, the bishops insisted that the sacrament of baptism was efficacious “where the Receiver doth not *ponere obicem*...which children cannot do” and thus that baptismal regeneration was a correct expression of the church’s faith.¹⁰² Gauden agreed with the bishops, but he wanted to “remove this *scruple*” from the non-conformists and sought to do so by distinguishing between “passive” and “active” regeneration to demonstrate to those that believed that baptismal regeneration meant that salvation was secured for all those to whom it was administered. Baptismal regeneration for Gauden only entailed the removal of the original sin of Adam from the infant, “but if it live to wilfull *actual* sin, it must have a further active work of *regeneration*, by an *actual faith* and *regeneration*, without which ‘tis sure there is no salvation for knowing, malicious, presumptuous *actuall sinners*.”¹⁰³

Considerations upon the Liturgy was intended as an irenic text, and Gauden was only attacking those who, like most Congregationalists, wanted to do away with set prayers altogether. Gauden had already during the Interregnum declared his disdain for the Congregational approach to ecclesiology and orders.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, it is clear that Gauden saw Richard Baxter as a paradigmatic moderate who could be persuaded, given a willingness among the bishops to revise the errors in the liturgy, to conform to the national church:

I cannot but commend the *candor, justice, and ingenuity* of Mr. *Baxter*, who lately protested to me, that he saw nothing in the *Liturgy* which might not well bear a good construction, if men looked upon it as became Chrisitans

¹⁰² *Savoy Conference Revisited*, 53, 55, 57, cf. 65.

¹⁰³ Gauden, *Considerations*, 14.

¹⁰⁴ See John Gauden, *Hieraspistes, A Defense by Way of Apology for the Ministry and Ministers of the Church of England* (1653), 179, 189-211, 253-58, 436-9.

with eyes of *charity*: Nor do I doubt but the faithfull people of the *Church of England* have since the Reformation served *God acceptably day and night*, in the solemn, devout and holy use of the *Liturgy*.¹⁰⁵

Given his irenic spirit, it would seem that Gauden would have been an ideal conversation partner for Firmin. However, in *The Liturgical Considerator Considered*, Firmin was nothing if not disdainful of Gauden's efforts, and he and Zachary Crofton, who authored the Epistle to the Reader, piled insults on to Gauden's work. Firmin and Crofton both accused Gauden of idolizing the prayer book and asserted that if one allowed Gauden's approach, "it is sure, time and season this holy Book be placed on the Altar, handled and opened by the Priest, only, with no less reverence than the Jews Thorah, or Papists Mass-Book."¹⁰⁶ Rather than helping to heal the divisions of the country, Gauden's "sarcastical Pen hath dropped as much gall as ink against those who are not of his perswasion."¹⁰⁷ Firmin implied that Gauden's intellect was not up to snuff by relating a story from a friend of Henry Hammond's: "when his first book came forth with that magnificent Title, *Hieraspistes*, I mentioned this Book that Dr. *Gauden* had put forth, unto him; he made a Pause before he gave me an Answer, then all he answered, was this, *Good store of words*. Surely if his own Party were not pleased with his Writings, judicious men of a contrary perswasion would not be converted by them."¹⁰⁸ Firmin also deemed Gauden a covenant breaker, and he compared him to Peter in Paul's letter to the Galatians: "To conclude these things, I find amongst you; after a solemn Covenant made on the contrary, and for

¹⁰⁵ Gauden, *Considerations*, 33.

¹⁰⁶ Firmin, *Liturgical Considerator Considered*, sig. a4r, 30-1.

¹⁰⁷ Firmin, *Liturgical Considerator Considered*, 3.

¹⁰⁸ Firmin, *Liturgical Considerator Considered*, 4.

extirpation of these your humane inventions: I am not of your *Faith* Doctor; that *Paul* would rejoyce, but would send you such a kind of Epistle as he did to the *Galatians*.”¹⁰⁹ Firmin’s and Crofton’s hostility to Gauden requires some explaining, and we will evaluate the grounds for it both here and in the next section.

Firmin, like other Presbyterians, tended to frame his objections to the liturgy not as condemnations of ceremonial or set prayers taken in themselves, but only against the “violent imposition” of these ceremonies upon the godly.¹¹⁰ This was of course a common argument advanced among earlier Puritans, but the argument received new life in the early Restoration.¹¹¹ Baxter pled to the bishops that “as Antiquity and the custom of the Churches in the first ages [rather than Scripture], is that which is most commonly pleaded against us...we beseech you let us not be silenced or cast out of the Ministry or Church, for not using the Liturgy, Cross, Surplice, Kneeling at the Sacrament” until the bishops could prove that it was the practice of the church catholic to adorn Christian worship with such accouterments.¹¹² For their part, the Bishops responded that it was an irrational position to take that something lawful in itself could not be imposed on all by a lawful authority. The Laudians prioritized order and conformity over the Christian liberty argued for by Presbyterians, and even non-Laudian bishops like George Morley could warn Baxter that he “ought to remember, that as there is no sin more

¹⁰⁹ Firmin, *Liturgical Considerator Considered*, 31.

¹¹⁰ Matthew Poole, *Evangelical Worship is Spiritual Worship* (London, 1660), sig. a4v; Richard Baxter, *The Grand Debate between the Most Reverend the Bishops and the Presbyterian Divines* (1661), 98-104; Crofton, “Epistle to the Reader,” *Liturgical Considerator Considered*, sig. a3r.

¹¹¹ On the Elizabethan period, see Mark Chapman, *Anglican Theology*, 80-3.

¹¹² Baxter, *The Grand Debate*, 115.

heinous than Rebellion, so no teacher ought to be more scandalous (I am sure there is none more dangerous) than a teacher of Rebellion.”¹¹³

Some fashionable practices among the Laudians, especially bowing toward the altar, were condemned in no uncertain terms among the godly as “popish and pagan,” and the publication of tracts such as Simon Duncon’s *Ortholatreaia*, which declared among other things that “kneeling is the sinner’s posture,” did not help to assure the godly that the Laudian bishops were not crypto-papists.¹¹⁴ Eleazar Duncon’s *De Adoratione Dei* revived the popish sentiment that the altar was “the best, Chiefest, and Holiest part of all the Church Household-stuffe,” but declared that “we attribute no particle of our Worship to the *Altar*, either transitively or relatively, or any other way; we onely reverence God before or towards the *Altar*,” a position which confirmed the suspicion of the godly that episcopal divines were popishly affected.¹¹⁵ Zachary Crofton was among the most zealous of the godly against such “superstitious” practices, mocking the Laudians for professing an altar without a sacrifice and insisting that the Laudians had no authority from either God nor from the state to impose bowing toward the altar upon the godly, particularly since the church’s canons referred to the “communion table” rather than an altar.¹¹⁶ Likewise

¹¹³ George Morley, *The Bishop of Worcester’s Letter to a Friend for Vindication of Himself from Mr. Baxter’s Calumny* (1662), 32.

¹¹⁴ Simon Gunton, *Ortholatreaia* (London, 1661), 89. There was certainly a retrieval of what Peter Lake has called “the Laudian style” among these conformist Restoration divines. Peter Lake, “The Laudian Style: Order, Uniformity, and the Pursuit of the Beauty of Holiness in the 1630s,” in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642*, ed. by Kenneth Fincham (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1993), 161-185. See also Idem, *The Boxmakers Revenge: “Orthodoxy,” “Heterodoxy,” and the Politics of the Parish in Early Stuart London* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2001), 298-341.

¹¹⁵ Eleazar Duncon, *De Adoratione Dei* (London, 1661), 20, 14.

¹¹⁶ Zachary Crofton, *Altar-Worship*, 10, 49, 76-8, 88, 95-6, 112; see also the republication of Henry Burton’s *Jesu Worship Confuted* (1660), 4; Daniel Cawdrey, *Bowing towards the Altar upon Religious Reasons, Impleaded as Grossely Superstitious* (1661), 7-8; Hickman, *Laudensium Apostasia*, 51-2; Idem, *Plus Ultra, or England’s Reformation Needing to Be Reformed* (1661), 16-17. Among the Laudians,

Daniel Cawdrey blasted the practice of bowing toward the altar as favoring “too much of *Romish* superstition.”¹¹⁷

However, moderate Puritans did not denounce set prayers or liturgical formulae in and of themselves, and in fact they insisted that they did not require agreement in all the “punctilios” of worship as a basis for conformity, which might seem to contradict the parallel insistence that all “substantials” of worship were provided for in Scripture.¹¹⁸ One might see in the former declaration a kind of ecumenical flourish, since the godly also tended to condemn ceremonial indirectly by arguing for the “spirituality” of worship which had followed upon the age in which God made “an allowance and indulgence” to “external Rites and Ceremonies”¹¹⁹ among the Jews, and also by prioritizing the prayer and preaching gifts of the minister.¹²⁰ Nonetheless, the godly did not outright anathematize the practice of common prayer, especially for ministers with lesser abilities. Firmin was united with the godly in his condemnation of Laudian innovations, and also in allowing that prayer rubrics in themselves were lawful if not imposed upon those with gifts of prayer. Here Firmin, as with the rest of the godly, was probably not reconcilable with his pet bishop, James Ussher, because Ussher’s order for liturgy, first published in 1642 and republished in 1660, declared that “Of all Prayers, premeditated are

Giles Widdowes had already addressed the objection that one should not bow to a communion table in 1630 against the jibes of William Prynne: “There is sufficient reason; why we should bow towards or at the Holy Communion-table. For we must bow at his Maiesteies Chaire of State, this is a knowne truth: and the King is *Jesus* his Deputie in his Dominions. The Chaire of State of the Lord *Jesus*, his chiefest place of presence in our Church is the Holy Communion-table, and therefore we may bow thereat without Idolatry, to testify thereby the honour that belongs to the Almighty King.” Widdowes, *The Lawlesse, Kneelesse, Schismaticall Puritan* (1630), 89.

¹¹⁷ Cawdrey, *Bowing towards the Altar*, 4, 9, 19, 24, 28.

¹¹⁸ Poole, *Evangelical Worship*, sig. a3r, Cawdrey, *Bowing towards the Altar*, 5; William Prynne, *A Brief Pithy Discourse on 1 Cor. 14, 40* (1661), 7.

¹¹⁹ Poole, *Evangelical Worship*, 6-7, 9, 12, 16, 23.

¹²⁰ Richard Baxter, *The Grand Debate*, 4-5, 31, 36-7, 57-62, 66-69, 71-75.

best...and of premeditated prayers, those which are allowed by publick authority, are to be preferred before those which are to be uttered by any private spirit.”¹²¹ This may be why some Presbyterians blasted the pamphlet upon its republication in 1660 as a forgery. The anonymous tract written against Gauden’s *Analysis, The Anatomy of Dr. Gauden’s Idolized Non-sense*, declared that the pamphlet was “a meer fiction, and a lye.”¹²²

These Presbyterians also found themselves at odds with living Bishops like Gauden and Reynolds who insisted upon use of the liturgy.¹²³ Thomas Bolde blasted Gauden for branding the godly who refused to take up the *Book of Common Prayer* as schismatic and for depreciating the *Directory for Worship*.¹²⁴ Gauden’s claim that the liturgy was a bulwark against papacy was belied by the fact that Edward VI had assuaged papists by claiming that the Prayer Book was the “masse in English.”¹²⁵ Like Matthew Poole, Bolde claimed that the church in infancy needed set prayers and external ceremonies but that she had long abandoned “the *puerilia* of Jewish Ceremonies.”¹²⁶ Gauden’s treatment of baptismal regeneration was particularly anathema for Bolde. Gauden’s allowance of apostasy after baptism “may make all

¹²¹ It is possible that Ephraim Udall and not Ussher was the original author of this pamphlet. On the authorship of the pamphlet, see Arnold Hunt, “Ephraim Udall,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/27972> (accessed Sept. 22, 2014); Anon., *The Bishop of Armagh’s Direction, Concerning the Lyturgy, and Episcoppall Government* (1660), 2.

¹²² Anon., *The Anatomy of Dr. Gauden’s Idolized Non-Sense* (1660), 30.

¹²³ Reynolds’s Articles of Visitation required that the minister “read the publick Prayers, Psalms and Lessons out of the Old and New Testament, and other parts of divine service, and celebrate every divine Office, in such form, manner, and habit as is prescribed.” Church of England, *Articles to be Enquired of in the Diocese of Norwich*, 3.

¹²⁴ Thomas Bolde, *Rhetorick Restrained* (1660), 3.

¹²⁵ Bolde, *Rhetorick Restrained*, 8.

¹²⁶ Bolde, *Rhetorick Restrained*, 13.

Infants...desire *to be baptized as soon as born*, and...may make them desire *to die as soon as baptized*.”¹²⁷

Firmin’s arguments in *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated* and *The Liturgical Considerator Considered* followed these Presbyterian objections closely. Firmin did not oppose set prayers *per se* as unlawful, but he believed that imposing them “upon men gifted and able” was unlawful. Firmin argued that divines in England and New England allowed the use set prayers so long as they were not imposed: “I finde that the old holy Non-Conformists were not offended at a bare form of Prayer, but some particular things in the Common prayer-Book, and truly those are many. Yea, I finde the Congregationall Divines, in *New-England*, though they use no forms, [they are able indeed] yet they dare not condemn all Forms of prayer in the Church, divers of them at least would not do it.” However, Firmin also explained that forms of prayer were at best “crutches” which should not be imposed upon those who are well.¹²⁸ Moreover, set prayers could offend other Christians, an objection Firmin believed the Bishops had not answered sufficiently. He listed the treatment of his father-in-law Nathaniel Wards’s objection by Laud: “My Father pleaded that Text of *Paul*, He would not offend his *weak* Brother, Why then should the Bishop offend him by imposing the Surplice?” Laud ejected Nathaniel Ward for raising the question, which indicated to Firmin not only that it was naked power rather than authority being exercised and that there was no good response to the godly objection to ceremonial. Moreover, Firmin argued, the “Gift of Prayer” in addition to the “Grace of Prayer” was one of the chief qualifications of godly ministers, and the requirement to read

¹²⁷ Bolde, *Rhetorick Restrained*, 22-5, quote on 25.

¹²⁸ Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 35.

prayers, “the effect of the gift of others,” frustrated that gift. Imposing prayers seemed to suggest that the writers of such prayers thought more of their gifts than the gifts of the godly, and it treated the godly the same as other “insufficient men...wanting gifts.”¹²⁹ Imposing prayers would also keep away “the best Worshippers of God” because they did not come to hear “what their children at home can do,” and it would expose ministers to the contempt of the laity.¹³⁰ The imposition of prayers was also unlawful because the prayers were not drawn from Scripture. Even still, “Impose no other Prayers upon us but Scripture-forms, and we shall not refuse to use them, though not them only. The Lords Prayer is the most compleat of all the Forms, yet we are not bound to that form only; I hope, we may use other prayers while keeping that substance.”¹³¹

Even allowing the theoretical legitimacy of liturgy, however, Firmin closely circumscribed what prayers and ceremonial would be considered legitimate. One of his complaints was that the *Book of Common Prayer* contained many errors of popish origin. He pointed out that Davenant commended the *Book of Common Prayer* by arguing that there was nothing in it that Papists would not use and that some Roman Bishops would authorize the Prayer Book if they would accept it by Rome’s authority.¹³² Worse than the content of the prayers, however, was the popishness of the church’s ceremonial. There was no Scripture indicated for the right of the church to impose ceremonies and practices except for 1 Cor. 14, “Let all things be done decently and in Order,” which Firmin found an inadequate ground

¹²⁹ Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 33, 35, 37.

¹³⁰ Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 34.

¹³¹ Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 36.

¹³² Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 37; Davenant, *Determinations*, ii.359-360.

for the proliferation of ceremonies, non-Scriptural prayers, and vestments.¹³³ Unsurprisingly, the surplice was a chief objection for Firmin. The surplice was supposed to represent the holiness of the one worshipping, as Thomas Westfield declared in his series of sermons entitled *The White Robe*: “in the Primitive Church, the common time of publique Baptisme was *Easter* and *Whitsund*. & those that were baptized, as soon as they were baptized had a white garment put on them. The Church tooke liberty in those dayes to appoint Vestments of Order and Decency; they were then in the white of their new birth; all went in white that were newly baptized, as upon this day; their Bodies, their Soules, their Garments, all white.”¹³⁴ Firmin’s riposte was to inquire why, since all are worshippers, only the minister was required to wear the surplice.¹³⁵ There were plenty of ministers who wore the surplice who did not bear out the signification of the sign in their ordinary conversation.¹³⁶ Most importantly though, the surplice was a merely human invention, and a popish and pagan one at that, and hence it was unlawful.¹³⁷ Firmin also opposed the cross at baptism and kneeling at the sacrament, along with most of the godly.¹³⁸

Firmin also found fault with Gauden’s treatment of baptismal regeneration.

Firmin objected both to the fact that regeneration was applied to all infants equally

¹³³ Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 38.

¹³⁴ Thomas Westfield, *The White Robe* (1660), 52-3. The protest against the imposition of popish vestments was, of course, a standard feature of godly nonconformity since the Vestments controversies of the Edwardian and Elizabethan periods. See, *inter alia*, Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 60, 67-83, 88-9, 93-6, 123, 364; Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterians and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 21-9.

¹³⁵ Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 43.

¹³⁶ Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 42.

¹³⁷ Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 46.

¹³⁸ Firmin, *Presbyterial Ordination Vindicated*, 46, 48; Idem, *Liturgical Considerator Considered*, 23.

through baptism in Gauden's formulation, and that Gauden said nothing of the parent's role in baptism.¹³⁹ The association of regeneration with baptism took away from the efficacy of the word preached, since the word was unnecessary to any who died in the state of grace produced by baptism.¹⁴⁰ Firmin's insistence that the child's right to baptism was a derivative right from the parent was an area in which he diverged from some Presbyterians like Cawdrey and Blake, but he was in agreement with others as diverse as Baxter and Crofton.¹⁴¹ Those who denied baptismal regeneration were not agreed among themselves about how to interpret the good that baptism did for the baptized, but Firmin agreed with Crofton that "The Moral swasion of any Ordinance is too short to sanctifie or solace any Spirit without supernatural Grace: but supernatural Grace comes not into any soul to convince or comfort but by a moral improvement of every Ordinance by rational meditation of its nature, use, and end."¹⁴² Like Bolde, Firmin thought that baptismal regeneration placed the infant in the position that it should rather die than live, because it could only decline from its present state of grace instead of improving upon the ordinance that had been administered to it.¹⁴³ Firmin's arguments against Gauden on the liturgy indicate that although Firmin retained his fondness for the New England divines, he was closely affiliated by the early Restoration with the class of Presbyterians that included Crofton, Poole, and Baxter, who were not opposed to the liturgy itself but who refused to have it imposed upon them.

¹³⁹ Firmin, *Liturgical Considerator Considered*, 24.

¹⁴⁰ Firmin, *Liturgical Considerator Considered*, 25.

¹⁴¹ Zachary Crofton, *The Vertue and Value of Baptisme* (1663), 20, 22, 139-43.

¹⁴² Crofton, *Vertue and Value of Baptism*, 167. Firmin, *A Serious Question Stated* (1651), 31.

¹⁴³ Firmin, *Liturgical Considerator Considered*, 25.

The Solemn League and Covenant, primitive Episcopacy, and tyrannical Prelacy

As we have already seen, one place at which Gauden was vulnerable was that he had been persuaded to take the Solemn League and Covenant during the Interregnum. The Covenant urged in part that it was the duty of all Covenanters to “endeavour the extirpation of Popery, Prelacy...superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever shall be found contrary to sound doctrine and the power of Godliness.” It was thus a desideratum for Gauden, not least in order to receive preferments in the church, to demonstrate in some detail why despite his subscription to it was not binding. Laudians like Matthew Wren and Gryffith Williams attacked the character and motives of the Covenanters, dismissing their motives out of hand, with Williams going so far as to construct an elaborate numerology putatively proving that the Long Parliament was actually the Antichrist spoken of in Revelation.¹⁴⁴ Gauden’s strategy was considerably more nuanced, consisting in a series of arguments showing first that the Covenant did not preclude the episcopacy of the Restoration church in its strictures against prelacy, and secondly and more importantly that it was deficient in its execution and authority in

¹⁴⁴ A sermon of Wren’s, *An Abandoning of the Scottish Covenant*, was published in 1662, in which he declared wittily that “I know they have used a great while to tell you of a *Solemn League and Covenant*, as though the Name of that should carry it. Alas, poor Souls! The Solemner the League is, the *Covenant’s* the more damnable, Unless it be a right, and a lawfull *Covenant*.” Ibid., xiii. Griffith Williams’ *The Great Antichrist* was presented to Charles II in 1660, proclaiming that the Long Parliament and the Westminster Assembly were in fact the Antichrist proclaimed in Scripture, and that the name it gave to itself proved it by an elaborate numerology: “I told you before, that the *name* and *title*, which *that Parliament* challenged to be *given* unto it selfe is, *custodies nostrarum libertatum*, or, as it was to be used in all *writs*, and in all judiciall Courts, *The Keeper of the Liberties of Ingland, by the Authoritie of our Parliament*; This was the *name*, and this was the *Title*, and the *Inscription*, which by a *secret* instinct of Gods Providence, *unaware* unto themselves, *that Parliament* took, and *appropriated*, as all men know, unto themselves; and this *name*, both in *Latin*, and in *English*, doth make the *full* and *just* number of 666.” Ibid., iii, 51. George Pressick, among others, responded in traditional Protestant form that it was the arrogation of ecclesiastical and secular power to the bishops that marked “the very time Antichrist had his Birth and first bringing forth into the world.” Pressick, *An Answer to Grifith Williams* (1660), 16.

a number of ways. As we will see, however, in his lengthy polemical exchange with Zachary Crofton, Gauden quickly moved beyond his casuistic endeavors to show why the Covenant no longer bound to mimic the Laudian hectoring of Covenant defenders, and this transition to raging polemic was part of the reason why Firmin and others distrusted and disliked him.

Gauden published his *Analysis* in 1660, in which he asserted that the covenant could not be taken as “*abjuring or extirpating of all Episcopacy, though reformed and regulated as it ought to be,*” since if it did it would be in danger of schism as crossing “*the judgment and custome of the Catholick Church.*”¹⁴⁵ Moreover, the covenant was also deficient in a number of ways: it had no exemplar or pattern in Scripture to authorize it, as did the covenant of baptism, it contradicted earlier oaths of the people to loyalty to king and church, it only bound “private men” because less than a quarter of the English people swore to it and thus it lacked authority to bind the whole nation, and most of the men who swore to it were “*bigots and virulent spirits in any sense, against primitive, reformed, and regular Episcopacy.*”¹⁴⁶

Gauden’s short tract was joined and its arguments confirmed in the same year by the publication of a posthumous tract written by Daniel Featley during his imprisonment in Lord Petre’s house on Aldersgate Street in 1644, in the final year of his life. Featley was an advocate of episcopacy who was nonetheless a delegate to the Westminster Assembly. However, he was expelled from the Assembly and

¹⁴⁵ Gauden, *Analysis, The Loosing of Saint Peter’s Bands* (1660), 6, 8, 17.

¹⁴⁶ Gauden, *Analysis*, 11, 13-14. Marcus Harmes argues that Gauden developed a theory of reformed episcopacy for English bishoprics, which coupled with his assessment that the Solemn League and Covenant insisted upon the extirpation of all episcopacy, led to his opposition to the Covenant. Harmes, “Protestant Bishops in Restoration England,” *Parergon* 26.1 (2009): 187-8.

sequestered from his living on 29 September, in his view because he opposed the Solemn League and Covenant and “sided with the Presbyterian against the Independents” on the place of creeds.¹⁴⁷ He was imprisoned after an agent for the London authorities offered to carry a letter from him to James Ussher and then turned him in as a royalist spy.¹⁴⁸ Featley’s final works defended episcopacy and denounced the Covenant’s commitment to extirpate “Prelacy.” *The Gentle Lash*, published in 1644, argued that the Thirty-Nine Articles “need no alteration at all, but onely an Orthodox explication in some ambiguous phrases, and a vindication against false aspersions.” It also contested that episcopacy is a “truly ancient and Apostolical institution” and that the prayer book “is the most compleat perfect and exact Liturgie now extant in the Christian world.”¹⁴⁹ His final publication, which only saw the light of day in 1660 when published by his nephew John Featley (Fairclough), a chaplain to Charles II and staunch critic of non-conformity who served as the older Featley’s curate at Acton in Middlesex in 1642, was *The League Illegal*, which advanced many of the same arguments as Gauden’s *Analysis*.¹⁵⁰ The tract was damaging to the cause of those who sought to enjoin obedience to the Covenant on Presbyterians who were defecting, since it came from the pen of a delegate to the Assembly, and so some denounced it as a forgery. Zachary Crofton urged that the tract was unworthy of “a man so acute and Logical” and offered “arguments by

¹⁴⁷ Daniel Featley, *Sacra Nemesis* (1644), 4; cf. Idem., *The League Illegal*, 29-30.

¹⁴⁸ On this incident see Arnold Hunt, “Daniel Featley,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/9242?docPos=1> (accessed Sept. 22, 2014).

¹⁴⁹ Daniel Featley, *The Gentle Lash* (1644), 31.

¹⁵⁰ See Hunt, “Daniel Featley.”

number, not by *Weight*” and should be considered fraudulent.¹⁵¹ The tract reiterated that the Covenant was unsupported by lawful authority, that there was no precedent for it in Scripture, that its aim was “pulling down Episcopacie, and setting up the Presbyterie,” that it violated previous oaths taken by the people, and that subscribing to the Covenant would constitute a form of “unchurching” Reformed churches as well:

In the second clause what is meant by *Church government by Archbishops, Bishops, &c?* either *all government by Bishops*; or the *present Government only*, with the late *Innovations* and *abuses* thereof. If *all government by Bishops*, then in taking this *Oath*, we condemn not only the *perpetual Government* of the *Church* from the *Apostles* time till the *reformation of Religion* in the dayes of *Hen. 8*. But also the *reformed Churches* in *England, Ireland, Denmark, Swethland, Poland, Saxonie*, and other parts of *Germany*; where either they have *Archbishops* and *Bishops*, or tantamount *Intendents*, and *Superintendents*; If the *present government only*, with *innovations* and *abuses*; let them explain what are the *innovations* and *abuses* we swear against: else we cannot *swear in judgment*. What is meant by *Hierarchy*? The word signifieth *holy Government*....And is it fit *crudely*, without any *glosse*, to *forswear all holy Government*?¹⁵²

The University of Oxford also re-issued a pamphlet first published in 1647 arguing that the Covenant was invalid, again with much the same rationale as Gauden’s and Featley’s tracts. The pamphlet rehearsed the arguments that the Covenant did not have sufficient authority, that it violated the earlier oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance, and it asserted that “it cannot but affect us with some grief and Amazement, to see that ancient form of Church-Government, which we heartily (and, as we hope, worthily) honour...endeavoured to be extirpated...ranked

¹⁵¹ Zachary Crofton, *Analepsis Anelephthe, The Fastning of St. Peters Fetters*, 4-5. Featley’s ODNB article supposes the text to be genuine, but given that Featley’s name was what carried the cache, whether the attribution was authentic is moot.

¹⁵² Featley, *The League Illegal*, 15, 22, 25, 33-35.

with *Popery, Superstition, Heresie, Schism, and Prophanenesse*” and denigrated as contrary to the word of God.¹⁵³ It was also not clear to the divines which churches constituted “the best Reformed churches,” because as far as they could tell, the alterations sought in worship and doctrine were not exemplified in any known church, ancient or modern.¹⁵⁴ The divines acknowledged that the episcopacy was not *jure divino* strictly speaking but maintained nonetheless that it was of “Apostolic Constitution,” and argued that its removal would “render the Reformed religion, and all Protestantism odious to all the world.”¹⁵⁵

Gauden’s, Featley’s, and the Oxford divines’s loosing of obligations to the Covenant predictably provoked a flurry of responses from Presbyterians. The anonymous pamphlet *Anatomy of Dr. Gauden’s Idolized Non-Sense and Blasphemy* unmasked Gauden’s casuistry as pure Jesuitism aimed at returning the Church of England to Rome. Gauden’s argument that baptism was the paradigm for covenanting in Scripture was taken as an endorsement of baptismal regeneration, which savoured “strongly of *Arminianism, and Popery*.”¹⁵⁶ The Covenant in no way contravened the earlier oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance because Parliament enacted it and it was not opposed ultimately by Charles, despite his early protestations.¹⁵⁷ Gauden’s argument that the Covenant did not oppose reduced or

¹⁵³ University of Oxford, *Reasons of the Present Judgment of the University of Oxford concerning The Solemn League and Covenant, The Negative Oath, The Ordinances concerning Discipline and Worship* (1660), 7, 10, 24.

¹⁵⁴ Oxford, *Reasons*, 16-17.

¹⁵⁵ Oxford, *Reasons*, 8-9, 16.

¹⁵⁶ Anon., *The Anatomy of Dr. Gauden’s Idolized Non-Sense and Blasphemy, in His Pretended Analysis or Setting forth the True Sense of the Covenant* (1660), 2-3, 19.

¹⁵⁷ Anon., *Anatomy*, 24-5. Featley’s *League Illegal* contained an appendix with “His Majesties Proclamation, forbidding the Tendring or Taking of the late Vow or Covenant, devised by some

primitive episcopacy was moot because, by Gauden's own admission in an earlier treatise, England's episcopal government did not resemble primitive episcopacy.¹⁵⁸ The pseudonymous Theophilus Timorcus added against Gauden's assessment that only a fraction of the population subscribed to the covenant that "it is a piece of new Divinity to us, that if five hundred take an Oath, and five of them violate it, the rest are all absolved from the Obligation of it: yet the disproportion is far greater betwixt those who took that Covenant, and those who so violated it, both as to their number and quality."¹⁵⁹ Predictably, the Episcopal divines John Rowland and John Russell issued salvos in defense of Gauden's *Analysis* and against the Covenant. Rowland commended Gauden for his compatibilist reading of the Covenant, but he believed that the intent of the Covenant was to allow in the Trojan horse of opposition of Prelacy to "the utter ruine of Monarchy and Episcopacy."¹⁶⁰ Russell likewise invoked a slippery slope argument against the Presbyterians, claiming that they intended only to bring down the pompousness of Episcopal government, but the "violent *Engine* of the *Voenant*, after it had set these stones upon the brow of the hill on rolling, they would not stop just at the middle of the hill; where our *Presbyterians*, would have them stop: But went on rolling and crushing all before them, till they came to the bottom of the hill; Leaving these men to seek for other materials to build their intended Church, then the ruins of the *Church of England*."¹⁶¹ Far from being a middle way between Prelacy and Anarchy, for these divines the Solemn League and

Members of both Houses, to Engage His Majesties good Subjects in the Maintenance of this odious Rebellion." *League Illegal*, 61-3.

¹⁵⁸ Anon., *Anatomy*, 25, 29.

¹⁵⁹ Theophilus Timorcus, *The Covenanters Plea against Absolvers* (1660), sig. a2r, 69-72.

¹⁶⁰ John Rowland, *A Reply to the Answer of Anonymous* (1660), 8-9, 19-20, 51-2.

¹⁶¹ John Russell, *The Solemn League and Covenant Discharged* (1660), 12.

Covenant committed Presbyterians and the nation to a logic of iconoclasm and ruin. The Covenant therefore could not be a legitimate one patterned on Scripture.

By far the most vociferous Presbyterian antagonist to Gauden, Featley, Rowland, Russell, and other putative liberators from the Solemn League and Covenant was Zachary Crofton, and the pamphlet skirmishes sketched above were overshadowed by Gauden's debate with him. Crofton repeatedly hammered Gauden, Featley, Russell, Rowland, and the Oxford Divines throughout the early years of the Restoration with potent arguments for the continuing force of the covenant. Beginning with *Analepsis*, which went through three quick editions in 1660, Crofton undermined each of the Restoration divines's attempts to discharge the Covenant, but Crofton was especially focused on Gauden. He urged that Gauden used Episcopacy equivocally in his *Analysis*. Gauden by his own admission in *Hiera Dakrya* knew that Bishops and Presbyters were identical in the New Testament. Thus, if Gauden meant by Bishops only the "President or Moderator" among Presbyters, which was "Primitive, Regular, Reformed, and Paternal Episcopacy," then the Solemn League and Covenant was not opposed to it.¹⁶² But since Gauden defended all English Episcopacy in *Analysis*, that could not be his meaning, and so the Covenant was manifestly committed to extirpating the Episcopacy advocated by Gauden. The Covenant was sworn by a legitimate body representing the nation, Parliament, and any defect supposed to be lacking from the king's failure to consent was supplied when he ratified it by "His Royal Declaration of the 16th of August,

¹⁶² Zachary Crofton, *Analepsis, or Saint Peters Bonds Abide*, 2-6.

1650.”¹⁶³ The Covenant in no way contravened the baptismal covenant but merely served to “renew and amplifie” the covenant made in baptism.¹⁶⁴ And the Covenanters, though constituting only a fourth of the nation, as Gauden contested, nonetheless possessed representative capacity to bind the whole nation, as shown by the Parliament’s capacity to bind the nation by law in other ways.¹⁶⁵ The covenant was so binding upon the nation that even “were Episcopacy it selfe never so good, yet it must appear necessary before it can break through the bond of the Covenant.”¹⁶⁶

Gauden responded to Crofton by republishing an anonymous pamphlet from 1643, *Certain Scruples and Doubts of Conscience about Taking the Solemn League and Covenant*, to which he appended a letter to Crofton reiterating the apostolicity and universal acceptance of Episcopacy and firmly repeating that “such *Presbyterians* as fancy they are by Covenant bound from admitting or submitting to Episcopall Government, should doe well to think what Government they will have in the Chuch, for by their Covenant they are bound as much to extirpate and oppose *Presbytery* which falls under the heads of Schism and Superstition, as Prelacy & Popery.”¹⁶⁷ *Analepsis Anelephthe*, published in response by Crofton, reiterated and extended many of the arguments he made in his initial refutation. He contested that there were adequate grounds in the deficiency of England’s reformation to warrant the

¹⁶³ Crofton, *Analepsis*, 12-13. On this point see Edward Vallance, *Revolutionary England and the National Covenant: State Oaths, Protestantism and the Political Nation, 1553-1692* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 182-6; Appleby, *Black Bartholomew’s Day*, 28-9.

¹⁶⁴ Crofton, *Analepsis*, 22-23.

¹⁶⁵ Crofton, *Analepsis*, 27.

¹⁶⁶ Crofton, *Analepsis*, 34.

¹⁶⁷ John Gauden, “Letter to the Author,” *Certain Doubts and Scruples of Conscience about Taking the Solemne League and Covenant* (1660), sig. A3v.

swearing of the covenant. The liturgy was popish, and the creation of saints' days, the creation of public prayers to be read by the congregation, and government by bishops were all without warrant in the Scripture. The deficiencies in the "*Worship, Discipline, and Government of the Church of England*, are obvious; and have been often urged as needing Reformation; and as Reasons Apologizing for the Non-subscription of the Sober, Learned, and Pious *Non-Conformists*, ever since the Reformation."¹⁶⁸ Although episocopy in itself was lawful, it had been corrupted by "*Montague, Laude, Wren, Pierce*" and others, and for Crofton "not only the expediency, but necessity of extirpation" of a government liable to such deformity was obvious, even if it were legitimate in itself.¹⁶⁹ Against Gauden's assertion that the covenant was not sworn by a lawful authority and that it bound only the swearers privately, Crofton insisted that it was consented to corporately

in the most full, and compleat Assembly, that could, and ever did represent the same, in all acts and agitations truly *Real and National*, viz. The *Parliament* consisting of Lords and Commons, and that in their publique capacity as a *Parliament*, the House of Commons Assembled *in their House*, and in the formality of the body of the Nation, *with their Speaker before them*, went unto St. *Margarets Church in Westminster*; and there with the greatest solemnity imaginable, did as the representative body of the Kingdom, swear this Covenant."¹⁷⁰

The covenant could in no wise be considered private and personal, but rather was public and national, and thus perpetually binding.¹⁷¹

In his riposte to Crofton, Gauden continued to assert that his reading of the Covenant was the only legitimate one, and that the Covenant in no way contravened

¹⁶⁸ Crofton, *Analepsis*, 61.

¹⁶⁹ Crofton, *Analepsis*, 74.

¹⁷⁰ Crofton, *Analepsis*, 139.

¹⁷¹ Crofton, *Analepsis*, 148.

“venerable Episcopacy.” Moreover, Gauden alleged that all reasonable Presbyters agreed with him.¹⁷² Against “rigid Presbyters” like Crofton (who Gauden mistakenly refers to throughout as “Grafton”), the anonymous author of *Anatomy*, and others, Gauden turned to sneers and affected high church sentiment that ran contrary to his earlier defenses of primitive Episcopacy in *Hiera Dakrya*, calling the Solemn League and Covenant a covenant with Baal (hence the title of his response, “Anti-Baal-Berith”), alleging that Crofton wanted to replace Reformed Episcopacy with a “headless Presbyterie” and claiming that the force of the Covenant was only urged by “peevisish men, none of the most learned, ingenious, or influential; for the learned and sober Presbyters do now all in Church and State (unite in a just *Episcopacy*, under a just *Monarchy*) but the others are still stickling against both, under pretext of their *once covenanting*.”

Obviously Gauden had Crofton in view as one of the “peevisish men,” describing him as a “*Presbyterian wasp*” among other choice epithets, but he also folded into this class that “Anatomical Libeller” who deemed Gauden a “blasphemer” and that “poor mushroom C.B. [Cornelius Burgess]” who sacrilegiously asserted that bishop’s and cathedral lands could be justly alienated since they had no biblical basis.¹⁷³ Anti-Episcopal Presbyters were mere schismatics and apostates,¹⁷⁴ and

¹⁷² Gauden, *Anti-Baal-Berith* (1661), 72, cf. 146-7 and 191: “The Covenant is so far from any sense or intention to extirpate any Episcopacy that is truly Apostolick and primitive, agreeable to sound doctrine, and the power of godlinesse, that it plainly includes, rather a binding of all Covenanters to endeavor by all lawful wayes to procure it.”

¹⁷³ Gauden, *Anti-Baal Berith*, sig. A3r, 42, 97-102, 137, 182-3, 203-4, 214-215, 240 (on Crofton as “Presbyterian wasp”), and *passim*. Burges’s *No Sacrilege nor Sin to Alienate or Purchase Cathedral Lands* appeared in 1660, and Gauden published the mercilessly polemical reply *Antisacrilegus: or, a defensative against the plausible pest, or guilded poison, of that nameless paper...to make good by an Act of Parliament to the purchasers of bishops, deans, and chapters lands* in the same year.

¹⁷⁴ Gauden, *Anti-Baal-Berith*, sig. A4r, 76-7, 198-9.

they were “void of all modesty, ingenuity, sense of honor, loyalty, real sanctity, generous constancy, and common honesty; lurking as serpents or evil beasts in secret places; and though unseen, yet assaulting with the sting and poison of *blasphemy*; whereof nothing is proved either against the blessed God, Creator, Saviour, and Sanctifier; or against the Holy Scriptures, or against the Church of God, or against any part of his Worship, or any holy duty, grace and virtue.”¹⁷⁵ Crofton’s efforts to demonstrate the continuing force of the Covenant against all Episcopacy were but a “very *weak and womanish flash*.”¹⁷⁶ Gauden claimed to be aware of the “corrupt principles and passions of some Bishops” and opposed the Prelacy especially of papists, but nonetheless, “he hath a very high *and holy esteem of Episcopacy*, in its *eminency*, antiquity, universality, use and authority Ecclesiastical, so as to prefer it above any *Church Government*; yea and to own no other, as *Primitive, Catholick* and compleat, nor yet so convenient or comfortable,” and it was clear to him that English episcopacy was identical with primitive episcopacy, Crofton’s catalogue of abuses notwithstanding.¹⁷⁷

Gauden’s scathing attack on “rigid Presbyters” like Crofton and his polemical defense of the estate of Episcopacy seems difficult to square with his earlier assertion that Bishops, although part of the apostolic deposit, were not a different order than Presbyters and shared the same power as Presbyters. He concludes his analysis of Crofton’s objections by asserting that “I know no greater evil in *Episcopacy*, than to have it too much *leavened, sowred, and paled with Presbytery*; the

¹⁷⁵ Gauden, *Anti-Baal-Berith*, 39.

¹⁷⁶ Gauden, *Anti-Baal-Berith*, 251.

¹⁷⁷ Gauden, *Anti-Baal-Berith*, 121, 192.

advise and counsel of grave and learned Presbyters is good, where required and useful, but to have the authority so melted and minced, that the Bishops shall have no more of it, than lately the Presbyters left him of his Estate, is to render the Bishop a cypher, and to make every Presbyter a kind of suffragan Bishop, or a Ruling Elder, and master of misrule,” a sentiment which might have been written by Wren, Duppa, Heylin, or any of the Laudians as easily as by Gauden. Indeed, the intensity of Gauden’s defense of Episcopacy, liturgy, and the ornamentation of churches *simpliciter* in this exchange with Crofton, Burgess, and the Anatomist goes some distance toward explaining why, despite Gauden’s willingness to compromise in his conversations with Richard Baxter and the Reconcilers, other Presbyterians like Firmin, who were sympathetic to Crofton’s position, were deeply suspicious of him.

The final salvo in this conflict was Crofton’s *Berith Anti-Baal*, hastily composed in response to *Anti-Baal Berith*, which blasted Gauden with a bit of Crofton’s own spleen for his “raging, rambling, raving discourse” with its “wild excursions” and “Wilderness of words, and wood of invention,” which consistently misrepresented his arguments and failed to address any of his arguments despite the length of the work: “it is swoln into such a bulk, and dressed in such a garb, as that it is not for every man to *buy*; nor any civil, sober, wise man to *read*, much less to *rejoin unto*; being able to do no more, but fill their mouths, who are minded to make a clamour, and thinking speaking (though to no purpose) to be a sufficient answer to Mr. *Grafton* [Crofton].”¹⁷⁸ Firmin agreed that Gauden’s answer to Crofton offered more heat than light, and that he had not adequately responded to Crofton’s

¹⁷⁸ Crofton, *Berith Anti-Baal* (1661), sig. A3v, r, 6, 9, 35. On 12 Crofton insults Gauden’s version of primitive Episcopacy as a “*hydra* of ecclesiastical heresie and political error.”

arguments for the continuing force of the Covenant.¹⁷⁹ He was alarmed especially that Gauden now seemed to be proposing a hierarchical episcopal polity for the church rather than a reduced or primitive model of Episcopacy. Gauden's defense of the church's power to define ceremonies and compose liturgies independently of Scripture struck Firmin as Laudian. He wrote that "The Fourth *Objection* some make against the Liturgy, is, the *Ceremonies*, concerning which...he tells us his Opinion after the old fashion in Rhetorick, but in p. 38 his zeal breaks out, telling us, *This National Church, as all others have power and authority from God to judge what is decent, as to any Ceremony in the worship of God....*Bishop Wren, give him a clap on the back for this Heroick Sentence."¹⁸⁰

Firmin agreed with Crofton that the Covenant was still binding on the whole nation, and that Episcopacy *per se*, and not only Prelacy as Gauden defined it, was excluded by the terms of the Covenant. He believed that Gauden had affirmed this when he subscribed to the Covenant, and thus his arguments against the Covenant now revealed him to be a hypocrite and a time server.¹⁸¹ The Covenant was binding not only for the individuals who took it, but rather the whole nation was bound because it was made by a sovereign act of Parliament.¹⁸² Thus, even though Firmin did not personally swear to the Covenant, he defended its continuing authority and force.¹⁸³ Thus, although Gauden was a would-be liaison between the moderate godly and the Episcopal party, his outbursts against "rigid Presbyters" made him an

¹⁷⁹ Firmin, *Liturgical Considerator Considered*, 2.

¹⁸⁰ Firmin, *Liturgical Considerator Considered*, 19, 29-30.

¹⁸¹ Firmin, *Liturgical Considerator Considered*, 25, 31.

¹⁸² Firmin, *Liturgical Considerator Considered*, 34, 35.

¹⁸³ Firmin, *Liturgical Considerator Considered*, 2.

unsuitable conversation partner for those Presbyterians who believed that the Solemn League and Covenant continued to bind the consciences of the nation. Firmin ended his analysis of Gauden's arguments in *Considerations on the Liturgy* with an acid denunciation of Gauden's pretended ecumenism: "The Title of your Book saith, you published it in order to a *happy union*; Alas, Sir, this, as your other Books shew, you have none of that Spirit."¹⁸⁴ Perhaps most conspicuously in his agreement with Zachary Crofton on the continued force of the Covenant over against those who, like Gauden, would discharge it, Firmin's sympathies with the Presbyterian party in the early Restoration were revealed. Despite Firmin's stated agreement with primitive Episcopacy, there were apparently no models of it available in the Restoration to which he could assent. Thus, Firmin came considerably closer in the early Restoration to Presbyterianism narrowly considered rather than the Presbyterianism broadly considered in which one could place divines like Baxter, Bates, and Howe.

Conclusion

Firmin's writings in the early 1660s manifest a marked shift in his churchmanship toward Presbyterianism. This was, of course, an idiosyncratic Presbyterianism (perhaps there was no other kind!), combining elements of moderate or reduced episcopacy and a defense of the non-separating, primitivistic independency of the New England divines. Nonetheless, Firmin's clear endorsement of the legitimacy of a national church as well as his insistence upon the

¹⁸⁴ Firmin, *Liturgical Considerator Considered*, 38-9.

interchangability of bishop and presbyter were features of his divinity that made him an amenable conversation partner both for Reconcilers like Baxter and for “rigid” Presbyterians like Zachary Crofton. The endorsement of Firmin’s writing by Crofton is itself a telling sign both of the changing times and the degree to which Firmin’s thought had migrated in the decade since his conflicts with the Presbyterians Daniel Cawdrey and Thomas Blake.

Firmin’s contributions to the early Restoration debates about the imposition of ceremonies and the reordination of Presbyters also sheds light on the intractable difficulties faced by the godly and their sympathizers among the Reformed bishops. Although signs of good will abounded, there was seemingly no arrangement that would satisfy all parties involved. Not only “rigid” Presbyters like Zachary Crofton found themselves unable to compromise. Even John Humfrey’s heroic attempts to justify his reordination were ultimately unsatisfactory, even to himself. Those who could accept primitive episcopacy in theory, like Baxter and Firmin, could not find any models in practice that were acceptable to them. The suggestion of baptismal regeneration in the liturgy and the imposition of set prayers upon all ministers rankled federalists and gifted godly ministers. Reformed bishops like John Gauden stirred distrust among the godly by defending these practices and by defending the repudiation of the Solemn League and Covenant. By placing Firmin’s work in this broader polemical context, I have shown that the ecclesiological intricacies of these Restoration disputes were highly variegated, and that a range of postures toward comprehension were adopted by the godly. By no means, however, has this chapter exhausted the work that needs to be done to document this complexity, and my

hope is that it will stimulate more research into the responses of the godly to the conciliatory offers of the Reformed bishops in the early Restoration.

In the next chapter, we switch gears from ecclesiology to practical divinity. Firmin produced no writings from 1661 to 1670, although as we will see, his life underwent some momentous changes as a result of his expulsion from the living at Shalford in 1662. In 1670, Firmin published *The Real Christian*, which represent Firmin's studied meditations on the "greatest case of conscience," how one can know whether he or she is effectually called.

Chapter III

“Truth and the lambs of God must be regarded”: Firmin on Effectual Calling, Faith, and Assurance

To the extent that Firmin has been discussed to any substantial degree in the historiography of early modern England and colonial New England, energy has generally been focused on his 1670 treatise *The Real Christian*. We know surprisingly little about the intervening period in Firmin’s life between his ejection in 1662 and the publication of *The Real Christian*. Edmund Calamy tells us that “after his ejection [from his living at Shalford] the church-doors were shut up for several Weeks, nay Months and God had no Publick worship there, because he could not conform to the Ceremonies. And he Complains, it was so also in several other Places....Some time after he retir’d to *Redgwell*, another Country Village about 7 or 8 Miles distant, where he continu’d till his Death....He practis’d Physick for many Years, and yet was still a Constant and Laborious Preacher; both on the Lord’s Days, and on Week Days too; saving that once a month there was a Sermon in the church, at which Time he was an Auditor there. And he held on thus, in the hottest part of King *Charles’s* Reign, having large Meetings, when so many other Meetings were suppress’d.”¹ Probably his removal from Shalford to Ridgewell occurred because of the Five Mile Act, since he does not seem to have had family in the town.² His conventicle in Ridgewell, Calamy avers, was tolerated even before the Declaration of Indulgence in 1672, while “many others were suppressed, owing to the respect

¹ Edmund Calamy, *An Abridgement of Mr. Baxter’s Life and Times* (1702), 244.

² On the Five Mile Act, see N.H. Keeble, *The Restoration: England in the 1660s* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 121; C.G. Boling and Jeremy Goring, “Presbyterians in Transition,” in *English Presbyterians: From Elizabethan Puritanism to Modern Unitarianism*, eds. C.G. Boling, Jeremy Goring, HL Short, and Roger Thomas (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968), 87; Michael Watts, *The Dissenters*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 225-6, 229, 243-5, 255, 259, 280.

which the neighbouring gentry and justices of the peace had for him as their physician.” Calamy asserts that Firmin’s reputation was in general quite favorable in Ridgewell, and that “there were none but he was ready to serve, which he did with great tenderness and generosity,” and that he served the poor *pro bono* and commanded “moderate” fees from everyone else.³ Given the slender biographical information we possess about Firmin’s life during these years, it is difficult to discern the precipitating cause for the treatise. We do know, however, that it was held in high regard in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and both Edmund Calamy in England and Cotton Mather in New England in the eighteenth century attest that Firmin’s reputation as a theologian stemmed from authoring this text. Mather comments that the “among the rest of his books, that is a golden one, which is entitled, ‘*The Real Christian*,’ does really prove the title to be his own character; and the rest, as well as that, prove him to be an able scholar, as well as a real Christian,”⁴ and Calamy notes that “he was a man of excellent abilities and a general scholar; eminent for oriental languages; well read in the fathers, schoolmen, church history, and religious controversies; particularly those between the Episcopal party, the Presbyterians, and the Independents....but he most excelled in practical divinity, especially in directing a sinner how to get peace with God, and how to judge of his state.”⁵ This chapter will be devoted to a close reading of the text in order to discern what animated Firmin to write the treatise and to make clear exactly how Firmin conceived of effectual calling, the *ordo salutis*, and assurance of faith.

³ Edmund Calamy, *An Abridgement*, 244; See also Giles Firmin, *The Real Christian* (1670), 83.

⁴ Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1853), i.588.

⁵ Calamy, *An Abridgement*, 244-5.

Previous discussions of *The Real Christian* tend to place the text at the far end of Puritan controversies over the *ordo salutis*, and even name Firmin as the figure who precipitated the decline of non-conformity into, as David Jones puts it, “sentimentalism and moralism.”⁶ Norman Pettit similarly describes Firmin’s work as emblematic of the decline of practical divinity in the later seventeenth century.⁷ A more recent book somewhat bizarrely categorizes Firmin as a Socinian (particularly because *The Epistle* spends several pages criticizing Socinian divinity) whose “benevolent God approves of ‘self-love.’”⁸ Although Firmin is certainly critical of a number of his venerable predecessors in practical divinity, Pettit, Jones, and others are clearly wrong in their assessments of his work. Firmin did make singular contributions to the science of practical divinity in his work, but he was in substantial continuity with the both the tradition of Puritan reflection on effectual calling, the “greatest case of conscience,” and with his peers among the orthodox dissenters. Firmin is often regarded as having dissolved the idea of the *ordo salutis* altogether, but in fact Firmin was offering his own iteration of puritan soteriology rather than dispensing with it altogether. Firmin’s reshaping of the tradition of practical divinity may in large part be attributable to the fact that he suffered from grave doubts about his own salvation. In his description of Firmin, Calamy indicates that although he “was one of eminent Holiness and Zeal for God’s Glory,” nonetheless he was “exercis’d with various Temptations, and was in very perplexing

⁶ David Jones, *The Shattered Synthesis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 38.

⁷ Norman Pettit, *The Heart Prepared* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 232.

⁸ Scott Simmon, *The Invention of Western Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 124

Fears, as to his Spiritual Estate,”⁹ which Firmin admits in the treatise was a precipitating cause for his contribution to practical divinity.¹⁰

While Calamy indicates that these spiritual struggles made Firmin “very Humble and Meek,” they did not cause him to stray far outside the standard account of the progress of salvation in Puritan practical divinity.¹¹ In particular, Firmin did not, as he is often said to have done, get rid of preparation. There are specific ways in which Firmin’s work, however, presaged the twin currents of revivalism and anti-revivalism in the eighteenth century. In particular, Firmin’s prioritization of the duty to accept Christ over the duty to be prepared to accept Christ was unique among the orthodox godly, though “antinomians” like John Saltmarsh and Edward Fisher made similar claims in their works.¹² Firmin’s work in this respect foreshadowed what Dewey Wallace has termed “evangelical Calvinism,” which “was a significant step on the road to the later evangelical revivals.”¹³ On the other hand, Firmin’s embrace of

⁹ Calamy, *Abridgement of Mr. Baxter’s History*, 245.

¹⁰ Firmin, *Real Christian*, 159-60.

¹¹ Calamy, *Abridgement of Mr. Baxter’s History*, 245.

¹² See, e.g. Edward Fisher, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1645), 101. It is interesting to note that the orthodox Independent Joseph Caryl wrote the preface to the first edition, and likewise Jeremiah Burroughs wrote a preface to a subsequent edition. On this point see David Lachman, *The Marrow Controversy* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1988), 359, 363, where Lachman comments that the testimony of these two divines becomes an important attribute in the defense of the *Marrow* for so-called “Marrow Brethren” like James Hog, John Webster, and Thomas Boston. In response, their enemies in the Church of Scotland insisted that these divines endorsed the book from “partisan spirit,” being Independents. See also D.M. McIntyre, “First Strictures against ‘The Marrow of Modern Divinity,’” *Evangelical Quarterly*, X.1 (1938): 61-70. For John Saltmarsh, see *The Fountain of Free Grace Opened* (1645), sig. A3r. David Como notes that the trouble with the antinomians was that “they drew on linguistic and theological motifs that were common currency throughout the godly community...they spread and nurtured their message using the very same cultural mechanisms – manuscript exchange, pastoral letters, private meetings – that were central to the culture of mainstream English puritanism.” Como, *Blown by the Spirit* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2004), 30.

¹³ Dewey Wallace, *The Shapers of English Calvinism, 1660-1714* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 122. David Lachman indicates that the “Marrow Brethren,” predecessors to revivalist evangelicalism, who created a stir in the Scottish church by reprinting Edward Fisher’s *Marrow of Modern Divinity* in 1718 and then defending its contents despite a series of ecclesiastical sanctions,

Hooker's and Shepard's inclusion of "separation from sin" within compunction as an aspect of preparation for salvation rather than regarding separation from sin as an aspect of mortification of sin within constituted Christians, as well as his belief that faith is separate from assurance of faith foreshadowed the anti-revivalist piety of the "Old Lights" in the eighteenth century.¹⁴ On none of these points, however, was Firmin genuinely an innovator. However, one feature of *The Real Christian* that does stake out a position at variance with the Puritan tradition was its repudiation of the idea that it was a necessary feature of effectual calling that one had closed with Christ for Christ's glory rather than from the selfish aim of obtaining salvation from him. *The Real Christian* thus takes its place as a mildly idiosyncratic but clearly orthodox contribution to practical divinity in the seventeenth century.

The Real Christian in context

Firmin maintained in the preface to *The Real Christian* that his purpose for writing was primarily that the work of some eminent Puritan divines made it difficult for genuinely constituted Christians to obtain assurance for salvation. The problematic works were related both to "the constitution of a Christian" and to the "conversation of a Christian constituted," but the former had been more damaging than the latter.¹⁵ Shepard, Hooker, and the three Rogers had written treatises that placed obstacles in the way of assurance for those who had already closed with

believed that the duty to accept Christ overruled the duty to be prepared to receive Christ. Lachman, *Marrow Controversy*, 382-395.

¹⁴ On these points, Firmin, like other seventeenth century divines, was considerably more nuanced than the evangelicals who were the successors to Reformed scholasticism. See Dewey Wallace, "Introduction," *The Spirituality of the Later English Puritans* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987), xii.

¹⁵ Giles Firmin, *The Real Christian*, sig. B4v.

Christ. Shepard's and Hooker's works focused on the severity of preparation necessary to "close with Christ" or experience effectual calling. The three Rogers and Perkins, according to Firmin, equated faith with full assurance, making those who experienced a lesser degree of assurance uncertain about their state of grace. He also believed that the mechanisms for obtaining assurance proposed in practical divinity, especially the practical syllogism, undermined the equation of faith and assurance of faith because the conclusion could contain no more than was in the premises, and the minor premise was supplied by the human conscience and thus could not yield an infallible conclusion.¹⁶ Firmin notes that after preaching on the issue of preparation, "a Gentleman and a Scholar meeting me some time after, gave me thank for the close of my Sermon: I asked him, why he told me, he had a Maid-Servant who was very godly, and reading of that particular in Mr. *Shepherd's* Book, which I opposed, she was so cast down, and fell into such troubles, that all the Christians that came to her could not quiet her spirit."¹⁷ He also knew of "a Minister of gracious spirit," John Glascock of little Canfield in Essex, and a godly woman experiencing "great desertions" who had been harmed by Daniel Rogers's works. Firmin himself had been led astray by all of these authors: "As for Mr. *Daniel Rogers*, and Mr. *Shepherd*, I am afraid to read their books, they have laid such blocks in my way." Firmin thought that "there might be many whom I knew not, that had met with the same afflicting thoughts from them, which my self and others had done; upon which grounds, and partly being moved thereto long since by some godly

¹⁶ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, C2v.

¹⁷ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, sig. B4r.

Divines, I have brought their works, and with them my self, to the trial.”¹⁸ All but one of the divines criticized by name in Firmin’s treatise - Thomas Shepard, Thomas Hooker, John Rogers, Richard Rogers, and Daniel Rogers, were either well-known to Firmin or related to him (all of the Rogers family were cousins to Firmin).¹⁹ Thus, he knew the narrative of their conversions intimately in some cases, and he thought of them as godly men, but “grace in their life time hath been low.”²⁰ The “distemper” of their countenances and their inability to find assurance made them too demanding on those “poor, weak” Christians who could not produce the evidences of “legal terrors” preparatory to union with Christ nor the “full persuasion” equated with the essence of faith for all of these divines. Firmin noted that John Ward, the father of his father-in-law Nathaniel Ward, whose widow Susan married Richard Rogers, declared of Daniel Rogers that “My Brother *Rogers* hath grace enough for two men, and not half enough for himself: A most woful temper, or rather distemper in his constitution, which hindered much the lustre of that grace which was in him,” and that Rogers himself had never experienced full assurance.²¹ Firmin indicated that it

¹⁸ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, sig. Cv.

¹⁹ See Jason Yiannikou, “John Rogers,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, eds. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/23982?docPos=5> (accessed Sept. 22, 2014); Idem, “Daniel Rogers,” *Ibid.*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/23970/23970?back=,23982> (accessed Sept. 22, 2014); Francis Bremer, “Richard Rogers,” *Ibid.*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/23995/23995?back=,23982,23970> (accessed Sept. 22, 2014); NH Keeble, “Giles Firmin,” *Ibid.*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/9481?docPos=1> (accessed Sept. 22, 2014); Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England, c. 1620-1643* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 100-112, 171; William Hunt, *The Puritan Moment: The Coming of Revolution in English County* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 110, 120.

²⁰ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, C2v.

²¹ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, Cv, r; K. Grudzien Baston, “Nathaniel Ward,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/28700?docPos=1> (accessed Sept. 22, 2014).

was John Rogers's son, the godly Church of England clergyman Nathaniel Rogers, who first disputed John Rogers's account of the *ordo salutis* to Firmin.²²

Firmin's association of the errors of these divines with certain personal defects allowed him to affirm the value of their divinity in other respects as well as the effectiveness of their ministries. While seriously critical of John Rogers, for instance, Firmin also reported that "[Ralph] Brownrigg said of him to my Father [John] Ward...*John Rogers will do more good with his wild Note, than we shall do with our set Musick.*"²³ Firmin's revision of certain aspects of the preaching of Shepard, Hooker, Richard, John, and Daniel Rogers, and Perkins was not then a wholesale rejection of their practical divinity but an attempt to set it on a more adequate footing, one that would also be amenable to his own struggles for assurance, as mentioned above. The attack upon their doctrines, Firmin would later write, was not an attack upon their persons: "these being men so eminent, and all of them (except holy Mr. *Perkins*, dead before my time) known unto me, the high esteem I bear unto their names, made me to consider my self, and see whether in those particulars, they spake as God spake."²⁴ In fact, Firmin's attack upon specific doctrines held by these divines obscures his overwhelming agreement with them on the vast majority of issues. The following is a close examination of the particulars of Firmin's continuities and discontinuities with these divines.

²² Firmin, *The Real Christian*, C2v.

²³ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 76.

²⁴ Giles Firmin, *Meditations upon Mr. Baxters Review* (1672), 2-3.

Preparation for salvation: Against Shepard and Hooker

Firmin's critique of Shepard's and Hooker's writings on preparation for salvation is what he is best known for in the secondary literature on puritan practical divinity. Firmin found both Shepard and Hooker to be overly severe in what they required of an individual without saving faith, such that they kept a good number of Christians (Firmin included for many years) from concluding that they were united with Christ. At no point in his criticism of these divines, however, did Firmin reject the *ordo salutis per se* or the role of preparatory works in disposing the soul to be united to Christ. The initial chapters of Firmin's work can be misleading in this respect. Firmin claimed that the sinner's chief duty was to receive Christ, whether one was prepared or not. Thus one who properly concluded that one had received Christ should not have an otherwise acceptable assurance shaken by the fact that he or she had not experienced sufficient legal terrors.²⁵ He also argued that the working of the Spirit in salvation was various as to the means, the timing, the amount of time it took, the degree of preparatory works necessary, and the number of seasons of preparatory works necessary to convert someone.²⁶ Thus, for divines to make any one person's experience of conversion the normative pattern for all conversions was "high tyranny."²⁷ Equally important for Firmin was the conviction that a number of the godly were converted in infancy without any legal terrors whatsoever.²⁸ Shepard, Hooker, the Rogers, and Perkins all agreed, and were forced to agree as a matter of dogmatics, that infant baptism could coincide with

²⁵ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 2-3.

²⁶ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 12-17.

²⁷ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 17.

²⁸ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 3, 8, 126, 152.

regeneration, which Firmin saw as devastating for strenuous preparationism.

Firmin could even be read as advocating a primordial form of “Christian nurture” in the Bushnellian sense, albeit in a puritan idiom: “I have known such families, where all the children have been godly, and that began in their childhood for ought *I* could learn. O you Mother, who are always with your Children in the chamber, at the fire side, and have the advantage to be dropping into them; when your Husbands must be abroad, you may do much towards the saving of your Childrens souls, if you be godly, prudent, and know how to keep Authority up.”²⁹

Firmin did not simultaneously do away with the *ordo salutis* in the process of affirming that God worked variously in different people. Firmin’s analysis of the *ordo salutis* relied on a key distinction between the order of nature and the order of time. In the order of nature, or as a matter of logic, certain stages had to occur in order for someone to be saved, but in the order of time, they might happen simultaneously or out of sequence. Preparation characterized by legal terror was not necessarily one of the stages necessary for salvation, since a soul could be disposed to receive Christ without such preparations, as the example of regenerate infants proved. God could dispose the soul to receive grace however he saw fit, and God’s workings in preparation of sinners was various. But the essence of effectual calling, the “work of self-unbottoming, *taking off the Soul from its own goodness, righteousness, abilities*” was the same for all, and thus its effects should be the same in all.³⁰ Firmin also believed, more importantly, on the basis of the distinction between the orders of nature and time, that a person might be truly closed with

²⁹ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 8.

³⁰ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 100.

Christ without having experienced legal terrors but that he or she might still come to experience them later. In this latter case the order of time would be out of sequence with the order of nature.³¹ Thus the mere fact that one had not experienced legal terrors or sufficient legal terrors should not in principle prevent a person from drawing the conclusion of assurance. Preparatory works were not part of the *ordo salutis de jure*, just *de facto* in most cases. Moreover, the mere presence of preparatory works did not in itself warrant the concomitant presence of a saving work of the Spirit, since many who experienced preparation did not go on to experience regeneration. By examining oneself and finding the rest of the gracious works of the Spirit, one could draw the conclusion of assurance even apart from preparatory works.

However, Firmin was convinced that for the vast majority of people, preparation defined as legal terror was part of the ordinary course of the Spirit's work. Except for regenerate infants, preparation was to be expected:

For persons that God works upon, when adult, where these are not found, viz. Conviction of sin, and sense of the evil of sin, self-emptiness, a lost condition, willingness that Christ should separate between its soul and sin, allowing the rules *I* have given before, I will say, that person is not rightly prepared for Christ; for where there is no conviction of sin, no fears and sorrows under the sense of the evil of sin, where no willingness that Christ should separate between the Soul and sin, where men have righteousness and abilities of their own, I am sure that man will never take Christ upon Christs terms.³²

Although he criticized what he saw as the excesses of Hooker and Shepard, he noted that "some it may be will deny any such preparation for Christ as necessary, and think it was only the Opinion of Mr. *Hooker*, Mr. *Shepard*, or it may be two or three

³¹ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 77.

³² Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 128-9.

more such rigid men; but surely that man is little acquainted with the Scriptures, or with the Writings of the ablest practical Divines....If you deny preparatory works, you deny half the work of a Minister.”³³ Discerning true from false, temporary, or hypocritical faith, a central preoccupation of practical divinity from Calvin until Firmin’s day, was very much a concern for Firmin: “no doubt there are deceits, and many are mistaken. How many have been deceived in their particular perswasions and assurances that Christ was theirs, and pardon theirs, but ‘tis to be feared, not only lived but died Christless?”³⁴ Firmin maintained that “it is very true, legal fears, terrors and sorrows are very good to help loosen the Soul from sin, to imbitter sin, to make the Soul see the necessity and excellency of Christ, prize him, and love him accordingly.”³⁵ Firmin thought it necessary to preach the law as much if not more than the Gospel, because the Gospel was only a remedy for someone already disposed by the law to receive Christ. The Gospel was only a diagnostic of sin in an indirect sense; the law exposed it directly. The more sensibly and particularly the law was preached the better. Despite his criticisms of Shepard, he nonetheless approvingly quoted part of a letter from him in which Shepard exhorted Firmin

Dear Brother, let my love end in breathing out this desire. Preach Humiliation; labour to possess men with a sense of the wrath to come and misery: The Gospel-consolations and grace, which some would have only disht out as the dainties of the times, and set upon the Ministry’s table, may possibly tickle and ravish some, and do some good to them that are humbled and converted already: But if Axes and Wedges withal be not used to hew and break this rough, unhewn, bold, yet professing Age, I am confident the work and fruit of all these mens ministry will be at best but meer hypocrisie, and they shall find it, and see it, if they live to see a few years more.³⁶

³³ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 230.

³⁴ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 240-1.

³⁵ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 237.

³⁶ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 55.

Firmin was convinced that the number of the saved was greater than those “poor, weak” Christians whom he was trying to help with a salve for their consciences believed, but he maintained that the total number of the saved was very small indeed: “The Schools have divided their Doctors into *Nominales*, and *Reales*. The great Doctor of the Church, hath divided his Scholars, into *Nominal* and *Real Christians*. In the Schools, the *Real Doctors* (*Thomiste* and *Scotiste*) do exceed the *Nominal Doctors* (*Occamiste*) in number: but in the School of Christ, the *Nominal Christians* exceed the real Christians abundantly.”³⁷ Shepard’s assessment that “those that are saved out of this estate, are very few, and that those that are saved, are saved with very much difficulty” would have received Firmin’s wholehearted endorsement.³⁸

Firmin thus was not opposed to legal terrors but only to the degree of such preparation required by Hooker and Shepard. Firmin’s opening chapters described the kinds of preparation he accepted as normative: illumination, conviction, and compunction. In compunction, the Spirit put a stop to active participation in sin, the Christian grieved his or her sinful estate, and he or she saw the force of the reasons against sinning and closing with Christ given to him or her in the ministry of the word.³⁹ Whereas some such as John Cotton put separation from sin under the category of sanctification, such that it was a product of regeneration,⁴⁰ Firmin

³⁷ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 227.

³⁸ Thomas Shepard, *The Sincere Convert* (1640), 120.

³⁹ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 87.

⁴⁰ John Cotton, *The New Covenant* (1654), 34. See David Parnham, “John Cotton Reconsidered: Law and Grace in Two Worlds,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 64.2 (April 2013): 306-7.

actually agreed with Hooker and Shepard that separation from sin in compunction was a work antecedent to regeneration and hence not a condition for, rather than a product of regeneration, though he quibbled with making separation from sin a “part” of compunction rather than an “effect” of it.⁴¹ In any event, separation from sin was still a preparation for, rather than an effect of, regeneration. Firmin’s position had become fairly conventional by the later seventeenth century, but in this treatise Firmin was expressly differentiating himself from the early practitioners of practical divinity like Richard Rogers, who declared that the “[heart] must, with the whole Man, be changed and renewed, before the life can be amended” and likewise that “the only way to curbe up and hold in our intemperate lusts, and evill desires, that they breake not out into further ungodlines is, that our hearts be first purified through beleeving, that our sins are forgiven us, and we made partakers of Christ his grace, and so our consciences appeased.”⁴² For Firmin, Christ could only be received on the terms on which he was offered, so if “the will of man refuse to be separated from its lusts,” it resisted “Christ in his kingly office.”⁴³ Moreover, the soul was married to Christ once it was regenerate, and the soul could not hold “two married affections” at once.⁴⁴ Thus the soul must already have turned from its former term of sin to receive Christ, even if it had not settled on its new term in Christ. Once more employing the distinction between order of time and order of nature, Firmin concluded that although Shepard and Hooker were correct, this issue was adiaphora:

⁴¹ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 87-91.

⁴² Richard Rogers, *Seaven Treatises* (1603), 102, 155, cf. 329, 547-8, 584-8, 600.

⁴³ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 90.

⁴⁴ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 90.

This Question fall it which way it will, makes no trouble to a sound Christian in examining of its work; Separation from Sin must be, Christ only can separate from Sin: The will must take Christ as King, and so must be separated from Sin: So then, the thing *be done*, whether it were begun under Compunction, before union with Christ, or after union, it matters not; the truth of our Conversion depends not upon the priority in the question: yet (with submission to other learned Divines) I cannot see that Mr. *Shepherd* in this point is mistaken, there seems to be clear Reasons on his side.⁴⁵

The arcana of the *ordo salutis* might seem quite removed from the practical issue of assurance that Firmin was addressing, but Shepard's analysis of the significance of what occurred in the separation from sin in compunction showed the intimate connection between the *ordo salutis* and assurance: "the maine end...of propounding these things is, that you would look narrowly to your union, oh take heed you misse not there; if you close with Christ, believe in Christ, and yet not cut off from your sin, viz. that spirit of resistance of Christ, you are utterly and eternally undone."⁴⁶ In other words, for Shepard as for Firmin, assurance that one had truly closed with Christ required an assessment that one had also been separated from the spirit of resistance to Christ that was sin. Shepard noted that others argued that "we have union to Christ, first by the Spirit, without faith, in order going before faith," but Shepard strenuously insisted that "our union...is by faith, not without it: for by it onely we that were once separated from him by sinne, and especially by *unbeliefe*...are now come not onely unto him...but into him, as branches into the vine."⁴⁷ Firmin was in wholehearted agreement with Shepard and Hooker on this point, indicating that he was in no way lowering the bar for closure with Christ, but

⁴⁵ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 89.

⁴⁶ Shepard, *The Sound Beleever* (1649), 114-15.

⁴⁷ Shepard, *Sound Beleever*, 110-12.

rather that he accepted Hooker's and Shepard's revisions of the *ordo salutis* of Perkins and the Rogers, in whose judgment separation from sin occurred after conversion. There may be room to argue that Firmin was a "moralist" as Pettit and others have, but no more than Hooker and Shepard were moralists on the issue of pre-regenerate compunction.

Beyond these preparatory works, however, Hooker and Shepard required a further work that Firmin found persecutory: the soul must be willing to be damned for the glory of God, an act which Firmin and Hooker termed "humiliation."⁴⁸ Shepard indicated that the soul who had gone through conviction and compunction would be a soul who was removed from sin and was engaged in the duties required of it by Christ. But the soul would as yet be "resting" in duties, which Shepard distinguished from "trusting" in duties. The unprepared soul would trust explicitly in duties to save it, whereas the prepared soul which rested in duties explicitly trusted Christ to save it but implicitly continued to trust the works:

It is one thing to trust to be saved by duties, an other thing to rest in duties. A man trusts unto them, when he is of this opinion, that onely good duties can save him. A man rests in duties, when hee is of this opinion, that onely Christ can save him, but in his practice he goeth about to save himselfe. The wisest of the Papists are so at this day, and so are our comon Protestants. And this is a great subtilty of the heart, that is, when a man thinks he cannot be saved by his good works and duties, but onely by Christ: he then hopeth, because he is of this opinion; that when hee hath done all, he is an unprofitable servant: (which is onely an act or worke of the Judgement informed aright) that therefore, because he is of this opinion, he shall be saved.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Shepard, *Sound Beleever*, 125. On Hooker's treatment of humiliation, see Sargent Bush, *The Writings of Thomas Hooker: Spiritual Adventure in Two Worlds* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), 188-92; David Parnham, "Redeeming Free Grace: Thomas Hooker and the Contested Language of Salvation," *Church History* 77.4 (Dec. 2008): 930-7.

⁴⁹ Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, 245-6; *Sound Beleever*, 128.

In the work of humiliation, the Spirit through the working of the law exhausted the soul by “loading, tiring, and wearying the soule by its own indeavours, until it can stir no more,” preparing it to be “weary and heavy laden,” the condition of those Christ called to himself. The soul was brought to a state of complete impartiality, realizing the justice of God in the law’s condemnation of the soul, even if God denied the “speciall mercy” of grace to the soul. Thus the soul must be divested not only of the active resistance of the soul to Christ, which is removed in compunction, but also of “a resistance to the Lord by sinking discouragements, and a secret quarreling with him, in case the soule imagines he will not come to work grace, or manifest grace.”⁵⁰ The latter was removed in humiliation, and through the removal of this secret sin the soul acknowledged that the prerogative to grant grace belonged to God alone and not to the soul who desired grace, and the soul learned to love Christ for his own sake rather than for his benefits.⁵¹ Only the soul that impartially loved Christ, rather than loving the good of the self in loving Christ, could be considered adequately prepared to receive Christ.

This final work of humiliation, Firmin believed, was a work that was possible only in a state of regeneration. The unregenerate prepared heart, which had been “unbottomed” from itself, had not yet been settled upon Christ, and so was incapable of producing such an advanced work: “The Soul before it comes to Christ hath no goodness at all, nothing that we can call Sanctification or Grace in them, by way of habit, these men acknowledge: yet here I think is an Act, and a high one too, of Grace...before the Soul hath faith in Christ; such a subjection to the holy Will and

⁵⁰ Shepard, *Sound Beleever*, 133, 136, 140.

⁵¹ Shepard, *Sound Beleever*, 151-55.

Sovereignty of God, that if he will deny it the greatest good the rational Creature is capable of, and inflect up on it his dreadful wrath to eternity, the Soul is quiet, contented, well satisfied with his pleasure.”⁵² Firmin quoted Shepard on the two different kinds of secret sins that prevented closing with Christ: a “secret...unwillingness that the Lord should work grace” and a “secret quarreling with him, in case the Soul imagines he will not come to work grace, or manifest grace.”⁵³ The former was evidence that the soul had not yet turned from its former lusts, but the latter constituted an annihilation of the person from Firmin’s point of view. Firmin “never read this Divinity in Gods Book, nor in any other Divine but these, their holiness and abilities I do much reverence, but their Doctrine is dreadful....Truth and the lambs of God must be regarded.”⁵⁴

Firmin’s fundamental axiom that the first duty of the human being was to have faith in Christ, prepared or no, was proposed as a palliative to the severity of Hooker’s and Shepard’s preparationism. Rather than calling sinners to obedience to Christ’s kingship, this kind of preparationism actually called them into rebellion against Christ: “He calls me, commands me to come and take [his covenants and seals]: He threatens me if I do not: No pride then at all to be discontent, disquieted without them.”⁵⁵ Firmin insisted that self-love and self-interest were not at odds with the command to close with Christ. In fact these were the only motives suitable to the sinner qua sinner: “Self love is a principle implanted by nature: *Self-love* I know sounds ill, but self-love regulated may be, yea, must be; *Thou shalt love thy*

⁵² Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 108.

⁵³ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 113.

⁵⁴ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 110, 149.

⁵⁵ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 120, 145.

neighbor as they self, is the rule for, or sum of, the Second Table...Then I am bound to love my self, as well as I am bound to love my Neighbour.”⁵⁶ The condition “is cross to the nature of man *as man*, to a Christian *as a Christian*,” it “cuts off all happiness;” it was a “Cord...not to draw the Soul to Christ..but to help to hang it.”⁵⁷ Again, precisely because it was hostile to the nature of humanity, Firmin believed like Baxter that the idea that God would be unwilling to show mercy was contrary to the nature of God: “All your doubts and fears that arise from an apprehension of Gods *unwillingness* to shew you Mercy, and to give you Christ and Life in him, arise from the misapprehension of Christs *unwillingness* to be *yours*; or at least from the uncertainty of his willingness; these have all a sufficient Remedy in the general extent and tenour of the New Covenant.”⁵⁸ If the love of an extraordinary saint like Paul or Moses (sanctioning examples given by Hooker and Shepard) were required in order to close with Christ, no one would ever do it because it was work that was beyond the unregenerate. Firmin’s critique of Shepard and Hooker, then, was not a wholesale rejection of the necessity of preparation. Firmin rejected only the extremity of Hooker and Shepard’s treatment of preparation. His rejection of the necessity of preparation appears only in the single case of regenerate infants, and thus he regarded illumination, contrition, and compunction as normative fixtures, occurring in diverse ways but present in every adult conversion.

⁵⁶ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 297.

⁵⁷ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 141, 144.

⁵⁸ Richard Baxter, *The Right Method for a Settled Peace of Conscience* (1653), 47.

Defining faith: For and against the Rogers and Perkins

Firmin's second class of enemies in *The Real Christian* were those divines who defined faith in such a way that it was equivalent with assurance, a position taken by many of the first and second generation Reformers, including Calvin, but also by the first generation of puritan "experimental predestinarians" who crafted the tradition of practical divinity.⁵⁹ The godly later thought better of the equation of faith and assurance of faith.⁶⁰ J.I. Packer, in the course of describing Richard Baxter's doctrine of assurance, has argued that

...part of the Reformers' case was that the Roman conception of faith was seriously incomplete. Faith was more than mental assent on God's authority; faith as action as well as belief. Faith, as they made plain in their sermons, lays hold of Christ, and works by love. It is a matter of the will as well as of the intellect. But this was not always made clear in their formal, controversial discussions. In the second place, they met the Roman denial of the ordinary possibility of assurance by speaking as if assurance was essential to faith. But this assertion would not bear examination. Faith rests upon God's written Word; but the proposition that one is elect and justified is no part of that Word, and so it can be no part of faith to believe it. Assurance, as we have seen already, is in reality an inference, faith's fruit....Faith may well be present without any assurance of its presence; the man who knows that he has sought does not always know whether he has yet found: but reliance on Christ as Savior was inseparable from submission to Christ as King.⁶¹

Firmin's efforts in *The Real Christian* were dedicated to undermining the definition of faith as *fiducia*, faith as full assurance of faith, a doctrine that generated despair in a number of "Christ's lambs," himself included, and which resulted from the "distemper" of the divines that had propounded it, John, Richard, and Daniel Rogers,

⁵⁹ This evocative term derives from R.T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

⁶⁰ See, e.g. T.D. Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), ch. 8.

⁶¹ J.I. Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2003), 256-7.

as well as William Perkins. Each of these divines had been guilty of conflating faith and assurance of faith, which Firmin indicated had been a vexing obstacle to his own sense of assurance:

Divines of late years have cleared up the nature of Faith more than ever: yet I shall make bold to cast in my Mite, it being a thing wherein I was exercised for many years myself, as to my own state, not being able to find by the Books which then were extant what it was; but if that were Faith, and saving Faith, which Mr. *Perkins*, Mr. *John Rogers*, and others had described, and what my godly Father had taught me in my Catechism, viz. that *Faith was sure perswasion of my heart, that whatever Christ hath done belongeth to me as if I had done it* (he had learned it from some of those ancient Divines) then be sure I had no Faith: When I heard Ministers preach against unbelief in Christ, or faith in him, I could not tell what they meant by faith or unbelief; nor do I know to this day, when I hear some men, what they mean by unbelief....It is an ill thing, that in a thing of this moment the Trumpet should give an uncertain sound; Ministers should be clear in their preaching.⁶²

Firmin instead found much to savor in the treatment of assurance that had become the majority position since the 1590s in Puritan practical divinity. He believed that faith was an act of intellect and will, and thus could exist without assurance of faith, which earlier revisionists had called a “reflex act” of faith. As Thomas Goodwin described it, the reflex act of faith was an act of discursive and fallible reflection upon the act of faith.

The most judicious do take the meaning of that “but I believe” to be only this: I seeing and finding by experience with myself, that I have a true faith wrought in me, and such a faith as the Scripture describies to be true and unfeigned, therefore I apply that promise, “whoever believes,” &c., with an assurance to myself, which is the conclusion....so understood, it cannot be that first act of justifying which an humbled sinner doth put forth...nor can this be the genuine act whereby the sinner is justified, and so not the act of justifying faith itself....nor is it a mere repeating or renewal of the first act, but a sight of that other which is the first act thereby expressed, yea, and is founded upon the intuition of the first, in the strength of which intuition the soul says, “but I believe.” It is a secondary and after act arising upon a first.

⁶² Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 159-60.

Secondly, it is another kind of act, for it is a reflex act of the mind upon its own act; but justifying faith is a direct act of Christ.⁶³

Michael Winship notes⁶⁴ that the separation of justifying faith from assurance of faith had become the normative pattern by the turn of the seventeenth century, and it was articulated in the Westminster Confession of Faith, which speaks of an “infallible assurance” which “doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true belief may wait long” before obtaining it.⁶⁵ Most divines who rejected the conflation of faith and assurance of faith did so because of the fear of antinomianism.⁶⁶ The specter of Crisp, Eaton, Saltmarsh, and other “carnal gospellers” loomed large, as in the statement of John Flavel: “That which I think led our Antinomians into this error, was an unsound and unwary definition of faith, which, in their youth, they had imbibed from their catechisms, and other systems, passing without contradiction or scruple in those days which, though it were a mistake, and hath abundantly proved to be so in latter days, yet our Antinomians will not part with a notion so serviceable to the support of the darling opinion of

⁶³ Thomas Goodwin, “The Object and Acts of Justifying Faith,” in *The Works of Thomas Goodwin*, vol. viii (Edinburgh, 1864), 211-12. Norman Pettit points out that this treatment became normative for the Bay Colony divines as well. *The Heart Renewed: Assurance of Salvation in New England Spiritual Life* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004). See also Charles Cohen, *God’s Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 100-1. See also John Flavel’s statement, “Now that cannot be the saving and justifying act of faith, which is not to be found in multitudes of believing and justified persons...But manifestation, or a personal persuasion of the love of God to a man’s soul, or that Christ died for him, and all his iniquities are thereby forgiven him, is not to be found in the multitudes of believing and justified souls.” Flavel, *The Whole Works of the Reverend John Flavel*, 2 vols. (1701), i.702. See also Brian Cosby, *John Flavel: Puritan Life and Thought in Stuart England* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), 114-15.

⁶⁴ Michael Winship, “Weak Christians, Backsliders, and Carnal Gospellers: Assurance of Salvation and the Origins of Puritan Practical Divinity in the 1580s,” *Church History*, 70.3 (Sep. 2001): 462-81, 480.

⁶⁵ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs/ (accessed Sept. 22, 2014), xviii, 3.

⁶⁶ Winship notes that John Crandon, writing in the 1650s, indicated that preachers had stopped using the Reformational definition of faith out of concern for “carnal gospellers.” Winship, “Weak Christians,” 479.

eternal justification.”⁶⁷ Likewise, in Thomas Brooks’s influential *Precious Remedies against Satan’s Devices* (1652), Brooks argued that assurance was the flower of faith rather than its essence. Against Satan’s false definition of faith, Brooks urges his readers that

assurance is an effect of faith; therefore it cannot be faith. The cause cannot be the effect, nor the root the fruit. As the effect flows from the cause, the fruit from the root, the stream from the fountain, so doth assurance flow from faith....Again, no man can be assured and persuaded of his salvation till he be united to Christ, till he be ingrafted into Christ; and a man cannot be ingrafted into Christ till he hath faith. He must first be ingrafted onto Christ before he can have assurance of his salvation; which doth clearly evidence, that assurance is not faith, but an effect and fruit of faith, &c.”⁶⁸

Yet alongside the majority position, some of the godly, like William Gouge, continued to hold to the older opinion. In *The Whole Armour of God*, Gouge wrote that although faith and doubt may coexist, yet assurance is of the essence of faith:

Quest. If Faith may stand with doubting, why is *Faith* defined to be *full persuasion*? Why is certainty brought into the definition of Faith?

1. Answ. Definitions used to be made according to the perfection of things defined, and that for two especial reasons:

1. Because defects are not of the nature and essence of them.
2. Because thereby men are provoked to endeavor after perfection, and not to rest satisfied in their failings and weaknesses....

There be degrees of assurance answerable to the degrees of Faith. Where Faith is weake, assurance is small: Where Faith is strong, assurance is steadfast.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Flavel, *The Whole Works*, i.777. I owe this reference to Michael Winship’s “Weak Christians.” Richard Baxter, as far and away the most influential moderate puritan of the era, likewise agreed with the separation; “Justifying faith is not an Assurance of our Justification, no nor a persuasion or belief that we are Justified or pardoned, or that Christ died more for us then for Others; nor yet is Affiance or Resting on Christ the vital, principal, certain, constant full act: but it is the Understandings belief of the truth of the Gospel, and the Will’s Acceptance of Christ and Life offered to us therein: which Acceptance is but the hearty Consent or Willingness that he be yours and you his. Baxter, *Right Method*, 53; See also Idem, *Saints Everlasting Rest*, 10th ed. (1669), 401-4.

⁶⁸ Thomas Brooks, “Precious Remedies against Satan’s Devices,” in *The Works of Thomas Brooks*, vol. 1 (London, 1866), 96.

⁶⁹ William Gouge, *The Whole Armour of God*, in *The Workes* (1627), vi, 117.

Thomas Shepard, while likewise insisting that assurance of faith had degrees, nonetheless concluded that “there is no true faith, but it hath some assurance.”⁷⁰

Writing in the late seventeenth century, Walter Marshall, an Independent minister, argued against the vast majority of his peers,

That we may be prepared by the Comforts of the Gospel to perform sincerely the Duties of the Law, we must get some Assurance of our Salvation in that very Faith whereby Christ himself is received into our hearts; Therefore we must endeavour to believe on Christ confidently, persuading and assuring our selves in the Act of believing, that God freely giveth to us an Interest in Christ and his Salvation according to this gracious Promise.⁷¹

The doctrine that faith contained assurance of faith as part of its definition, while by far the minority position, remained a possibility among respected ministers in the later seventeenth century. Firmin by his own attestation had encountered the minority position in the writings and teachings of the godly, and it had afflicted the consciences of his congregants and acquaintances.

Firmin thus agreed with the majority tradition of practical divinity in separating faith from the reflex act of faith. Firmin proved that the “essence of saving Faith doth not lye in that particular perswasion, or assurance, that Christ is mine, and my sins forgiven,” with eight arguments: 1) if faith were equated with

⁷⁰ Thomas Shepard, *Sound Beleever*, 162, cf. 220-1.

⁷¹ Walter Marshall, *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification* (1692), 164. *Gospel Mystery* was published posthumously, and the author of the preface indicates that Marshall, struggling with assurance, “consulted others, particularly Mr. Baxter, (whose Writings he had been much conversant with,) who thereupon told Mr. Marshall he took them too Legally: He afterward consulted an eminent Divine, (giving him an Account of the State of his Soul, and particularizing his Sins that lay heavy on his Conscience, who in his Reply told him, He had forgot to mention the greatest Sin of all, the Sin of Unbelief in not believing on the Lord Jesus for the Remission of his Sins, and Sanctifying his Nature.” *Gospel Mystery*, Aa3v-r. Joel Beeke and Randall Pederson suggest that the “eminent divine” noted in the preface was Thomas Goodwin.

<http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/meetthepuritans/waltermarshall.html> (accessed May 15 2014).

assurance, ministers would have to urge many to believe a lie, since Christ has not actually forgiven everyone; 2) equating faith with assurance makes faith an act of the understanding only, which is a false definition of faith; 3) this definition of faith is not “cross” to the “corrupt heart” of humanity and thus cannot be the definition of faith; 4) assurance is not found in all sound believers and so cannot be the essence of faith; 5) the essence of faith cannot require another act of faith to precede it in order for it to exist, but assurance as the “reflex act” of faith does require this; 6) the essence of faith cannot be something that is intermittent and inconstant, but assurance is; 7) the essence of faith cannot be a “mixed act” but assurance is “at best a mixed act of faith and sense;” and 8) The essence of faith cannot be something that leaves a true believer “sinking under the sense of sin and misery without support,” but the definition of faith as assurance of faith did so.⁷²

Armed with the distinction between justifying faith and assurance of faith, Firmin was thus in a position to help those weak Christians who could not obtain full assurance of salvation to see that they did indeed have faith without encouraging presumptuous assurance through the application of an absolute promise. Firmin concluded that “every man...must be urged to seek a well-grounded assurance, and warned against the danger of ‘false peace’Such an assurance is neither a feeling nor an experience, but a proposition syllogistically inferred from two premises: first, that Christ in the gospel promises justification, perseverance and eternal life to those who by faith receive Him; secondly that one has thus personally received Him.” The discernment of these two promises for

⁷² Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 185-202.

Richard Baxter as well as for Firmin was led by the Holy Spirit, but “certainty concerning the second can only be reached through a detailed and prolonged scrutiny of one’s daily life. Saving faith is known by its works; the inquirer’s problem is to make up his mind whether his works warrant the inference that such faith is present.”⁷³ Firmin clarified that the certainty in this assurance was a certainty of experience rather than a certainty of faith. The promises of God in Scripture were *de fide* and so infallibly certain, but the practical syllogism was only a certainty in experience and so fallible, since the minor premise was supplied by conscience, and the conclusion could only be as strong as the weakest premise.

whence riseth this particular perswasion and assurance that Christ is mine, forgiveness mine? Is it not the conclusion arising from two premises that went before, of which one must be made up of sense, spiritual sense: He that believeth in Christ is justified, or is united to Christ, Christ is his. This indeed is *de fide*, we know it by revelation, we have Gods testimony for it....*But I believe this minor* proposition; how do you know that? It must be by a mans retiring into himself, and there taking a view of his own heart, examining what God hath done there, how he hath drawn the Soul to Christ....Here I shrink, certainty I acknowledge, not a wavering conjecture; but to have it, special Divine faith, and to be *as certain*, as this proposition, *That he that believeth in Christ is justified or pardoned*, of which I am sure it is true, *non potest subesse falsum*, this is hard to yield to. The *minor* is certain, with the *certainty of experience*, or *experimental knowledge*...experience and faith are different things. How then is the conclusion certain, with the certainty of Divine Faith?⁷⁴

Firmin also relied heavily, similarly to other orthodox divines, on the role of historical or dogmatic faith in the process of assurance. The scholastic distinction between *fides qua creditor*, the “faith with which it is believed” and *fides quae creditor*, the “faith which is believed” was carried over into Puritanism as a

⁷³ Packer, *Redemption and Restoration of Man*, 342. Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 283-4, 289.

⁷⁴ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 193-4.

distinction between historical faith and saving faith. Historical faith was essentially the content of the bible's teaching about the doctrine of the faith, whereas saving faith was the total trust and allegiance of the person to those doctrines. For Firmin the middle term between bare understanding and saving faith, historical faith or assent to the truth of the doctrines of the faith, was extremely important in the process of assurance:

I may know an abundance of proposition or opinions of other men in Divinity, Philosophy, Physick, but if I do not do not assent to them as *true*, I never *receive* them: Thus when the Soul gives its assent to all those things as true, Christ is received into the understanding, the intellectual part; and the ground of this assent, being because he who is the *prima veritas* saith it, because of the authority of Gods Testimony, who reveals it, this makes that which we call *Historical faith*, or *Dogmatical Faith*. Though this *assent* alone is not enough to make a *saving reception* of Christ, yet it is in saving Faith, and that without which it is impossible there should be any saving Faith.⁷⁵

Firmin thus urged that "this Faith is not such a slight thing as men have made of it," and here he was again in substantial continuity with other Puritans who distinguished saving faith from assurance of faith.⁷⁶ Firmin gave three reasons for focusing on dogmatic or historical faith in the process of effectual calling: 1) taking away dogmatic faith was the way Satan succeeded in convincing Adam and Eve to sin; 2) Christ's reproach to Peter was a criticism of his lack of dogmatic faith; 3) the author of Hebrews feared not the loss of saving but of historical faith in his audience. On the basis of these considerations, Firmin concluded that "if Dogmatical faith once fall, saving Faith cannot stand."⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 162-3.

⁷⁶ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 165. Baxter, *Right Method*, 38.

⁷⁷ Firmin, *Real Christian*, 164-67, quote on 167.

Firmin's disagreement with John, Daniel, and Richard Rogers as well as William Perkins on the definition of faith, then, actually obscured the degree of his continuity with them on the issue of the degrees of faith. As Michael Winship has pointed out, what these divines gave one the one hand by defining faith as a clear persuasion of union with Christ, they took away on the other by insisting that faith that did not doubt itself was not genuine faith but presumption.⁷⁸ John Rogers defined faith as a "particular persuasion of my heart, that Christ Iesus is mine, and that I shall have life and salvation by his meanes; that whatsoever Christ did for the Redemption of mankind, he did it for me, &c,"⁷⁹ but he also wrote that "Faith is joyed with doubting, both in the working of it, and after: for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and there is a continuall combate betweene them in the beleever and the regenerate man, and the devil opposeth the Faith of such a one; therefore they are not soone settled, but are like a man cast into the Sea, who swimming towards a rocke is beate backe oft with waves."⁸⁰ Richard Rogers similarly argued that in faith "God maketh him (of whom I speake) to see cleerly that he is his, and no more to be separated from him...and causeth him to beleeeue that the sonne of God, who was giuen to the unworthy world, is given to him, being one of the same,"⁸¹ but then intimated that one's faith would be shipwrecked without constant maintenance of faith and mortification of sin.

...the knowing and keeping of Gods commandements is interpreted by the holy Ghost in the Scriptures, to bee an indeavouring to know and keepe them.

⁷⁸ Michael Winship, *Making Heretics: Militant Protestantism and Free Grace in Massachusetts, 1636-1641* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 14-18. Daniel Rogers is explicit: "sure it is, the greater our assurance is, the lesse our faith is." *Naaman the Syrian* (1650), 480.

⁷⁹ John Rogers, *The Doctrine of Faith* (1627), 23, 428-454.

⁸⁰ John Rogers, *Doctrine of Faith*, 447.

⁸¹ Richard Rogers, *Seaven Treatises*, 23.

And this indeavour is every day necessarily to be found in us to please God, even as ever we did anie daie, neither can it be neglected of us at anie time but God is offended....this indeavour must be heartie and constant: heartie, and not constrained or hollow, that our beginning may be good as well as our proceeding, and constant, that we faint not, but hold out therein. For many make faire shewes, but they are not sound and true from the heart, and therefore soone vanish: other meane well in practising that which they should have beene taught, but seeing they doe not strongly renew their covenant from day to day, and that with as good courage and desire as they began first, and nourish and persue integritie, they therefore breake off and waxe faint and wearie, before they have brought their worke to an end, that is, before death.⁸²

In the case of precisianists like Perkins and the Rogers, T.D. Bozeman rightly insists that “when...cases of conscience began to abound, pietist authorities did not highlight afresh the soothing power of sola fides; indeed, they found it increasingly difficult to affirm that faith alone reliably assured....If the certainty of faith was relative in part to one’s disciplinary drills and feats and if the solace drawn from spiritual combat could be faint or lost wholly for a time, then in practice certainty was divisible from faith.”⁸³ In practice, the Rogers and Perkins all distinguished between degrees of faith, such that one could have weak faith and in fact be duly constituted as a Christian but without having any assurance that one was in fact saved. John Rogers distinguished between “markes of a strong faith” and “other signes of the smallest measure of true faith,”⁸⁴ and Richard Rogers gave advice to “strong Christians,” “weak Christians,” and “carnal gospellers.”⁸⁵ Everyone had a duty to become fully assured, however, and John Rogers worried about the fact that many settled for weak faith because full assurance required such strenuous

⁸² Richard Rogers, *Seaven Treatises*, 328-9.

⁸³ Bozeman, *Precisianist Strain*, 142.

⁸⁴ John Rogers, *Doctrine of Faith*, 375-6.

⁸⁵ Richard Rogers, *Seaven Treatises*, sig. B3r, 41-2, 45, 49, 69-70, and *passim*.

endeavor.⁸⁶ Nonetheless, he recognized that it was “a thing which is not granted of all.”⁸⁷ The difficulty was to distinguish weak faith from merely temporary faith or hypocrisy. Temporary faith was like “some counterfeit coyne” which “is so like that which is good and current” that it must be tested by a “skillfull Goldsmith” to determine its falseness. Richard Rogers argued that all had a duty to examine their consciences to determine whether the proper foundation had been laid because “he who laith not this foundation, but buildeth on the sand, shall soon see his building turned over.”⁸⁸ As Winship points out, however, there is reason to wonder about the effectiveness of both of the Rogers’s casuistry when the chief way one could know the genuineness of one’s faith was its “perpetuitie.”⁸⁹ In other words, the chief difference between genuine and temporary faith was the tautologous criterion that one was permanent and the other not. A test for how one could know one would never apostasize seems difficult if not impossible to articulate, and none of Rogers’s other criteria seemed to deliver such certainty either. In light of the muted certainty provided by Rogers, Firmin’s assessment that only a “certainty of experience” rather than a full assurance *de fide* seems warranted.

Firmin’s continuity with the majority tradition of practical divinity also led him to insist that one could not have assurance by an absolute promise. A discursive, progressive spiral of assurance was the ordinary means by which one could have knowledge that one had properly closed with Christ. The promise had to

⁸⁶ John Rogers, *Doctrine of Faith*, 357.

⁸⁷ John Rogers, *Doctrine of Faith*, 348.

⁸⁸ Richard Rogers, *Seaven Treatises*, 91, cf. 437-8 where Rogers warns weak believers to beware of presumption.

⁸⁹ Winship, *Making Heretics*, 14-18. Richard Rogers, *Seaven Treatises*, 325-348.

be applied to the person, and that application had to be well-founded and not “enthusiastic.” Firmin’s experience in New England in the 1630s gave him a distaste for all Hutchinsonian and Cottonian claims to assurance by immediate witness or sealing by the Spirit. Firmin made the connection between New England and his embrace of the practical syllogism clear in a later treatise written against Richard Davis, who defended the “free grace” preaching of Tobias Crisp:

When I returned to New-England; before our Ship came into Harbour, a Shallop coming of Shore to us, the Men told us, *the Churches were on fire*....Mr. *Wheelwright*, a Minister, acted his part there, as Mr. *Davis* doth here. All the Discourse was about *Justification*, and the Assurance of it, by the immediate Testimony of the Spirit, or an absolute promise applied by the Spirit. To speak of Conditional promises, sanctification, or Marks, was a Mark of one under the Covenant of Works.”⁹⁰

Firmin was nothing if not anti-antinomian, and he was certain that it was necessary to take the “longer way” of detailed application of redemption to get assurance, and that the short way would lead to ruin. Assurance by means of an absolute promise without any conditions expressed “was the only way of evidencing which some cried up, and all assurances that came not this way were not valued,” and this false assurance “did...unbottom many serious Christians.”⁹¹ Thus Firmin repudiated the antinomian preaching not only of Anne Hutchinson but also John Saltmarsh, among others.⁹² Here was yet another point of continuity with New England divines like Shepard and Hooker. Shepard’s posthumous *Parable of the Ten Virgins*, edited for publication by Jonathan Mitchel, lamented the antinomian

⁹⁰ Giles Firmin, *Panergia, A Review of Mr. Davis’s Vindication: Giving no Satisfaction* (1693), sig. Ar; see also David Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 326-7.

⁹¹ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 283-4.

⁹² Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 52-3.

repudiation of “conditional promises” as “too straight a size,” insisting that “they must be all absolute, and give us peace without any qualification in us, or else they are not large enough.”⁹³ Firmin’s own method of assurance, then, despite repudiating the practical syllogism, nonetheless relied on an evidentiary process, even “syllogizing, taking the first the word, then applying that word to my heart, and if my heart answers the word, then conclude, thus or so of my condition.”⁹⁴ Norman Fiering describes Perkins’s treatment of the function of conscience in the process of assurance as the means by which

the saved get 'infallible certainty' of the pardon of sin and of life everlasting. Perkins guarded against the danger of such a notion dissolving into a mere feeling of assurance by arguing that this knowledge, which after all is communicated through a rational faculty, derives its certainty from a logical deductive process of understanding, not simply from a sense of 'inward delight or peace'...Gradually a syllogism is formed in which one sees himself or herself in congruence with God's expectations of man, and a rational certainty follows.”⁹⁵

Firmin’s treatment of assurance maps closely onto this description, although he would argue that assurance was only an experiential rather than an absolute certainty, which suggests that he did not abandon the basic accepted schema for the interrogating one’s effectual calling.

Given Firmin’s anti-antinomianism and endorsement of the function of the practical syllogism in assurance, the choice of Perkins and the three Rogers as targets in this section of the treatise is surprising, since as Michael Winship notes, it

⁹³ Jonathan Mitchel, “The Epistle to the Reader,” in Thomas Shepard, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins* (1660), sig. A3v.

⁹⁴ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 284.

⁹⁵ Norman Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard: A Discipline in Transition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 58.

was Perkins and the paterfamilias Richard Rogers who invented the idea of “degrees of faith” as a way of dealing with the problem of weak Christians.⁹⁶ The problem for Firmin was that these divines simultaneously affirmed that in substance, faith was assurance of faith, but also that the substance unfolded only over time and not necessarily in every case. Firmin rightly saw this double-mindedness as a contradiction:

if you exclude them who have not the assurance, you will leave a pitiful remnant indeed. This our holy ancient Divines saw in their experience and trading with Souls; hence they were forced to make distinct sizes of Christians, and degrees of Faith, as Mr. *Richard Rogers* makes several degrees of Faith....Yet in *page 23* [of the *Seven Treatises*], he had set out Faith by *assurance*, and said, *that is* the Faith which uniteth to Christ. Now how can these things possibly hang together? When as he, and so holy *Perkins*, will own many for sound believers, in whom there was no *assurance*, and yet it is that *assurance*, as he saith, by which men do apply Christ to themselves, and which uniteth men to Christ: where there is no *assurance*, there can be no application of Christ and his benefits, no union with Christ; it is as possible, as there can be a man, and yet no reasonable soul. Hence *no assurance*, and yet a *believer* is near a contradiction, for *assurance* makes a *believer*; yet here is a *believer* and *no assurance*.⁹⁷

For Firmin as for other puritans before him, the chief dilemma to be clarified was the danger of “false faith.” The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints threw into sharp relief the problem of apostasy: how could one know on the basis of a present certainty that one would not defect in the future and so condemn oneself to damnation? Recognizing the ambiguity in the claim that faith was full assurance of faith but that not every Christian achieved full assurance, there were essentially two ways to alleviate the tension. One was, as with Eaton, Towne, and Saltmarsh, to hold onto the claim that faith was assurance of faith and jettison the discursive spiral of

⁹⁶ Michael Winship, “Weak Christians,” 472-80.

⁹⁷ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 191.

assurance. David Como argues that for these “imputative” antinomians, “Faith was but an awakening, a realization of a preestablished fact that had remained unknown. From this perspective, no “growth in grace”—no ascending spiral of grace, holiness, and assurance—was necessary for God had *already* granted all the “unsearchable treasures of his grace” in Christ’s death.”⁹⁸ On the other hand, one could retain the discursive account of assurance and jettison the operative definition of faith, which was the harmonization chosen by Firmin and the majority of the godly.

Firmin claimed that what was essential was to discern the legitimacy of the act of faith and object of faith, Christ, a process which required time to unfold.⁹⁹ The process of reception must be “deliberate” or considered, free and uncoerced, and full in the sense that “the prevalence of the will in its choice” is such that the “heart is not divided,” and it must be a choice that not only abides but grows stronger over time.¹⁰⁰ The object of faith must be Christ in all of his offices, including King and Governor, not just savior: “Justification by imputed righteousness may be very well liked, by a laxe, careless and vain Christian, who either in opinion will deny (as some) any inherent created righteousness or grace in us; or be their opinion what it will, do not much regard it...as I have known some crying up the righteousness of Christ to our justification, their tongues could speak of nothing but this, how pure we were, so that God could see no sin in his people...but inherent righteousness was never made mention of.” Such a “laxe Gospeller” was merely presumptuous rather

⁹⁸ Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 209-10.

⁹⁹ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 242-3.

¹⁰⁰ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 244-50.

than properly assured.¹⁰¹ Receiving Christ “clothed in his Offices” was a reception in which “I receive him not only as a King, to give me laws morally, but *I receive* Jesus my King *efficiently*, to incline my will, bow my heart, and to enable me to be subject to him, and obey his Commandments; this is the King under a Covenant of Grace which we chiefly look at,....all his Offices tend to *healing*, to *redemption*.”¹⁰² Thus if one could discern the beginnings of this “lively faith” within one, one could make the inference to assurance. Firmin believed that if both act and object could be authenticated through this discursive process, then one could have assurance that one was truly a child of God and would not apostasize.

Thus it seems that Simon Chan is wrong in his conclusion that Firmin replaced assurance by discursive reflection on one’s participation in the steps of the *ordo* with a focus on “the Spirit’s illumination,” and in positing John Cotton as the source for Firmin’s treatment of assurance.¹⁰³ While illumination does play a role in Firmin’s discussion of assurance, Firmin is not distinctive in the way he approaches the role of the Spirit in soteriology. Firmin remained, as with Hooker and Shepard, committed to the doctrines of grace in the Reformed tradition and to the all important doctrine of divine concursus with human activity. This doctrine, as Richard Muller,¹⁰⁴ William Stoever and others have indicated, distinguished between different strata of divine and creaturely activity. The causal activities of

¹⁰¹ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 251-255, quote on 255.

¹⁰² Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 260.

¹⁰³ Simon Chan, “The Puritan Meditative Tradition, 1599-1691: A Study of Ascetical Piety” (Ph.D. Diss., Cambridge University, 1986), 201-2. I owe this reference to a conversation with Amy Gant Tan.

¹⁰⁴ Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 vols., 2d. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 3:101, 110, 123, 327, 342-3, 355, 471, 538; See also Sebastian Rehnman, “The Doctrine of God in Reformed Orthodoxy,” in *The Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy*, ed. Herman Selderhuis (Leiden: EJ Brill, 2013), 353-402.

God and creatures were not univocal and so not in competition with one another.

Stoeever's account of the doctrine is especially lucid:

For Reformed divines in the early seventeenth century the really crucial theological distinction, it may be argued, did not lie between human activity, on the one hand, and divine activity, on the other, with the consequence that man must literally be passive in conversion. The crucial distinction lay, rather, between merit and grace in human action relative to attainment of justification, and also between the inability of corrupt man and the ability of gracious man to 'close with' the offer of justification. The Protestant sola gratia excluded the possibility that any human act could merit pardon from God. Exclusion of merit from justification, however, was not quite the same thing as exclusion of human faculties from participation in conversion. The scholastic doctrine of multiple causality, which was the common property of Reformed theologians during the orthodox period, enabled them to conceive of a concurrence of divine and human activity in conversion and of gracious and natural human agency in the individual's act of faith that did not violate the integrity of grace or nature.¹⁰⁵

The doctrine of concursus was, however, ambiguous. It could underwrite, as it had in the earlier puritan tradition, a fundamentally voluntarist soteriology. So long as one insisted that divine activity concurred with and oversaw the creaturely "means" used to prepare for salvation or to mortify continuing sin as a regenerate saint, one could avoid an openly Arminian soteriology while insisting upon the centrality of duties in the Christian life. Firmin's treatment of illumination fit within this scheme of concursus. Although the Spirit superintended the process of preparation and effectual calling, it did so through by superintending the creaturely media of means, especially the preaching of the word.

The fact, then, that Firmin described effectual calling in terms of the work of the Spirit by no means reflects a Cottonian influence. As Bozeman has argued, what

¹⁰⁵ Stoeever, *A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven: Covenant Theology and Antinomianism in Seventeenth Century Massachusetts* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1978), 110.

was distinctive about Cotton's new world treatment of assurance was the particular inflection he gave to the doctrine of God's concurrence with believers in the production of covenant conditions. Where the rigorous "pietists" among the New England theologians used the doctrine voluntaristically, as a way to hold onto divine sovereignty while playing up human endeavor in salvation, Cotton accented the transcendent nature of divine operation that superintended human action.

Assurance conceived of as "sealing" by the Spirit was a matter of the justified believer being possessed from on high for Cotton. Cotton was also unusual in that he concluded that the creaturely operations of the unregenerate and the "increated" operations of the Spirit in the regenerate were virtually indistinguishable, such that they were not probative of one's spiritual estate. Whereas earlier divines like Richard Rogers argued that it was difficult to tell the difference between the operations of the elect and the hypocrite, they were nonetheless distinguishable through introspection and careful guarding of conscience, Cotton concluded that there was no discernable difference between them. Cotton's answer to this problem was to appeal to the seal of the Spirit, which was a "transcendent operation" of the Triune God acting as a kind of "second blessing" in the Wesleyan sense, in which the believer received full assurance that overcame all doubt and fear:

For Eaton, Crisp, and other antinomian theorists, the act of faith that joins to Christ was the medium of certainty; properly understood, one's trust in Christ and his pardon supplies unflinching knowledge that one is elect and redeemed. But Cotton now took an opposite tack. Expanding a theme he had begun to develop in England, he offered a humbler estimate of what the initial act of faith accomplishes. Faith makes the link to Christ and so remains a watershed event in the Christian life, but, if only temporarily, it lacks power clearly to attest that union to the believer and thus is not itself the definitive ground of assurance....The conjoined work of the Father and Son and the believer's faith confer but a partial certitude, still laced with doubt and fear.

When and whence, then, is the deficiency overcome? Firm assurance arrives with a separate and subsequent grace, a “most clear, most certain and most powerful” attestation expressly targeting and curing anxiety of conscience. Cotton sometimes called it the seal of the Spirit.¹⁰⁶

The difficult cases of conscience occurred on Cotton’s understanding of the matter in the liminal space between justification and “sealing” where, as Bozeman states, there can be no discussion of “signs and evidences.”¹⁰⁷

Downplaying covenant conditions in this way is exactly what Firmin did not do in *The Real Christian*. As we have seen, Firmin highlighted the distinctiveness of the regenerate conscience and mode of reception of Christ as the right means to greater assurance. One can easily see how Cotton’s theology gave rise to Anne Hutchinson’s, and one can for that reason easily see how it would therefore have been unattractive to Firmin. Far more likely, especially given Firmin’s discussion of “weak Christians,” “poor lambs of Christ,” and “carnal Gospellers” in *The Real Christian*, is the somewhat obvious answer that Firmin drew his account of assurance from the very sources that he was criticizing – the three Rogers, Hooker, Shepard, Perkins, and Baxter. Firmin’s intra-traditional adjustment is by no means a wholesale repudiation of the progressive, discursive, means-driven approach to settling one’s conscience one finds among Jacobean and early Carolingian puritans, but rather a truncation of its most persecutory elements to make the puritan message articulable in Firmin’s post-Restoration context. John Stachniewski notes that

¹⁰⁶ Bozeman, *Precisianist Strain*, 269-270.

¹⁰⁷ Bozeman, *Precisianist Strain*, 271.

Baxter and Firmin obviously thought they were taking a personal stand in deprecating former rigours, but they were in fact responding to wider ideological changes. They needed to woo a recoiling public. Moreover, an empirical regard for what conduced to human happiness had made inroads into their own minds, as Firmin reveals when he can take stock of the fact that outsiders look on the ways of God “as good for nothing else but to make men mopish and sad.”¹⁰⁸

It is not the case, however, as Stachniewski maintains, that earlier puritans were not concerned about melancholia and the tendency of disciplinary religion to drive people to despair. Richard Rogers already urged in 1603 that

[d]ivers others account the Christian life, mopish, solitarie, and such an estate, the which they hold great wisdom to avoyde,” and retorted that “[n]ow therefore except these can be otherwise perswaded, that the godly life is neither irkesome in it selfe, nor full of deadly discouragements, except, to the flesh, *wherto they are not debtors.*”¹⁰⁹

Rogers also acknowledged how difficult it would be to persuade the ungodly that disciplinary religion was not persecutory, because the godly life “is not pleasure unto all...but that it is a pleasure to those which love the Lord...This unto the upright in hart is such a pleasure, as without it there is none to them.”¹¹⁰ It does seem, however, that there was a lateral shift in the approach that Baxter and Firmin took to conscience. Responding to the virtue-orientation in the later seventeenth century England, Baxter’s and Firmin’s approach to conscience focused more on the limits of what humans were capable rather than urging the necessity of what was

¹⁰⁸ John Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 59-60.

¹⁰⁹ Richard Rogers, *Seaven Treatises*, 212.

¹¹⁰ Richard Rogers, *Seaven Treatises*, 600.

above them.¹¹¹ Again, the issue was less a change in terminology or conceptual foundation and more a shift in focus within a prevailing tradition.

Chan's explanation also makes no sense in light of the fact that *The Real Christian* received an imprimatur from Robert Grove, who in 1669 and early 1670, as the imprimatur indicates, was chaplain to the Bishop of London, Humphrey Henchman. Henchman was a conformist Calvinist with generally cordial relationships with putatively moderate non-conformists of Firmin's ilk. John Spurr notes that Henchman "drew a distinction between sectaries—crowing to Sancroft when a crackdown was ordered that 'I always sayd that the insolence of the sectaries would prove to our advantage'—and sober dissenters such as Dr Thomas Manton who 'deported himself civilly and prudently' when summoned before Henchman's consistory court."¹¹² Given Henchman's receptiveness to moderate Presbyterians like Manton, it is hard to imagine Grove as Henchman's chaplain endorsing what would be regarded in the Restoration church as an "enthusiastic" account of the operation of assurance.¹¹³ Instead, Firmin's far more discursive, cognitivist, analytical theology of assurance was much more akin to Baxter's, Flavel's, Hooker's, or Shepard's approach in which a "spiral of assurance" resulted

¹¹¹ John Spurr, "'Latitudinarianism' and the Restoration Church," *Historical Journal*, 31.1 (1988): 61-82, Idem, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 236-49.

¹¹² John Spurr, "Humphrey Henchman," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/12898?docPos=1> (accessed Sept. 22, 2014); On Grove and Henchman, see John Spurr, *Restoration Church*, 27, 35, 53, 58, 75, 95, 125, 188, 203, 207, 240, 331.

¹¹³ See Michael Heyd, *"Be Sober and Reasonable": The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Leyden: E.J. Brill, 1994), chs. 3, 6, 7.

from a continuous investigation of conscience and testing of the conditions of salvation.¹¹⁴

Effectual calling, self-love, and the glory of God

The bar for discerning whether one had received effectual calling for Firmin did mark a genuine departure from many of Firmin's strenuous peers, and not only the extreme versions set out by Shepard and Hooker.¹¹⁵ The approach that Thomas Shepard and Thomas Hooker took, insisting that preparation for salvation was not complete until one could be content even if God should deny justifying grace for the sake of his glory, was a step beyond what most Puritans would require, but Firmin also took issue with the classical way in which the doctrine was framed. Puritans insisted that the process of introspection to discover whether one's effectual calling was sure would reveal that one desired Christ for his own sake rather than the for sake of one's own salvation if indeed one had been effectually called.

John Preston argued that

such repentance as will save thy soule, is a sorrow for thy sin that is past, and a purpose for the time to come to endeavor to leave all sin; arising out of a love to God: for all repentance ariseth either out of a love of God, or els from selfe-love: if it be out of love of God, thou wilt presently give thy selfe to his service, and forsake thy sinne: if it be not out of love to God, but out of selfe-love, that thou purposest to forsake thy sinne, then it is not true repentance, but false, and riseth from by-respects.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Charles Hambrick Stowe's helpful summary of the Puritan approach to assurance in *The Practice of Piety* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 89.

¹¹⁵ Critics of the "Marrow Brethren" in eighteenth century Scotland like John M'Laren also acknowledged that Firmin's critique of these positions as overly demanding was legitimate. Lachman, *The Marrow Controversy*, 187; See also John MacLeod, *Scottish Theology* (Edinburgh: Publications Committee of the Free Church of Scotland, 1943), 29.

¹¹⁶ John Preston, *A Liveles Life* (1641), 11, cf. 42-5. See also idem, *Plenitudo Fontis* (1645), 14. Jonathan Moore is manifestly wrong in arguing that for Preston, "the gospel promise is 'free without any condition', in that it is wrong to 'looke for sorrow and holinesse before thou takeest Christ.' This

Christopher Love likewise wrote that repentance that aimed at one's own salvation was insufficient: "Men may change their course from this Principle also, because of that horror of conscience that seizeth on them, in the apprehension of hell, and the wrath of God, and from this principle a heathen may change his course....Now if thou change thy sin, only to stop consciences mouth, and muzzle conscience, this is no Argument of effectual calling."¹¹⁷ Thomas Goodwin similarly indicated that those with false faith, whose calling would not prove sure, would find that their affections centered upon themselves, rather than upon God. The successful internal search should reveal affections that were oriented toward God rather than the soul's salvation.¹¹⁸

One curious exception to this Augustinian approach that was central to the Puritan morphology of conversion can be found in Richard Sibbes. In "Divine

opposition to preparationism flows from his reasoning that if 'godly sorrow and grace were required, it were not free; godly sorrow and grace followes faith, but are not required before it'However, as if fearing antinomian deductions from the unconditionality of the promise, Preston immediately in this same passage qualifies this unconditionality. It is not that the sinner is to be represented with no conditions whatsoever, but rather that these conditions are to be understood as duties that are to *follow* faith....The gospel promise is unconditional but final salvation is conditions upon progressive sanctification." Preston is conventional not only in making preparation before justifying faith normative, but also in the degree of preparation required. Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism: John Preston and the Softening of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 127.

¹¹⁷ Christopher Love, *A Treatise of Effectual Calling* (1658), 87, cf. 76-7.

¹¹⁸ "All their prayers, all their affections in holy duties, if they examine the reason of them all, the ends that run in them all, and whence all the motives that do actuate all they do in these, they will find they are taken from themselves. And though the assistance wherewith they are enabled to do what they do is more than their own, yet their ends are no higher than themselves, and so they employ but that assistance God gives them wholly for themselves. Now the end for which a true branch brings forth fruit is, that God might be glorified. Thus, Rom. Vii.4, when 'married to Christ', they are said to 'bring forth fruit to God', which is spoken in opposition to bringing forth fruit to a man's self. Thus also Christ here useth this as the great and main motive to fruitfulness in ver. 8, 'hereby is my father glorified, that you bring forth much fruit' Now whom will this move? Into whose affections will such an argument draw up sap and quicken them? None but those hearts who do make God's glory their utmost end; and so all true branches do, or else this motive should have been used by Christ in vain unto them." Thomas Goodwin, "The Trial of a Christian's Growth," in *The Works of Thomas Goodwin* (Edinburgh: 1861-1866), iii.442.

Meditations and Holy Contemplations,” Sibbes used the conventional Puritan analogy of the soul’s marriage to Christ, but postulated that “The love of a wife to her husband may begin from the supply of her necessities, but afterwards she may love him also for the sweetness of his person. So the soul doth first love Christ for salvation, but when she is brought to him, and finds that sweetness that is in him, then she loves him for himself.”¹¹⁹ Sibbes seems to suggest here that seeking one’s own salvation rather than the glory of Christ is legitimate when the soul first closes with Christ. This passage is at best ambivalent, however, because in other places, Sibbes also requires discernment that the soul aims at God’s glory rather than its own salvation in order to conclude that the person is effectually called:

Hence desires are counted a part of the thing desired, in some measure; but then they must be, *first, constant*, for constancy shews that they are supernaturally natural, and not enforced, *secondly*, they must be *carried to spiritual things*, as to believe, to love God, &c: not out of a special exigent, because, if now they had grace, they think they might escape some danger, but as a loving heart is carried to the thing loved for some excellency in itself.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Richard Sibbes, “Divine Meditations and Holy Contemplations,” in *The Works of Richard Sibbes* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1973), vii.217. Mark Dever cites this passage as Sibbes’s normative perspective on preparation. Dever, *Richard Sibbes: Puritanism and Calvinism in Late Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2000), 148. This passage is isolated in Sibbes’s works, however. Other passages suggest that Sibbes’s followed the Augustinian pattern of required love of God’s glory rather than love of self in determining whether one was effectually called. See the following note.

¹²⁰ Richard Sibbes, “The Bruised Reed and Smoking Flax,” in *Works*, i:62. See also, *Works*, vi:522: “When a man sets a high price on grace more than all the world besides, then a man is sufficiently prepared....Some poor souls think they are never prepared enough; but let them look to the end that God will have preparation for, that is, that a high price be set upon the best things, and value all things but grace meanly in their own rank. When a man is brought to that pitch that by the light of the Spirit he esteems all nothing but Christ, and that he must be had, and he must have saving grace, let him never talk whether he be prepared or no. This disposition shews that he is prepared enough, at least to bring him to conversion.”

Firmin opposed not only the strenuous position on effectual calling marked out by Hooker and Shepard, but also the classical Augustinian position advocated by the mainstream of Puritan divinity. In the introduction, Firmin writes,

So...sinner, here is the question before you enter in to the City, or close with Christ, *Is it the glory of Gods grace which you seek, above your own Salvation?* If your Salvation be not aimed at in a subordinate way to his glory, *Self love* only acts you, and that will undo you....Good Lord, saith the poor sinner, how shall I know this? I am glad of a Saviour to deliver me from Hell and wrath, which I fear, yea, and willing to be saved from my own heart, and lusts, and enmity against God, are drunkards and swearers to so too? If so, then I am lost indeed: while my soul is thus pressed and oppressed with the sense of my undone, miserable, lost sinful and damned estate I see it is rich grace which only can save me through Christ, and I shall ever adore his grace; but whether the glory of it is now *above* my own salvation, I fear it.¹²¹

Like Sibbes, Firmin employed the marriage analogy for his own description of how one can know one is effectually called. As described above, for Firmin, to receive Christ properly is to receive him clothed in all of his offices, rather than as one would like him to be. Thus, dogmatic or historic faith was immensely important for him. At the same time, Firmin argued that reception of Christ for selfish motives was legitimate, as he indicated in his version of the marriage analogy: "Here is *union*, they twain now are become one flesh; he hath taken her, and she hath taken him into marriage covenant and union. She now being *united* to him, *rests* upon him, *trusts* to him, goes to his purse for whatever she wants, she lives upon him, this is *communion* in his goods."¹²² Against both Daniel Rogers¹²³ and Thomas Shepard, Firmin later writes that although God's glory may be the ultimate goal of salvation, these two goals are not opposed to one another but rather are in harmony and are

¹²¹ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, sig. Ga2r.

¹²² Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 183.

¹²³ See Daniel Rogers, *Naaman the Syrian*, 499.

ordered to one another. Thus one may aim at one's salvation and at God's glory simultaneously without being guilty of self-love in the same measure as a reprobate:

The question lieth here, whether in faith answering the call of God, in its first union with Christ, doth God require, that *now* we look that we receive Christ, to exalt that glory of his *above* our own salvation? For thus Mr. *Rogers* and Mr. *Shepherd* have both carried it...For the first Question, I shall not need stand upon that, it is so plain, to any man who hath read the Gospel, that he is stark blind that cannot see this, that believers in Christ may aim at their own salvation in receiving of him: Only this same word, *self love*, is a suspicious word, and Mr. *Rogers* (especially) with Mr. *Shepherd*, have spoken so much against it, that they make poor Christians afraid....A Rule. *Never did God declare against self, or call a man to deny himself, in that which did hinder his own salvation and happiness, lying in union and communion with God by Christ....Did I hear any man preach a duty to Christians, in answering of which duty I saw clearly, myself, my happiness, my salvation were cut off and hindered...in my union and communion with God by Christ...I would be bold to tell that Preacher he lyed.*¹²⁴

Some of godly, in particular Richard Baxter, were already straining toward the conclusion that Firmin stated quite baldly in *The Real Christian*. Baxter argued, for instance, in *Reliquiae Baxterianae*:

And I understood, that though *Fear* without *Love* be not a state of Saving Grace, and *greater Love* to the *World* than to *God* be not consistent with Sincerity; yet a *little* predominating Love (prevailing against worldly Love) conjunct with a far *greater measure of Fear*, may be a state of Special Grace...And that it is long before *Love* be sensibly predominant in respect of *Fear* (that is, of *Self-Love* and *Self-Preservation*, though at *the first* it is predominant against *Worldly Love*.¹²⁵

Baxter's position, allowing a degree of self-love to enter the discursive analysis of whether saving faith is present, was carefully hedged about with warnings. Baxter's imagination was still Augustinian, seeing a polarization between self-love and the

¹²⁴ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 208-9.

¹²⁵ Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696), i.7. See Paul Lim, *In Pursuit of Liberty, Unity, and Purity: Richard Baxter's Puritan Ecclesiology in Seventeenth-Century Context* (Leiden: EJ Brill, 2004), 36-8; See also Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), i.162-4.

love of the glory of God, whereas Firmin had begun to see these two ends as consonant with each other and as organically connected to one another. Thus although Firmin's position on the discernment of effectual calling was in many in consonance with the tradition of practical divinity, he had also modified that tradition by insisting on the consonance between the self-regard with which one closes with Christ for his or her own salvation and the glory of God that is implicitly aimed at in that act of faith.

Imposing duties on a Christian constituted

Despite Firmin's similarities to Baxter, *inter alia*, on the issues of preparatory works and the definition of faith, surveyed above, Firmin was critical of how some divines imposed the requirement of certain duties upon a "Christian constituted," especially the duty of heavenly meditation. This was, Firmin acknowledged, a duty set forth by many in the puritan tradition, in more or less extreme versions.¹²⁶ Firmin did not condemn the duty of meditation wholesale, but only the duty of "unmixed" heavenly meditation, and the requirement that at least an hour be spent in this kind of devotion.

Richard Baxter was not the only divine to commend deliberate meditation on heavenly things. Edmund Calamy argued, for instance, for deliberate meditation,

¹²⁶ U. Milo Kaufmann's argues that there are two approaches to meditation in Puritan practical divinity. Joseph Hall restrained the use of imagination and focused his approach to meditation only on the content of the word. Richard Sibbes and Richard Baxter, by contrast, argued that one could mentally represent heavenly realities in earthly, material terms and so gave more liberty to the imagination. Kaufman, *The Pilgrim's Progress and Traditions in Puritan Meditation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 126, 144-5. Joel Beeke is critical of Kaufmann's typology and argues for a more univocal tradition of Puritan meditation. Beeke, "The Puritan Practice of Meditation," <http://segonku.unl.edu/~agant/BeekeMeditation.pdf> (accessed Sept. 24, 2014).

“when a man *sets apart*...some time, and goes into a private Closet, or a private Walk, and there doth solemnly and *deliberately meditate of the things of Heaven*.”¹²⁷ This section focuses on Baxter’s treatment of heavenly meditation, however, because Baxter responded to Firmin in print, and because Firmin had already criticized Baxter privately in 1654 after reading Baxter’s requirement of the duty in an earlier edition of *Saints Everlasting Rest*, stating that “in Meditation you nip Mee, but the book I embrace.”¹²⁸ Evidently Firmin had found in the intervening years that Baxter’s and other’s treatments of the duty had subtly created two classes of Christians and made some (including himself) to believe they were not Christians because they did not practice the duty. Firmin stated that Nathaniel Ward did not practice heavenly meditation, “yet this my godly Father would scarcely be esteemed for a serious Christian by some, for not performing that duty according to the question, though I suppose, a year or two before his death he did take it up, but then I was far distant from him.”¹²⁹

For Baxter, meditation was an abstraction of the soul from the sensible powers of the body and a pure use of the rational faculty of the soul to discern the immaterial:

I call this Meditation (*The acting of the powers of the Soul*,) meaning the soul as rational, to difference it from the cogitations of the soul as sensitive; the sensitive soul hath a kind of Meditation by the Common sense, the Phantasie, and Estimation; The fleshly man mindeth the things of the flesh: If it were the work of the ear, or the eye, or the tongue, or the hands, which I am setting you on, I doubt not but you would more readily take it up; but it is the work of the soul; for bodily exercise doth here profit but little. The soul hath its

¹²⁷ Calamy, *The Art of Divine Meditation* (1680), 10.

¹²⁸ *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter*, eds. NH Keeble and Geoffrey Nuttall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), Letter 193, 1:149.

¹²⁹ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 314-15.

labour and its ease, its business and its idleness, its inattention and remission, as well as the body; And diligent Students are usually as sensible of the labour and weariness of their spirits and brain, as they are of the members of the body. This action of the soul is it I perswade thee to.¹³⁰

Meditation for Baxter was not the “meer imployment of the Brain” either, such that the duty was distinguished from mere cognition as well. It was cognition that had passed to “affection” and thus was a “delightful apprehension” of the soul’s object. Lastly, meditation was not “cursory” or “occasional” but was a focused concentration of the soul on the “everlasting enjoyment of God in heaven,” unmixed with thoughts of other terrestrial objects.¹³¹ Firmin argued that although meditation was required of Christians, the requirement of unalloyed heavenly meditation could not be found anywhere in Scripture, and moreover it was too burdensome for most real Christians to attain to: “This I see is the meditation strongly urged upon Christians, a duty very hard I am sure, and if our salvation lye upon this being performed after this manner as this learned and reverend Author hath set down, then most Christians that I meet with, forty to one, and those whom I esteem good Christians, must never come at Heaven, but must to that dark place.”¹³² Some Christians were capable of this kind of meditation, but it depended upon their “tempers and constitutions,” the “strength of the *Invention*” in a person, and the “strength of habitual Grace received.”¹³³ It could not be enjoined equally on all Christians.

¹³⁰ Baxter, *Saints Everlasting Rest*, 698.

¹³¹ Baxter, *Saints Everlasting Rest*, 700-702.

¹³² Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 314.

¹³³ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 322-23.

Baxter responded to Firmin's critiques in 1671 with *The Duty of Heavenly Meditation*, which allowed that Firmin's treatise was "judicious" and that Baxter was appreciative of his "free and faithful opening and disowning the Errors and failings of the most esteemed Divines."¹³⁴ Like Firmin, he too was "afraid...of screwing weak ones too high in this duty of *meditation* on the *Glory of Heaven*." Despite his severe criticisms of Firmin, he concluded his pamphlet by advising the reader "not to conceive of the worthy person to whom I write this, as any Adversary to a Heavenly Life: For he is a Sober, Godly, faithful Minister....and if we do differ at all (which I am not sure of) it is so little as is not like to cause the least disaffection."¹³⁵ But since Firmin and Baxter had previously corresponded privately, Baxter chastised Firmin for not responding to him by letter before attacking his views in print, and he argued that Firmin had not paid sufficient attention to Baxter's qualifications and "cautions" on the duty, for which he accused Firmin of "unrighteous dealing."¹³⁶ Baxter added a few more qualifications on the duty in light of Firmin's critique, including a proviso for those with weak "invention," stating that "weak persons" should not "stretch their brains beyond their abilitie, to do what they cannot do." Nonetheless, "for this I am of the same mind expressed in the Book which you find fault with. 1. That *Heavenly mindedness is essential to Holiness*. 2. That *Heavenly thoughts or Meditations*, are much of the *exercise of Heavenly mindedness*. 3. And that it is every mans duty to exercise his Thoughts or Meditations in the most *clear, methodical, affecting, practical* way that his *Abilities and opportunities (consideratis*

¹³⁴ Richard Baxter, *The Duty of Heavenly Meditation* (1671), 3.

¹³⁵ Baxter, *Duty*, 33.

¹³⁶ Baxter, *Duty*, 4-5, 8-9.

considerandis) will reach to.”¹³⁷ He added, quite pointedly, that “Though I said it not before, I will now say, that even *Methodical Heavenly* Meditation is a *Duty* to all that have the free use of Reason.”¹³⁸ He disliked Firmin’s tendency to reduce “the *Rule* to our impotent sinful *natures*, nor to our *crooked lives*, when our Hearts and lives should be measured by, and reduced to the *Rule*.”¹³⁹ To justify sin because it was easier for people to perform the acts of holiness was not good practice. Baxter called Firmin out, telling him that if he thought meditation was not a duty, to say so plainly, but not to say that it was a duty for some and not others. If he took that line, he would be similar to papists with their works of supererogation and evangelical counsels.¹⁴⁰ He questioned whether Firmin did not need such meditation as much as Baxter: “Truly Brother, if your soul be not much more Heavenly than mine, it needeth a considerable time of holy exercise, to habituate it to converse above; and to bring it to the benefits of Meditation which we must desire,” and argued that meditation on heaven was the best cure for unassured and unconverted sinners.¹⁴¹ Rather than discouraging weak Christians, Baxter argued that “it is the want of thinking more seriously what *Heaven is*, and the certainty of it to all believers, that causeth men to follow the flesh and world, and to lose it by contempt or gross neglect.”¹⁴²

Firmin responded in 1672 by arguing that his position was the real middle way between extremes: “Gospel-Conversion, and Gospel-Conversation are not

¹³⁷ Baxter, *Duty*, 7.

¹³⁸ Baxter, *Duty*, 29.

¹³⁹ Baxter, *Duty*, 9, 30.

¹⁴⁰ Baxter, *Duty*, 14-15.

¹⁴¹ Baxter, *Duty*, 19, 24-27

¹⁴² Baxter, *Duty*, 27.

things so easie as carnal-gospellers take them to be....To make these more *easie* than God hath made them, is very dangerous...To make them more *difficult* than God hath made them, is to lay a block in the way of the unconverted, and very injurious to the really converted.”¹⁴³ Firmin complained that he did not mention Baxter by name, referring to him only as “a *Learned and Reverend Author*,” intimating that he did not necessarily have Baxter in view. Baxter “takes himself to be that Learned and Reverend Author,” though Firmin had others in mind who were even more stringent than Baxter: “Another Reverend Divine I see requiring at least half an hour for beginners, and one hour for others: another giving twenty heads of explication of the Duty, being requisite to the right performance of the Duty, I presume these heads will require meditation also, and thus we shall make the Duty difficult indeed, at last.”¹⁴⁴

Firmin’s fundamental point was that the question was not whether meditation was a duty, but whether the specific mode of meditation Baxter set out in the treatise of heavenly meditation was the biblical duty of meditation. For those whose imaginations wandered but were still real Christians, the duty of meditation could be set out in a more realistic way. Firmin enjoined only a general duty to meditation, which did not require one to keep thought focused on a single subject for a half hour or an hour. For Firmin the general duty satisfied the purpose of meditation, and he believed, as Stephen Chan has written, “a bee which flits from flower to flower still gathers honey!”¹⁴⁵ The fight between Firmin and Baxter ended

¹⁴³ Firmin, *Meditations upon Mr. Baxters Review*, 2.

¹⁴⁴ Firmin, *Meditations*, 3-4.

¹⁴⁵ Chan, “Puritan Meditative Tradition,” 204.

in 1672 because, quite uncharacteristically, Baxter did not respond. He later indicated that the reason for this was that Firmin “wrote a weake reply which I thought not worthy of a Rejoinder.”¹⁴⁶ It is not exactly clear why Firmin wrote such a tepid reply to Baxter in 1672 – he was certainly capable of a more vicious attack, as he demonstrated in the case of the Rogers, Perkins, Hooker and Shepard. In all likelihood, it was Firmin’s affection for Baxter in other respects that led him to pull his punches.

Conclusion

This chapter has been dedicated to a close reading of *The Real Christian*. To my knowledge, no one has systematically evaluated the content of this treatise until now, showing Firmin’s continuities and discontinuities with the authorities he addresses in the text. I have attempted to show that Firmin had much more in common with Richard, John, and Daniel Rogers, William Perkins, Thomas Shepard, Thomas Hooker, and Richard Baxter than differences from them. Against those scholars who see in Firmin a vast departure from the tradition of practical divinity, this chapter has attempted to show that Firmin saw himself as standing within that tradition but making slight but important modifications to it. Ultimately, these divergences consisted in Firmin’s sense that the gospel was to be offered universally and that the duty to accept Christ was a priority over the duty to be prepared: “Object. *Ministers are to press all men prepared to believe in Christ.* Answ. First, But what if not *prepared*? Is it not therefore their duty? If it be not their duty, then I

¹⁴⁶ Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, ed. Matthew Sylvester (1696), iii, 102.

confess *all* men must not be pressed to believe in him, but then I hope unbelief in them is no sin, because faith is not their duty, because not prepared.”¹⁴⁷ Secondly, Firmin disagreed with the Puritan tradition of practical divinity in allowing that coming to Christ did not require prioritizing his glory over one’s salvation. These two aims were ordered to each other rather than being at odds with one another.

In the next chapter, we will examine Firmin’s contributions to the debate with Anglican apologists during the 1670s and early 1680s. The transition to Dissent changed Puritanism indelibly, quickly and violently changing positions that could be reliably taken for granted only a few short years before. Where Presbyterians could reliably be seen as advocates for comprehension in the early Restoration, by the 1670s, they had fractured into two parties, one of which had begun advocating for toleration. Edward Stillingfleet’s 1679 sermon *The Mischief of Separation*, brought the differences between different sorts of Presbyterians to the fore. Firmin’s contribution, as we will see, helps to illuminate and illustrate many of these differences.

¹⁴⁷ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 186.

Chapter IV

“What Episcopacy Is It You Mean?” Conscience, Schism, Anti-Popery, and the Edward Stillingfleet Debate

“The Controversie therefore stands upon the same bottom on which it has stood these hundred years, and more, like that famous *stone in the West*, which they say, *a child may shake*, but *a hundred men cannot overturn*. Every wrangler can jostle our principles, but the United force of the world cannot overthrow them; *True men* may be killed, but *Truth* will outlive all enmity.”¹

Jonathan Scott describes the Restoration as part of a protracted political crisis funded simultaneously by the international weakness of Protestantism and the weakness of England’s monarchy. Scott reminds us that “between 1590 and 1690 the geographical reach of Protestantism shrank from one-half to one-fifth of the land area of the continent” and that the agony of international Protestantism was at the root of the convulsing political struggles of the seventeenth century.² The ecclesiological struggles of the 1660s, 70s and 80s were no exception to this. Both the Indulgence Controversy from 1667-1673 and the Popish Plot from 1678-1681 were animated by the intensification of the language of anti-popery among the parties. Gary DeKrey has made the case that Dissenters in London, Presbyterian and Independent alike, found it politically expedient to make the case that popery and arbitrary government went hand in hand, both in the ecclesiastical and the secular spheres. From 1667-73, DeKrey argues, “in London, many Presbyterians, who might have been expected to advocate comprehension rather than conscience, were instead driven by the policy of coercion into cooperation with the more sectarian

¹ Vincent Alsop, *The Mischief of Impositions* (1680), sig. D3v.

² Jonathan Scott, *England’s Troubles: Seventeenth Century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 29-30; Idem, “England’s Troubles: Exhuming the Popish Plot,” in *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England*, eds. Tim Harris, Paul Seaward, and Mark Goldie (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 114.

dissenters. As Joseph Williamson reported: “all the Presbyterians are growing to Independents.”³ By contrast, anti-popery among Anglicans was a fighting creed for the established church. Scott Sowerby has recently argued that “anti-popery was a polemical weapon. It had been developed by the Puritans and honed by the Whigs; the opponents of these groups, whether Laudians or Tories, had to neutralize this weapon by either opposing it or adapting it for their own ends.”⁴ Anglican polemics against ecclesiastical non-conformists of all stripes involved a claim either that Dissenters were in league with Roman Catholics or that they were aiding and abetting Roman Catholics by diminishing the strength of the English church. Even among those who were not overtly hostile to Dissenters among Anglican laymen MPs, the fear of popery had an effect, as John Spurr has indicated: “it was after all one of the motives for forcing the cancellation of the Declaration of Indulgence. Many who were well disposed to Dissenters were nevertheless glad to see the end of the indulgence ‘if it was dangerous as to the growth of popery’. But they could not help fearing that ‘an after reckoning must come for use of past liberty.’”⁵

This was not to say that the distinction between those nonconformists ultimately seeking Comprehension and those seeking Toleration that characterized Dissent in the 1660s and 70s did not exist right the way through the 1680s, but that the context of persecution in the form of the Five Mile and Conventicle Acts along with the increasing suspicion that union with Rome was a *desideratum* for key

³ Gary DeKrey, “The First Restoration Crisis: Conscience and Coercion in London, 1667-73,” *Albion*, 25.4 (Winter 1993): 578-9. See also Jacqueline Rose, *Godly Kingship in Restoration England: The Politics of the Royal Supremacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 163-93.

⁴ Scott Sowerby, “Opposition to Anti-Popery in Restoration England,” *Journal of British Studies*, 51.1 (Jan. 2012): 29-30.

⁵ John Spurr, *England in the 1670s: ‘This Masquerading Age’* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 42.

leaders in the Church of England led to a convergence in interest among the two parties. The “sober dissenters,” as John Spurr has called them, were interested in quite specific changes to the Act of Uniformity, a “further latitude in the present constituted order,” “some kind of Relaxation to be made by law” to the terms of communion with the Church of England.⁶ Other Dissenters had more readily internalized the identity of Dissent and argued for the co-existence of separate ecclesiastical institutions. The Anglican layman Edward Polhill summarized the distinction by asserting that there were “two sorts of *Nonconformists*...The *One* who do allow of a *Liturgy* and our Parochial Churches, and these may be all *Comprehended* upon very reasonable condescensions: The *Other* who do not allow of either, and these must be *Indulged*, or destroyed.”⁷ *Pace* Dekrey, however, both parties of Dissenters argued against impositions on the basis of conscience, one party doing so for purposes of furthering the agenda of comprehension and the other for advancing toleration, the latter of whom Richard Baxter referred to as characterized by “peevish singularity and schism.”⁸ Michael Winship characterizes the differing responses of these two parties within Dissent in the 1670s to the polemical work of Simon Patrick, Samuel Parker, and William Sherlock as a contest over the legacy of nonconformity in earlier Puritanism.⁹

The contested theological nature of schism, the dimensions of anti-popery, the desirability of comprehension, the fragmenting shape of the Puritan tradition,

⁶ John Spurr, “The Church of England, Comprehension, and the Toleration Act of 1689,” *English Historical Review*, 104.413 (Oct. 1989): 928-9; John Humfrey and Stephen Lobb, *The Peaceable Design* (1675), 57.

⁷ Edward Polhill, *The Samaritan* (1682), 114.

⁸ Richard Baxter, *The Cure of Church-Divisions* (1670), 228.

⁹ Michael Winship, “Defining Puritanism in Restoration England: Richard Baxter and Others Respond to *A Friendly Debate*,” *Historical Journal* 54.3 (Sept. 2011): 694, 696.

and the place that should be given to the scrupulous conscience of ministers are all themes reflected in Giles Firmin's 1681 treatise *The Questions between the Conformist and the Non-Conformist Stated*. This chapter uses this important tract by Firmin, the proximate cause of which was the profoundly disturbing sermon preached by Edward Stillingfleet in 1680 published as *The Mischief of Separation*, in order to survey these dimensions of the dissenting community in the 1670s and 80s. Since Anglican polemic was so wide ranging in the 1670s and 80s, Firmin's tract provides the opportunity to focus selectively on the authors typically identified as "Erastian" or "Latitudinarian," principally Simon Patrick, Samuel Parker, William Falkner, and Edward Stillingfleet. The commonalities between these two groups of Anglican polemicists were the rejection of the claim that scripture provided any sort of *jure divino* ecclesiastical polity and the strong polemical reliance upon a politically meaningful national church, both as checks to creeping Romanism. All of these polemicists believed that Dissenters were either in conspiracy with Rome or were giving aid to Rome by taking strength away from the national church. The Latitudinarians, however, have typically been seen as willing to make concessions to Dissenters for the purposes of incorporating them within the national church, whereas the Erastians were not. Stillingfleet's sermon and subsequent publications, however, make clear that this the latter distinction was largely a rhetorical construction, and hence illusory. Stillingfleet proved to be a strong defender of the church's prerogatives in legislating ceremonial and liturgy and unwilling to concede more ground to Dissenters. In response to this sermon, Richard Baxter, John Howe, Vincent Alsop, John Humfrey, and John Owen responded in variegated ways,

representing the range of leadership within the kaleidoscope of Puritan Dissent and demonstrating in their individual responses the fragmentation of the Puritan community in its new configuration as Dissent. Firmin's treatise offers yet another illuminating vantage from which to survey the crisis occasioned by Stillingfleet's sermon, the manner in which it enmeshed politics and religion in the early 1680s, and the shape of dissenting approaches to conscience and ecclesiastical polity during this time period.

Erastians and Latitudinarians against Dissenting schismatics in the 1670s and 80s

In an earlier chapter, I discussed the polemics surrounding the Act of Uniformity and the Restoration Crisis of 1660-5 through the lens of Firmin's contributions. Firmin's invective against John Gauden and against the imposition of set prayers, ruling Bishops, and re-ordination offered a concise entry point for the examination of the conformist and non-conformist polemics that characterized the time period. The polemics of the 1670s and 1680s hovered largely around the same issues as in the earlier period, except that in the latter period there was an added incentive of Dissenters to press for provision for conscience, either for the purposes of comprehension or toleration. The themes of anti-popery and the inviolability of conscience in Dissenting writings were, however, foregrounded in a way they were not in the 1660s, and this accent encouraged Dissenters in the advocacy of parallel institutions outside the national church. In turn, Anglican polemicists due to fear of Rome and increasing impatience with Dissenters, simultaneously increased the intensity of their invective.

A large number of Dissenters had been turned out of their livings in 1662 and faced steep penalties from the Clarendon Code, particularly the Five Mile Act and the first Conventicle Act. The backdrop to much of the polemics in the late 1660s and early 70s was the possibility of indulgence being granted by Charles II. As one might expect, in this political context both rigid Laudians and conformist Calvinists like Robert South inveighed against Dissenters of all stripes. However, it was also putatively “liberal,” rationalistic churchmen suspected of Socinianism and Erastianism by Dissenting and conforming divines alike, such as Simon Patrick, Samuel Parker, and William Sherlock, who made the case against loosening the requirements for conformity.¹⁰

The writings of these supposed liberal or rationalistic divines in the late 1660s and 70s was almost stunning in its abusiveness toward Dissenters. Despite the increasing emphasis on reason and sobriety in doctrine, these treatises were almost hysterical in their vituperation toward the Dissenters. This was because, as John Spurr has written, “The Anglican Church saw itself as being crucified between two thieves, popery and dissent: ‘the common cry is, that the Church of England must go down’, wailed Richard Allen.”¹¹ The principal charges in these polemical outbursts were not necessarily compatible, even intratextually. The Dissenters were maligned as unlearned, rationalistic, prideful, cowardly, seditious, schismatic, enthusiastic, and in league with the papists. John Owen complained of Samuel

¹⁰ See, e.g. Thomas Danson, *A Friendly Debate between Satan and Sherlock Containing a Discovery of the Unsoundness of Mr. William Sherlocks Principles* (1676); John Owen, *A Vindication of Some Passages in a Discourse concerning Communion with God from the Exceptions of William Sherlock* (1674).

¹¹ Spurr, *England in the 1670s*, 234.

Parker's writing that it was hysterical and lacked clarity.¹² Patrick's *Friendly Debate* refused to make distinctions between the Dissenters, presenting all of them as prideful and vain, advancing "their own private late inventions, against publick Decrees and ancient Constitutions" under the guise of the "greatest niceness of conscience" while making "no scruple to do those things continually which are utterly contrary to good conscience."¹³ Dissenters of whatever stripe were thus not to be compromised with but rather extirpated. They were essentially seditious and destructive of public order, and they were factious because they were enthusiastic, prideful, and antinomian.¹⁴ There was no difference between Independents and Presbyterians, as this passage makes plain:

N.C. What do you tell me of *Independents*? We have nothing to do with them.
C. Yes, but you have. For it appears by your discourse, that your Opinions now are a mixture of the Fancies of more Sects than theirs. And as for your Ministers; it's plain that they are in part turn'd *Independents*, (which is a gross Apostacy from their Principles) having Congregations in several places that have no Dependency one upon another....Was there not a time when your Ministers would by no means hear of *Liberty of Conscience*?...their Principles did not die with them, but survived in their Followers. And yet now all on a sudden they are vanish'd. Now they are for Liberty of Conscience. By which if they mean only a Liberty for themselves, let them speak out, that all their Brethren of the Separation may hear them. And withal let them acquaint us by what title they claim this Favour more than the rest of the Sects that are sprung from them., who might take the liberty to separate from them, as well as they take the Liberty to separate from us.¹⁵

¹² "What conscience is, what liberty of conscience, what it is pleaded for to extend unto, who are concerned in it, whether its plea be resolved absolutely into its own nature and constitution, or into that respect which hath to another common rule of the minds and conceptions of men in and about the worship of God, is not decalred; nor is it easily discernible what he allows and approves of in his own discourse, and what he introduceth to reflect upon, and so reject." Owen, *Truth and Innocency Vindicated*, in John Owen, *Works*, ed. William Gould, 16 Vols. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1966), xiii:371.

¹³ Simon Patrick, *A Friendly Debate between a Conformist and Non-Conformist* (1669), sig. A5v.

¹⁴ On Dissenters' enthusiasm, see Patrick, *Friendly Debate*, 11, 25, 65-6, 133. On their putative antinomianism, see *Ibid.*, 22-3, 30-1. On their pride, see *Ibid.*, 60, 83, 114.

¹⁵ Patrick, *Friendly Debate*, 51, 56, 57, cf. 92-3.

Samuel Parker inveighed similarly against the sedition of the Dissenters, acknowledging that the “Fanatick Party,” adhering to “schismatical Non-conformity” might object to the “vehemence and severity of its Style,” not that it much concerned him since they would not be able to refute his arguments.¹⁶ The tone, Parker argued, was necessary since “when we have to do with the Scribes and Pharisees, we must point our Reproofs with sharp Invectives, we must discover them to humble them; we must lance their Tumour, and take out the Core of their proud Flesh before we can cure them.”¹⁷ Parker accused the Non-conformists of enthusiasm stemming from an implicit endorsement of Hobbesian Epicureanism, “that mean have no Faculties but of sense and Imagination; that Understanding is Reaction, and Reason a train of Phantasms; that the Will is a Corporeal Motion,” a set of beliefs bound to lead to irreligion and atheism.¹⁸ This argument was strange since Parker’s own radical Erastianism made him susceptible to the charge that he was an adherent of the “Malmsbury philosophy.” Like Patrick, Parker also accused the Non-conformists of ignorance, pride, antinomianism, schism, and sedition, and he denied that there were any distinctions to be drawn between the parties of the nonconformists.¹⁹ It was the way of all schismatics according to Parker to err in one direction in opposition to another error: “our Church Dissenters, out of abhorrency to the Papal Tyranny and Usurpation upon mens understandings, never think the liberty of their

¹⁶ Samuel Parker, *A Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie* (1671), sig. A2r, xii, xxxix-xl; on Parker and his context see Jason Jewell, “Authority’s Advocate: Samuel Parker, Religion, and Politics in Restoration England,” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Florida, 2004.

¹⁷ Parker, *Discourse*, viii.

¹⁸ Parker, *Discourse*, xxv-vi, cf. 137-9. On Parker’s view that Hobbesianism led inevitably to atheism, see Jewell, “Authority’s Advocate,” 41, 83-5.

¹⁹ Parker, *Discourse*, xl, cf. xliii-xlv, 73-74, 152-4. On the accusation of Hobbesianism, see Jewell, “Authority’s Advocate,” 78.

Consciences sufficiently secure, till they have shaken off all subjection to Humane Authority: and because the Church of *Rome* by her unreasonable Impositions has invaded the Fundamental Liberty of mankind, they presently conclude all restraints upon licentious Practices and Perswasions about religion under the hated name of Popery.”²⁰

The revulsion toward popery among the Dissenters that led to the repudiation of the English church could only succeed in replacing the national church with the Roman church. The Royalist propagandist Roger L’Estrange evocatively captured this line of logic, which reached an hysterical point from 1678-82 under the shadow of the putative Popish Plot, in his 1680 broadsheet *The Committee, or Popery in Masquerade*, which John Spurr describes as depicting “a conglomeration of rebels, sectaries and dissenters, whose factious and seditious activities had led to civil war in the past and could provoke disorder in the present. These so-called protestants are doing the work of papists (they are urged on by the pope from the top-right) because they are introducing the tyranny which will pave the way for popery.”²¹ Any pretended liberty of conscience on the subscription to the Act of Uniformity was mere schism and sedition, just as was popery because “if we take a Survey of all the Forms of Divine Service practiced in the Christian Church, there is not any of them that can so much as pretend to be appointed in the Word of God, but depend upon the Authority of the Civil Power in the same manner as all Customs and Laws of Civil Government do. And therefore to quarrel with those

²⁰ Parker, *Discourse*, 24.

²¹ Spurr, *England in the 1670s*, 289; see also Tim Harris, *The London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration until the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 139-40 on L’Estrange’s engraving.

Forms of Publick Worship, that are established by Authority, only because they are *Humane Institutions*, is at once notorious Schism and Rebellion.”²² Against the argument that what was indifferent in itself became unlawful when imposed, Parker and Patrick both scoffed that this was a piece of crass sophistry.²³

Sherlock added to this stock of arguments an extended polemic against John Owen’s discourse on union and communion with God in which he argued that Christ’s union was not with every Christian but with the church as a whole, maligning Owen for his putative individualism.²⁴ For Sherlock as for other Anglican churchmen, “the Union of particular Christians to Christ is by means of their Union to the Christian Church: the Church is *the body of Christ*, and every Christian by being united to this body becomes *a member of Christ*.”²⁵ Thus no individual could claim authority from Christ that was not vested with authority by the church, which was Christ’s body. Although Christ was the Head and Husband of the Church, such that he exclusively exercised authority over it, “he doth not govern us immediately by himself, for He is ascended up into Heaven, where he powerfully intercedes for his Church, and by a vigilant Providence superintends all the affairs of it, but hath left the visible and external conduct and government of his Church to *Bishops* and

²² Parker, *Discourse*, 104-5, cf. 155-6, 174-7.

²³ Parker, *Discourse*, 188-90; Patrick, *Friendly Debate*, 77.

²⁴ As with other polemical treatises, it is clear that Sherlock’s treatise made an utter caricature of Owen’s argument in characterizing it as individualistic. In Owen’s spiritual reading of Canticles, for instance, he makes plain that when the spouse cannot find her husband (3:2), “then the way she puts herself upon, is to go about the city. Not to insist upon particulars, nor to strain the parts of the allegory too far, the city here intended is the city of God, the *Church*, and the passing through the broad and narrow streets, is the diligent inquiry that the spouse makes in all the paths and ordinances given unto it. This, then, is the next thing the soul addresses itself unto in the want o Christ:--when it finds him not in any private endeavours, it makes vigorous application to the ordinances of public worship; in prayer, in preaching, in administration of the seals, doth it look after Christ.” Owen, *Of Communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, in *Works*, ii.130.

²⁵ William Sherlock, *A Discourse concerning the Knowledge of Christ* (1674), 143-4.

Pastors, who preside in his name, and by his authority.”²⁶ This derived authority given to Bishops and Pastors meant that one who was not subject to them could not be united to Christ, since that union was mediated by the authority of Christ’s vicars on earth.²⁷

William Falkner added arguments in favor of the church’s liberty in legislating ceremonial and liturgical practices over the course of the 1670s. While Falkner’s tone was more cordial than Patrick’s, Parker’s and Sherlock’s, he nonetheless inveighed against “those who will allow nothing (except some few circumstances) to be determined by the Authority of the Church, unless it be directly enjoined by a particular enjoined by a particular divine Institution,” which was an “unjust and unreasonable exception against the established order of any Church, that there are something things determined and appointed by the Authority of Superiours, which have always been accounted of an *Indifferent* nature; and are indeed the proper matters of *Ecclesiastical Liberty*.”²⁸ Like the others, he insisted that the Dissenters’ refusal to join the church would only “gratify popery and irreligion” and that it was schismatic since the separation had no “just and necessary grounds” to account for it. He argued that the definitions of schism employed by Dissenters to justify separation from the church were the “natural result of the *New-England Independent Principles of Church-Communion*.” Owen’s definition of schism, for instance, as infighting within a particular congregation was

²⁶ Sherlock, *Discourse*, 162-3.

²⁷ This is Sherlock’s only real difference with Owen: the political significance of the visible Catholic church, particularly as a national body. This argument will become clearer below in the explanation of Owen’s threefold understanding of the church.

²⁸ William Falkner, *Libertas Ecclesiastica* (1677), “Preface to the Reader.”

unduly exclusive. If infighting was schismatic, then a fortiori separating from the church on the basis of such disagreement was schismatic.²⁹ Acknowledging that some Dissenters still acted out of a sincere conscience and not out of mere fractious schism, Falkner set out to demolish the basis of conscientious scruples, the requirement of repudiation of the Solemn League and Covenant and the subscription to the liturgy. Unlike the Dissenters, who differentiated between assent and consent in the Act of Uniformity, Falkner insisted that “as to *assent*, when referred to things asserted, is to own the truth of them; so when referred to things to be done, ordered or used, is to allow that they should be put in practice: in which latter sense, *assenting* is one and the same with *consenting*.”³⁰ Nor was the Dissenting argument that lawful forms limited the gift of prayer a valid one, because it “is manifest, that by the will of God, bounds and limits were to be set even to the use of the *extraordinary gifts of Gods Spirit*,” which were to be set by the church itself.³¹ The fact that the Apocrypha was read in churches was not a legitimate reason to suspend one’s attendance upon worship, since if one did not want to hear anything but the scriptures in church one should logically also “reject and disown, to the great disadvantage of Religion, the use of Sermons, Exhortations, and Catechism.”³² The biggest charge laid against the Church of England, Falkner observed, was the practice of humanly contrived ceremonies. These ceremonies were indifferent in themselves and able to be imposed and changed by the church at

²⁹ As we have already seen in a previous chapter, this line of argument was shared by both Anglicans and many Presbyterians, including Firmin.

³⁰ Falkner, *Libertas Ecclesiastica*, 91.

³¹ Falkner, *Libertas Ecclesiastica*, 121.

³² Falkner, *Libertas Ecclesiastica*, 162.

its discretion. More pertinently, however, Falkner asserted that “the observation of things indifferent, may by a *secondary* and consequential respect to other commands of God and duties of men (though not directly from themselves) render our services *more acceptable to God.*” In other words, as aids to worship, indifferent ceremonies such as “a gesture of the body” may express reverence and serve as an enhancement to worship and so become necessary to worship at the direction and discretion of the church.³³ It was also necessary for the same reason to distinguish “superstitions” from “prudential constitutions,” the former of which was unlawful and popish, the latter of which was lawful.³⁴ These so-called liberal or Erastian divines compiled a polemical arsenal against Dissenters in the 1670s that froze any attempts at comprehension. Dissenters were, by these accounts, extremely dangerous, because they gave encouragement if not open support to Roman Catholics in their refusal to submit to the church’s teaching, liturgy, and ceremony.

The Latitudinarians on the separation and schism of Dissenters

The putatively Erastian churchmen like Patrick, Parker, and Falkner described above were differentiated, even at the time, from the so-called “Latitudinarian” divines, who were also rationalistic and Erastian, but who also

³³ Falkner, *Libertas Ecclesiastica*, 305-6. On arguments for ceremonies performed only on the authority of the church in antiquity see *Ibid.*, 341-6. Falkner was wholly unsympathetic to the argument that impositions infringed upon Christian liberty: “whereas Ecclesiastical Rites and Constitutions are in themselves lawful, as hath been proved; prudential determinations about such indifferent things, can no more *incroach* upon Christian liberty, than do the political Sanctions of Civil Laws, and the Domestick commands of Parents and Masters.” *Ibid.*, 399, cf. 440-1, 481 on kneeling at the sacrament, 498-9 on the use of the surplice, 505ff on the sign of the cross at baptism. Falkner urged that Lutherans, whom the Reformed Dissenters saw as allies, retained even more ceremonies than did the Church of England. *Ibid.*, 522.

³⁴ Falkner, *Libertas Ecclesiastica*, 361, cf. 441-3 on the proper use of things that have been abused in Rome.

warmed to the godly Dissenters³⁵ and argued in favor of Comprehension. Just who the Latitudinarians were, however, was a matter of confusion even for contemporaries. Robert Grove, for instance, reflected that “there has been a great deal of talk of late years of a certain sort of Men which they call *Latitudinarians*: But I could never yet learn who they were, or what they hold, or where they dwell.”³⁶ Those typically named include Edward Fowler, Edward Stillingfleet, Joseph Glanvill, John Wilkins, and John Tillotson. Richard Baxter suggested that the Latitudinarians were “only Cambridge Arminians, and some of them not so much; and were for Philosophy, and especially for Cartes; and not at all for anything Ceremonious: But being not so strict in their theology or way of piety as some others, they thought that Conformity was too small a matter to keep them out of the Ministry.”³⁷ These divines, who putatively focused on “fundamentals” as opposed to ceremonial or exclusive doctrines, all nonetheless ultimately condemned the continued separation of Dissent, and none of them were finally willing to cave on the features of the Act of Uniformity that gave most offense to moderate Dissenters. Tillotson and Stillingfleet both leaned Erastian, concluding that all church ceremonial and polity was *jure humano* but urging the necessity of subscription where the prince or monarch had decreed on the matter. Both of them, however, wanted to make allowances for the tender consciences of Dissenters for the sake of Comprehension. Tillotson pleaded

³⁵ I am using this term to distinguish Congregationalists and Presbyterians from radical dissenters such as Baptists and Quakers.

³⁶ Robert Grove, *A Vindication of the Conforming Clergy* (1676), 24; John Spurr confutes some popular treatments of the movement in “‘Latitudinarianism’ and the Restoration Church,” *Historical Journal* 31.1 (1988): 61-82.

³⁷ Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696), iii.19-20; cf. ii.386, 408, 427; Spurr, “Latitudinarianism,” 64-5.

for the church “not to insist upon little things, but to yield them up” for the sake of Comprehension,³⁸ and Stillingfleet early in his career argued that that

were we so happy but to take off things granted unnecessary by all, and suspected by many, and judged unlawful by some; and to make nothing the bonds of our communion, but what Christ hath done...allowing a liberty for matters of indifferency...we might indeed be restored to a true, primitive lustre far sooner, than by furnishing up some antiquated ceremonies, which can derive their pedigree no higher than from some ancient custom and tradition.³⁹

The fact, then, that in 1680 Stillingfleet preached the sermon the *Mischief of Separation* was a great blow to Dissenters, which occasioned impassioned responses from the leading Dissenting Churchmen. Sungho Lee has argued that

although Stillingfleet was known as a Latitudinarian for his relatively moderate tendency, it is to be noted that the Latitudinarians were not so much different from other Restoration clergymen. They wholeheartedly embraced the doctrine of the Church of England, highly regarded all liturgies and ceremonies, and deeply respected the episcopal government. Therefore, Stillingfleet’s moderation should not be exaggerated. It is one thing to keep good fellowship with individual Nonconformists; it is quite another to show sympathy to Nonconformity as such.⁴⁰

Stillingfleet’s defense of conformity thus should not be considered a total about face on his principle of moderation, but rather an outworking of his churchmanship in the political context of the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis. The Tory backlash to

³⁸ T. Birch, *The Life of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson* (1753), xxix, 407; on the “irenicism” of Fowler, Wilkins and Tillotson, see John Marshall, *John Locke: Resistance, Religion, and Responsibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 41-2; Idem, “The Ecclesiology of the Latitude-Men 1660-89: Stillingfleet, Tillotson, and ‘Hobbism,’” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 26 (1985): 407-27.

³⁹ Edward Stillingfleet, *Irenicum* (1660), 121. For an analysis of *Irenicum*, see John Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England in the Seventeenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1874), 411-63.

⁴⁰ Sungho Lee, “All Subjects of the Kingdom of Christ: John Owen’s Conceptions of Christian Unity and Schism,” Ph.D. Diss., Calvin Theological Seminary (2007), 235-6. W. Spellman likewise asserts that “a comprehensive church was certainly one of their main goals, but they pursued this otherwise laudable visions on their own thoroughly Anglican terms, with little empathy for or understanding of the position of moderate Dissenters.” Spellman, *The Latitudinarians and the Church of England, 1660-1700* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000), 8.

these events meant that political winds were blowing against reconciliation and the so-called “Trimmers,” and by 1683, John Tillotson felt forced to write a treatise entitled *Moderation a Vertue*.⁴¹ Mark Goldie and John Spurr have documented the ill fate met by one “Protestant Reconciler” in the early 1680s:

In 1682 Daniel Whitby published *The Protestant Reconciler*, urging an accommodation between the Church of England and Dissent. Whitby had been a rising star, a fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, a valued polemicist against Rome, a dignitary of Salisbury Cathedral, and chaplain to Bishop Seth Ward; but this book damned him. He was nicknamed ‘Whigby’; three high-churchmen published against him; and his book was among those anathematized and burnt by the University of Oxford in 1683. Whitby was forced to make a humiliating retraction, confessing his “want of prudence and deference to authority.” He issued a *Second Part* of his book, contradicting the first and pressing conformity vigorously.⁴²

In this context of Tory alliance with the established church, a condemnatory sermon from a reported friend of nonconformity occasioned a firestorm of controversy, as did Stillingfleet’s extended defense the following year, *The Unreasonableness of Separation*. Baxter, Owen, Howe, Humfrey, Lobb, Claggett, Alsop and others all responded with varying levels of indignation, with Baxter predictably leading the charge by taking the sermon as a personal insult.⁴³ Conformists including Thomas

⁴¹ John Tillotson, *Moderation a Vertue* (1683). J.C.D. Clark notes that “in 1679, and twice more in 1681, Charles dissolved Parliament in a defensive action which finally frustrated three successive Whig bills [to exclude James as successor]. It also frustrated Commons’ attempts to secure toleration or comprehension for Protestant Dissenters, episodes which forged a link between Whiggery and Nonconformity that was to last for more than a century. In the last few years of his reign, Charles II abandoned conciliation for a policy of coercion, in full alliance with Tories and churchmen. Given the nature of the ‘Exclusion Crisis,’ which soon involved far more than exclusion alone, the monarch was increasingly seen as the main support of the ‘ancient constitution’ as the frenzy of the ‘Popish Plot’ died way.” Clark, *English Society, 1660-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 70.

⁴² Mark Goldie and John Spurr, “Politics and the Restoration Parish: Edward Fowler and the Struggle for St. Giles Cripplegate,” *English Historical Review*, 109.432 (June, 1994): 574.

⁴³ Baxter insisted that Stillingfleet “told the Magistrates and the World that you think of me as guilty of sinful separation.” Baxter, *Richard Baxter’s Answer to Dr. Stillingfleet’s Charge of Separation* (1680), 8.

Long and William Sherlock, responded in defense of Stillingfleet's sermon and lengthier treatise in the debate ranging through the early 1680s.⁴⁴

Little work has been done to contextualize Stillingfleet's sermon and Dissenting responses to it. Sungho Lee's dissertation has focused extensive attention on Owen's response to Stillingfleet. Martin Sutherland's work focuses on Baxter's and to some degree Howe's rebuttal of the sermon and treatise, but more attention needs to be given to other responses within the world of godly Dissent.⁴⁵ Firmin's response gives us an angle into the concerns of godly Dissent about Stillingfleet's argument and the increasing epistemic closure on both sides about the possibility of reconciliation and comprehension.

Stillingfleet's polemics in the 1680s

Stillingfleet's sermon was written primarily in response to treatises written by Baxter and Owen in 1672, after Charles II's Declaration of Indulgence.⁴⁶ Owen argued in *Discourse Concerning Evangelical Love* in 1672 against Anglican polemicists that the "Kingdome or Church of Christ, on the earth" was defined under three aspects. Most basically and principally, the church was "that *real living, and spiritual body of his*, which is firstly, peculiarly, and properly the *Catholick Church militant in this world....*This then is that Church which on the account of their *Sincere faith and Obedience* shall be saved; and out of which, on the account of their

⁴⁴ Sherlock, *A Discourse about Church Unity Being a Defence of Dr. Stillingfleet's Unreasonableness of Separation* (1681); Thomas Long, *A Continuation and Vindication of Dr. Stillingfleet's Unreasonableness of Separation* (1682).

⁴⁵ Martin Sutherland, *Peace, Toleration, and Decay: The Ecclesiology of Later Stuart Dissent* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2006). On Howe, see also David Field, *Rigide Calvinisme in a Softer Dresse: The Moderate Presbyterianism of John Howe* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2004); 62-8.

⁴⁶ John Owen, *Discourse concerning Evangelical Love* (1672).

Profession, there is no salvation to be obtained; which things are arrogantly appropriated unto any *Particular Church* or Churches in the World."⁴⁷ The church can also be considered under the aspect of the "*Catholick visible Church*," which includes "all who throughout the world outwardly own the Gospel," who acknowledge "*one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism*, which are a sufficient Foundation of that Love, Union and Communion among them, which they are capable of, or are required of them."⁴⁸ In other words, the visible Catholic church was the mere aggregation of those who profess belief in Jesus Christ, having no "organical" or "political" function and thus not capable of exercising discipline over its members. Thus it could not be confined "unto a particular Church of one single Denomination; or indeed rather unto a combination of some Persons, in an outward mode of religious Rule and Worship."⁴⁹ Under the third aspect, the Catholic church was "the *visible Professors* of the Gospel in the world...disposed of by Providence, or their own choice, in *Particular Churches*."⁵⁰ It could not be schism to separate from and gather churches out of parish churches because there was no reason in particular to worship inside of a national parochial system where the individual parish was characterized by grave error or unholiness.⁵¹ Only particular churches could exercise the keys, so only particular churches had any political functions, though again this did not mean that *only* particular churches were the Catholic church.

⁴⁷ Owen, *Discourse*, 39, 41.

⁴⁸ Owen, *Discourse*, 49.

⁴⁹ Owen, *Discourse*, 52.

⁵⁰ Owen, *Discourse*, 56.

⁵¹ Owen maintained, however, consistent with his definition, that "we do preserve our communion entire with the *Church of England* (that is, all the visible Professors of the Gospel in this Nation) as it is a part of the *Catholick Church*, in the Unity of the Faith owned therein, provided it be not measured by the present Opinions of some, who have evidently departed from it." Owen, *Discourse*, 256.

Owen makes clear that “such as were *baptized* into those Churches, were not baptized into them as particular Churches, nor *initiated* into them thereby: But the Relation which ensued unto them thereon, was unto the *Catholick Church visible*, together with a Separation from the *Infidel world*, lying wholly in darkness and evil, by a dedication unto the name of Christ.”⁵² The problem with Conformist and Moderate Dissenting divines was “the Ignorance or Misapprehension...of the *true nature of that Evangelical Unity*, which they ought to follow after.” Such unity was spiritual, a unity of faith and belief that created union with Christ the head, and allegiance to the “Rule of the Word” which established the practices of worship. For Owen as for other nonconforming ministers, the Scriptures were the “apostolic rule” mentioned in Phil. 3:16, a point on which they are at loggerheads with Stillingfleet and other Anglican polemicists.⁵³ Stillingfleet urged that the rule in Phil. 3:16 was not the Scriptures but a rule known to the church at Philippi that had been given by Paul himself as church governor. By analogy, the contemporary church with King as governor ought to be able to give the rule by which churches function in the contemporary context.⁵⁴ Most godly Dissenters agreed with Owen against Stillingfleet on this point, but they did not necessarily agree with each other on the consequences of the affirmation.

⁵² Owen, *Discourse*, 57, 74-5.

⁵³ Owen, *Discourse*, 98-106. See also Vincent Alsop, *A Reply to the Reverend Dean of St. Paul's* (1681), 2: “the Word, the Scripture-Rule is that *same rule* the Apostle would have Christians walk by (*Phil. 3.16*) And that *Establisht Rule*, the Doctor would have it applied to, is such a Rule, as he himself hath told the World, the Apostles and *Primo-Primitive* Christians had not. And if they had no such Rule, nor would ever have establisht such a Rule, then it certainly follows, the Apostle should not be supposed there to press Christians to *Walk by such a Rule*, (which was no Rule with him.” Cf. *Ibid.*, 52-61, 99-127. See also Sungho Lee, “All Subjects of God’s Kingdom,” 237-42 on the controversy over the meaning of “walk by the same rule” in Phil. 3:16.

⁵⁴ Stillingfleet, *Mischief of Separation* (1680), 11.

For Owen, schism and dissension emerged from false teachers and tyrannical abuse of authority, which represented a false view of unity and a divergence from the Scriptures as rule. The imposition of “*unscriptural Conditions of...Communion*” indicated belief in the Church of England that “there is *no certain rule* amongst Christians fixed and determined by Christ,” which was false.⁵⁵ Conformity with the church’s impositions, both in liturgy and polity, was impossible, and Owen advocated the toleration of dissent within parallel institutions.⁵⁶

Richard Baxter argued quite differently in accordance with his moderate nonconformity. Baxter did not believe as did Owen that the visible Catholic church only found political expression in the gathered, particular churches. Baxter, describing himself as a Presbyterian in some sense, argued that most Presbyterians accepted the parish system, though of *jure humano*, not *jure divino* origin, and asserted that Presbyterians made distinctions between “a Parish-Church that imposeth nothing on the Ministers or People that God forbiddeth, and one that doth” and “a Parish-Church that is Reformatable, in that which notoriously needeth Reformation; and one that solemnly Covenanteth against Reformation.”⁵⁷ Baxter even allowed that the King was of course the “Constitutive Ecclesiastical” “Civil-Head or Governour” of the national church,⁵⁸ and he advocated occasional

⁵⁵ Owen, *Discourse*, 194.

⁵⁶ Owen, *Discourse*, 207-12; 253-4.

⁵⁷ Baxter, *Sacrilegious Desertion of the Holy Ministry Rebuked* (1672), 34-5.

⁵⁸ Baxter, *Sacrilegious Desertion*, 36, cf. *Richard Baxters Answer to Dr. Edward Stillingfleet’s Sermon*, 24: “I take myself to be more bound to obey the King, than some Bishops.”

conformity particularly related to reception of the sacrament.⁵⁹ The old Puritans, Baxter contended,

Never said, it was unlawful to hold communion with *any besides* the Parish-Churches; no more will we. What Law tyeth us to be such *Schismaticks* as to renounce communion with all other Churches, except *Parochial* and *Conformists*, or what *Nonconformists* ever held it?...Whose conscience should sooner accuse him of *Schism*; A *Conformists*, that will hold Communion with none but his own party, but *separateth* from all the other Churches in the Land? Or ours, that resolve to hold communion seasonably with all true Christian Churches among us, that teach not *Heresie*, nor preach down Holiness, *Love* or *Peace*, and deny us not their communion, unless we will sin? Let the impartial judg which of us is the *Schismatick* and *Separatist*.⁶⁰

For Baxter, the sole but perfectly sufficient reason to remain outside of the parochial system was for the reformation of the parochial system. He narrowly circumscribed the circumstances in which it was acceptable to worship in a gathered assembly outside the parish. He was not opposed to all impositions, nor was he opposed to Prayer Book itself, he merely insisted that to accept the Act of Uniformity's language of full "Consent and Assent" meant that he could never speak against it.⁶¹ He denied that he desired anything other than comprehension for the Dissenters who scrupled against the precise phrasing of the Act of Uniformity, and he blamed both the Anglicans and the Independents for the continuing threat of popery. Baxter lamented that the Congregationalists, through their sectarian divisiveness, had put

⁵⁹ Baxter, *Sacrilegious Desertion*, 89-91, especially 102-3: "Is it not a high degree of Pride for persons of your *standing* and *understanding* that almost all of Christs Churches in the World for these *thirteen hundred years at least to this dasy*, have offered such worship to God, as that you are obliged to avoid it, and all their Communion in it; And that almost all the Catholick Church on earth, this day, is below your Communion for using Forms? And that even *Calvin* and the Presbyterians, *Cartwright*, *Hildersham*, and the old Non-Conformists, were unworthy of your Communion: Would you have run away from *Dod* or *Perkins*, or from *Cyprian* or *Augustine*, and said, They are *formal Fellows*, not to be joyned with?"

⁶⁰ Baxter, *Sacrilegious Desertion*, 41-2.

⁶¹ Baxter, *Sacrilegious Desertion*, 96.

fuel to the fire of popery: "I tell you with truth and grief, I am confident (next to mens own sin, which leaveth them to a judicial delusion,) *nothing hath done more to set up Popery, and the Prelacy dislike, than the scandalous instances of your unruliness and Church tearing humours*: And that you have made more Papists, than ever you or we are like to recover."⁶² And yet Anglicans had done no better, because in their zeal to keep Dissenters out they set up prelacy in place of Popery, and rather than give leave to dissenters to preach along of parish ministers, "they that cry out of the danger of Popery, Infidelity, Profaneness, and Heresies...had rather let them in all, than give us leave to exercise that Ministry to which were consecrated, in poverty and subjection; and while they cry out of Divisions, while not lay by the *Dividing-engines*."⁶³

Owen's contentions about the visible Catholic Church were exactly what Stillingfleet opposed precisely on grounds of anti-popery, because for him the idea of the national church, as with other Anglican polemicists, was the supreme, or perhaps only, bulwark against popery.⁶⁴

National Churches are National Societies of Christians, under the same Laws of Government and rules of Worship. For the true notion of a *Church* is no more than of a Society of men united together for their Order and Government according to the Rules of the Christian Religion. And it is a great mistake, to make the notion of a *Church* barely to relate to *Acts of Worship*; and consequently that the adequate notion of a Church, is *an Assembly for Divine Worship*; by which means they appropriate the name of Churches to particularly Congregations."⁶⁵

⁶² Baxter, *Sacrilegious Desertion*, 104. Michael Winship argues that "according to Baxter, Congregationalism was little more than the institutionalization of the pride and weakness of spiritually immature puritans." Winship, "Defining Puritanism in Restoration England," 696.

⁶³ Baxter, *Sacrilegious Desertion*, 137-8.

⁶⁴ Sutherland, *Peace, Toleration and Decay*, 77-81; Stillingfleet, *Mischief of Separation*, 19; Stillingfleet, *Unreasonableness of Separation* (1681), 299-300.

⁶⁵ Stillingfleet, *Mischief of Separation*, 17.

The Dissenters in Stillingfleet's view justified nonconformity on two grounds: either they acknowledged that they were separate, but argued this separation was not the sin of schism (Owen), or they argued that separatism was sin, but that their ecclesiastical posture was not separatism (Baxter).⁶⁶ As for the Independents, in Stillingfleet's view "it is very strange, that those who contend so much for the Scriptures being a perfect Rule of all things pertaining to Worship and Discipline, should be able to produce nothing in so necessary a Point."⁶⁷ Stillingfleet accused Owen of believing that the Catholic church was only particular congregations, such that when those congregations ceased to be, the Catholic church ceased to be, but as we have seen Owen's view was more nuanced than Stillingfleet allowed. Against moderate Dissenters like Baxter, Stillingfleet argued that the withdrawal from complete communion and conformity was "a tacit and practical condemning of our Churches, if not as false, yet as impure."⁶⁸

Pace scholars like Dekrey, it is clear that both Baxter and Owen in their way were making arguments for conscience: Owen for the purposes of toleration, Baxter for the purposes of reformation and the allowance of preaching in cooperation with and occasional conformity with the parish church. Stillingfleet acidly responded that "scruple of conscience is no protection against Schism" and that "it is endless to hope to give satisfaction to erring Conscience." In other words, further lassitude and relaxation of the church's posture against dissenters would only result in further

⁶⁶ Stillingfleet, *Mischief of Separation*, 23-4, 33.

⁶⁷ Stillingfleet, *Mischief of Separation*, 26.

⁶⁸ Stillingfleet, *Mischief of Separation*, 36.

appeals for relaxation.⁶⁹ Conscience only extended so far as the “Rules of uniformity” set up by the church and no further. There was every bit of difference between “Tyranny over mens Consciences” and “Rules of Uniformity.”⁷⁰ Stillingfleet maintained here the same posture as in 1659, that there was no sure rule set up by Scripture, but he had moved (along with most Anglican clergy siding with the Tories) away from Erastianism toward a more potent Episcopal position.⁷¹ Stillingfleet urged that both forms of Dissenters were weakening the church and rendering it vulnerable to the Catholics:

Lastly, Let me beseech them to consider *the common danger that threatens us all by means of our Divisions*. We have Adversaries subtile and industrious enough to make use of all advantages to serve their own ends; and there is scarce any other they promise themselves more from, than the continuance of these breaches among our selves: This some of our *Brethren* themselves have been aware of; and on that account have told the *People* of the danger of the *Principles of Separation*, as to the interest of *Religion* in general, and the *Protestant Religion*, in particular among us...Certainly, Nothing would tend more to our common security than for all true and sincere Protestants to lay aside their prejudices, and mistakes, and to joyn heartily in *Communion* with us: which many of their *Teachers* at this day allow to be lawful. ⁷²

Stillingfleet responded to the initial wave of nonconformist revulsion toward his sermon with his lengthier *Unreasonableness of Separation* in 1681 in which he sharpened his case for uniformity within the national church, again against those two positions which he distinguished among the Dissenters. Against those who argued in favor of occasional conformity, he argued that “bare *occasional Communion* doth not excuse from the *guilt of Separation*” and “that as far as

⁶⁹ Stillingfleet, *Mischief of Separation*, 40.

⁷⁰ Stillingfleet, *Mischief of Separation*, 40-1.

⁷¹ Marshall, “Ecclesiology of the Latitude-Men,” 407-27.

⁷² Stillingfleet, *Mischief of Separation*, 52.

occasional Communion with our *Church* is allowed to be *lawful*, *constant Communion* is a *Duty*.” He poisoned the well on the issue of occasional conformity by tracing its genealogy to the hated *Dissenting Brethren* who were attempting to “give satisfaction to the *Presbyterians*, who charged them with *Brownism*.” Independent occasional conformity gave no satisfaction to the *Presbyterians*, and neither would it give any satisfaction to the *Anglicans* when the *Presbyterians* tried it with them.⁷³ The real meaning of occasional communion was that *Dissenters* did not want communion with parochial churches but rather were giving a “meer *complement* to our *Churches*, wherein they force themselves to a dangerous piece of civility much *against their own inclinations*; but they account *constant communion* a thing pernicious to their Souls.”⁷⁴ If occasional communion was an actual recognition of the parochial churches as churches, then there could no argument against complete communion and conformity. Against the *Dissenters* who agreed “in substantial” with the English church but refused conformity, *Stillingfleet* insisted upon five “absurdities” that followed from the positions:

1. That it weakens the *Cause* of the *Reformation*.
2. That it hinders all *Union* between the *Protestant-Churches*.
3. That it justifies the *Antient Schisms*, which have been always condemned by the *Christian Church*.
4. That it makes *Separation* endless.
5. That it is contrary to the *Obligation* which lies on all *Christians*, to preserve the *Peace* and *Unity* of the *Church*.⁷⁵

Referencing *Alsop*’s arguments in *Mischief of Impositions*, published in 1680 after the appearance of *Stillingfleet*’s sermon, the Dean of *St. Paul*’s raged that the

⁷³ *Stillingfleet*, *Unreasonableness of Separation*, 150-1.

⁷⁴ *Stillingfleet*, *Unreasonableness of Separation*, 155.

⁷⁵ *Stillingfleet*, *Unreasonableness of Separation*, 178-9.

argument that separation was lawful where any scruple of conscience could be raised was unserious and would grant legitimacy to the popish interest in England:

Let our *Brethren* now consider, what Triumphs the *Church of Rome* would make over us, if we had nothing to justify our *Separation* from them, but only that we could not have our *Children Baptized without an Aerial Sign of the Cross, nor receive the Communion without kneeling; that we must observe Holy-days, and use a Liturgy; and that Men are not so good as they should be, nor Discipline so exact as were to be wished; How should we be hissed and laughed at all over the Christian World; if we had nothing to alledge for our Separation from the Roman Church, but such things as these? And when the Papists see the weakness of these Allegations, they are harden'd in their own ways; and cry out presently there is no end of Schism's and Separations on such pretences as these, by which, unspeakable mischief hath been done to the Cause of the Reformation.*⁷⁶

Stillingfleet acknowledged that there could be cases where separation was lawful and not schismatic, but this could only occur in three cases: idolatrous worship, where “Men cannot joyn with a Church in their Religious Worship, without doing that which *God* hath so strictly forbidden;” where false doctrine is imposed instead of true; where indifferent things are made necessary to salvation.⁷⁷ Any other defects in the church, whether differences of opinion about practices, or corrupt lives of clergy or laity, could not give rise to an argument for separation, and thus separation from the church of England was sinful schism.⁷⁸ Vincent Alsop, in the

⁷⁶ Stillingfleet, *Unreasonableness of Separation*, 185-6.

⁷⁷ Stillingfleet, *Unreasonableness of Separation*, 190, 211, 213-14. Stillingfleet did clarify that “Men may make *Ceremonies* to become *parts of Divine Worship* if they suppose them *unalterable*, and *obligatory* to the *Consciences* of all *Christians*: for this supposes an *equal necessity* with that of *Divine Institution*. If men do assert so great a *Power* in the *Church*, as to appoint things for *Spiritual effects*, and to *oblige* the *Consciences* of all *Christians* to observe them; it is all one as to say, the *Church* may make *new parts* of *Worship*. But this can with no colour be objected against a *Church* which declares as expressly as it is possible, *that it looks on the Rites and Ceremonies used therein, as things in their own nature indifferent and alterable; and that changes and alterations may be made, as seems necessary or expedient to those in Authority: And that every Country is at liberty to use their own Ceremonies; and that they neither condemn others nor prescribe to them*. What can more express the not making *Ceremonies* any *parts of Divine Worship* than these things do?” *Ibid.*, 347.

⁷⁸ Stillingfleet, *Unreasonableness of Separation*, 215-18, 279-287.

epigram to this chapter, argued that “the Controversie stands still, where it did these hundred years, and more” between the conformists and the non-conformists, but Stillingfleet begged to differ: “I utterly deny that, for the *Nonconformists* have advanced more towards *Separation* these last ten years, than they did in a hundred years before.”⁷⁹

In part III of his treatise, Stillingfleet examined arguments in favor of separation related to the constitution of the church, to the terms of communion with it; to the consciences of dissenters, and to the arguments in favor of Anglican separation from Rome. In addressing the first set of concerns, Stillingfleet rehearsed the stock arguments in favor of the superiority of bishops from the history of the church. In examining the case of Cyprian of Carthage, Stillingfleet argued approvingly that “Saint *Cyprian* did believe that this *Authority* which he had for *governing the Church* was not from the *Power of the People*, but from the *Institution of Christ*,” and while remaining agnostic on the question whether parochial churches and dioceses were of Christ’s institution argued that “our *Diocesan Episcopacy* is the same for *substance* which was in the *Primitive Church*,” indicating just how far Stillingfleet had moved in his ecclesiastical posture from the *Irenicum*.⁸⁰ What Stillingfleet was clear about was that unity in the church was of Christ’s institution, and bishops were the best way to secure unity for the church, since “in the *Congregational way*, there may be as many *Religions as Churches*.”⁸¹ Tellingly, Stillingfleet classed Alsop and Owen together as adherents of the

⁷⁹ Stillingfleet, *Unreasonableness of Separation*, 367.

⁸⁰ Stillingfleet, *Unreasonableness of Separation*, 232, 244, cf. 262.

⁸¹ Stillingfleet, *Unreasonableness of Separation*, 292.

Congregational way because of their principles, despite the fact that Alsop identified as Presbyterian. In the case of scrupulosity of conscience, Stillingfleet argued against Howe that this position should not be a fortress, because scruples could only be excused where they were the products of rightly ordered conscience. Where they were the products of doubting conscience, the question should be resolved rather than allowing doubt to harden into a defensive agnosticism. Worse still was the erring conscience that had become willfully errant. Neither the doubting nor the erring conscience when corrected gave rise to “sinful persecution” but only appropriate correction.⁸²

Dissenting replies to Stillingfleet and Anglican polemics

Stillingfleet’s sermon produced an enormous flood of nonconformist response, particularly from Presbyterian Nonconformists angered to be classed together with Congregationalists and other Independents. Owen observed that the point of Stillingfleet’s sermon seemed to be

- (1) To prove all the Nonconformists to be guilty of Schism, and a sinful Separation from the Church of *England*.
- (2) To aggravate their supposed Guilt and Crime, both in its Nature, and all the pernicious Consequents of it that can be imagined.
- (3) To charge them, especially their Ministers, with want of Sincerity and Honesty, in the management of their Dissent from the Church of *England*, with reference unto the People that hear them.⁸³

He responded that Stillingfleet’s argument for rules of uniformity was just the product of clouded reason. It was the failure to allow the text of Scripture to speak

⁸² Stillingfleet, *Unreasonableness of Separation*, 373-4.

⁸³ John Owen, *A Brief Vindication of the Non-Conformists from the Charge of Schisme* (1680), 3.

for itself without imposing any particular prejudices upon it: “The Truth is, if God would be pleased to help us on all hands, to lay aside Prejudices, Passions, Secular Interests, Fears, and every other distempered Affections, which obstruct our minds in passing a Right Judgment on things of the nature treated on; we find in the *Text* and *Context* spoken unto, a sacred Truth divinely directive of such a Practice as would give Peace and Rest unto us all.”⁸⁴ It was, of course, in Owen’s interest to stress the closeness of the different sort of nonconformists, so he denied Stillingfleet’s characterization of two different classes of nonconformity, instead arguing for a single body of non-conformists who expressed themselves slightly differently.⁸⁵ In any event, for Owen parish churches were corrupt and needed Reformation by the Gospel, and “in this case we judg it lawful for any Man peaceably to with-draw Communion from such Churches, to provide for his own Edification in others.”⁸⁶

Baxter’s response, as mentioned earlier, took Stillingfleet’s analysis personally, it seems in large part because Stillingfleet put him in the same camp as Owen and the Congregationalists and other Independents.⁸⁷ Baxter’s own passive-aggressive spleen was in plain evidence in his response: “Dear *Brother*, Try to take off the Byass of your Judgment, and bear with necessary Truth, though rough. Though your *Logical Faculty* run lamentably Low in this your *Accusing Sermon*, I impute to the Badness of your *Cause*.”⁸⁸ The riposte to Stillingfleet’s sermon took

⁸⁴ Owen, *Brief Vindication*, 30.

⁸⁵ Owen, *Brief Vindication*, 20-1.

⁸⁶ Owen, *Brief Vindication*, 35.

⁸⁷ *Richard Baxter’s Answer to Dr. Edward Stillingfleet’s Sermon*, 72-4, 98-9, 104.

⁸⁸ *Richard Baxter’s Answer to Dr. Edward Stillingfleet’s Sermon*, 51.

the form of a published extended correspondence between the two divines, the tone of which alternated between cordial, frosty, and malicious. Baxter wrote a letter to Stillingfleet immediately after the publication of the sermon on 29 May 1680, to which Stillingfleet responded, denying that he personally accused Baxter of separation but pressing Baxter that his own withdrawal from full communion amounted to sinful separation. He accused Baxter of insincerity in his rules for nonconformists gathering for worship outside the parish: “you cannot but know, that the People do not go to them, because they cannot find room in Churches, but because they look upon the Worship of God, as purer there, than in our Parochial Churches.”⁸⁹

Although Baxter continued to distance his position strenuously from Owen’s, it was clear that Stillingfleet’s and Owen’s argument that there were really only divergent expressions within a unified Dissent rather than separate parties contained a grain of truth. Baxter argued that Stillingfleet’s definition of the church was inadequate, since the idea of a society governed by the “rules of the Christian religion” could apply as well to Parliament or a Navy. He was at one not only with Owen and with Vincent Alsop, who mocked that “Parliament is a society of men, and of men united, and united for their order and government, and truly I believe according to the Rules of the Christian Religion. *Quare now, whether the Parliament of England, be not the Church of England.*”⁹⁰ Baxter protested, as did Owen, that church rules that were not drawn from Scripture could not be imposed on

⁸⁹ “Dr. Stillingfleet’s Answer to Mr. Baxter’s Letter,” in *Richard Baxter’s Answer to Dr. Stillingfleet’s Sermon*, 11.

⁹⁰ *Richard Baxters Response*, 34; Vincent Alsop, *The Mischief of Impositions* (1680), 29.

Christians, or if they did that such impositions gave rise to grounds for only occasional conformity so long as “affections” were not alienated.⁹¹ Although he argued that he had not “formed” any churches, his preaching to separate assemblies who had gathered for that purpose made this protest seem like logomachy.⁹² For Baxter, however, it was tyrannical partiality for one’s own way of doing things in a censorious way toward other Christians that was the source of schism.⁹³ Only sinful separation could be construed as schism, and it was not always sinful to disobey where a command lacked authority.⁹⁴ A putative superior might never have possessed authority (here Baxter takes Stillingfleet to task for his lack of clarity about whether the Bishops or the King was the constitutive head of the church), or a legitimately authoritative superior might lose authority by commanding something contrary to the rule of Scripture.⁹⁵ Baxter’s parting shot to Stillingfleet insinuated that the learned Doctor was more to be blamed for the advance of popery in England than were any of the Non-conformists:

...will not all that have eyes see, who doth more for Toleration of *Popery*, they that say “*Popery and you shall stand and fall together, except you will say, subscribe, and do all that is prescribed you;*” or they that say “*We cannot do that which we take to be heinous sin?*” Do you think the Papists had not rather (with you) that we were Silenced; than that we Preach, who have been their greatest Adversaries? It will rather let in Toleration of Popery, than you will Tolerate Protestants that fear the guilt of Lying, Perjury, and many other Evils, should they do that which you Confess *indifferent*, let God be judge between you and us.⁹⁶

⁹¹ *Richard Baxters Response*, 56, 80-1.

⁹² *Richard Baxters Response*, 62.

⁹³ *Richard Baxters Response*, 30, 60, cf. 62: “You separate from my Auditory, and more than separate: And I Separate not from Yours: Who then is the *Separatist?*”

⁹⁴ *Richard Baxters Response*, 53-4, 83, 86.

⁹⁵ *Richard Baxters Response*, 16, 24, 28.

⁹⁶ *Richard Baxters Response*, 107.

The mutual recriminations about the nature of schism and who was giving more quarter to papists were probably interminable, since as Gary DeKrey has argued, the settlement that most London divines, Presbyterian and Independent, favored in the Restoration era looked similar to each other, and would have been abhorrent to the majority of the conforming clergy, including Stillingfleet: "Such an ecclesiastical polity would clearly resemble the Cromwellian church that the restored Anglican ecclesia had replaced, with a broad parochial establishment at the center of a multiform Protestant order extending into the separate churches."⁹⁷ Baxter, Owen, Alsop, Howe, Humfrey, Firmin, and the host of other Presbyterian and Independent divines who responded to Stillingfleet by the 1680s were committed a settlement that "would...banish the popish practice of coercion from the English church in favor of the Protestant practices of choice and consent."⁹⁸ The office of Bishop would be reorganized along the lines of consent and cooperation, since in "primitive episcopacy" the Bishop was not a ruler but a pastor and the first among equals in the presbytery. Baxter urged that "no man can be the *Bishop*...of a Church...against the...Peoples will, without their consent," and likewise Alsop maintained that "every particular church...has an inherent right to chuse its own Pastor, and every particular Christian the same power to chuse his own Church."⁹⁹ Moreover there should be as many bishops as necessary for them to fulfill their pastoral task. Humfrey urged that "there should be so many bishops, as the

⁹⁷ DeKrey, *London and the Restoration*, 304.

⁹⁸ DeKrey, *London and the Restoration*, 305.

⁹⁹ Alsop, *The Mischief of Impositions*, sig. B2v.

multitude of People requireth, Verily Every parish ought to have its proper Bishop,” and Baxter argued that “I am for *more Bishops*, and not for fewer.”¹⁰⁰

Despite the commonly held conviction among moderate Dissenters that tyrannical impositions was both a vestige of popery and a practice destined to return England to Rome’s authority, Dekrey is misleading to insinuate that there were few if any differences in the responses of godly Dissenters to Stillingfleet and other Anglican polemicists. John Humfrey’s, Vincent Alsop’s, and John Howe’s responses to Stillingfleet’s sermon represented a range of “Presbyterian” thinking on the question of separation. While Humfrey was probably closest to Baxter in his tolerance for impositions and insistence upon Comprehension, the latter three divines thought quite differently than Baxter on the issue.

The differences in approach map on quite closely to the differences between “Don” and “Duckling” thinking on ecclesiology, which had been brought to light in the wake of the Five Mile Act. C.G. Bolam and Jeremy Goring argue that that the Five Mile Act, which outlawed conventicles within five miles of the church from which they had expelled, unless they swore not to resist the king or alter secular or ecclesiastical government,

brought to light new differences among the Presbyterians, particularly in London. Some older ministers, among them Bates, Jacomb, and Manton, thinking that the oath required by the Act meant no more than a promise not to endeavour to change the Government by unlawful means, subscribed to the Act and earned the name ‘Five Mile Men’. On the other hand, some of the younger men, among whom were Annesley, Vincent, Watson, and Janeway, refused to take the oath. These two groups later came to be known as ‘Dons’ and ‘Ducklings’: the former was a natural term for those who tended to lord it over the others; the latter was a fitting description of those who, it was

¹⁰⁰ Baxter, *The Non-Conformists Plea* (1679), “The Epistle,” 15, 25-6; John Humfrey and Stephen Lobb, *Reply to the Defence of Dr. Stillingfleet* (1682), sig. b2r.

said, 'did not fear the water', i.e. those who were ready to take the plunge in breaking the law and setting up conventicles.¹⁰¹

This political division largely captured a theological one as well. Roger Thomas indicates that “Samuel Annesley's associates, the Ducklings, were apt to be traditional Calvinists like the generality of Independents. But Baxter, from his first book until the end of his days, was an opponent of certain extreme positions often dervied from, if not indeed implicit in, Calvinism.”¹⁰²

In an earlier chapter, I documented John Humfrey’s struggle over whether to be re-ordained by a bishop within the Church of England, initially accepting re-ordination and defending it in print and finally repudiating it and accepting ejection in 1662.¹⁰³ In 1680, Humfrey’s case against re-ordination remained complex. He allowed that “there is *Re-ordination ad Officium, or ad Exercitium particulare,*” as he had in his earlier writings, but insofar as Episcopal ordination was regarded not as a license to preach but a negation of the original ordination, it was unlawful.¹⁰⁴ He included a bill with both *A Peaceable Resolution* and *An Answer to Dr. Stillingfleet’s Sermon* reflecting this approach to re-ordination.¹⁰⁵ Humfrey had been active in the

¹⁰¹ C.G. Bolam, Jeremy Goring, H.L. Short, and Roger Thomas, *English Presbyterians: From Elizabethan Puritanism to Modern Unitarianism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968), 87. See also Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter and the Formation of Nonconformity*, 268-70.

¹⁰² Bolam, et al, *English Presbyterians*, 103.

¹⁰³ In *The Peaceable Design, being a Modest Account of the Non-conformist’s Meetings* (1675), John Humfrey, together with Stephen Lobb, again argued against re-ordination. *Ibid.*, 8-12, on the familiar grounds that bishop and presbyter were the same office in the New Testament. See also John Humfrey and Stephen Lobb, *Reply to the Defence of Dr. Stillingfleet*, sig. b1r.

¹⁰⁴ Humfrey, *A Peaceable Resolution of Conscience Touching Our Present Impositions* (1680), 126-7.

¹⁰⁵ “We do declare, moreover, that whereas it is required also in the *Act of Uniformity*, that every Minister who enjoys any Living, or Ecclesiastical Preferment, shall be Ordained by a Bishop; and there are several Persons of late, who in case of Necessity, for want of Bishops, took Presbyterian Orders: Our meaning is not in any wise to disgust the Reformed-Churches beyond the Seas, and make it necessary for such to be Re-ordained to the *Office*; but that they receive this Second Imposition of Hands, to the *Exercise* of their Office in the new Charge, unto which they are, or shall be called; and

decades following in defending the nonconformist cause against Anglican polemicists from Simon Patrick to Stillingfleet. Humfrey's 1675 treatise *The Peaceable Design* argued that "there are divers sorts of Nonconformists," some favoring parochial churches and others favoring "the Congregational way only." Humfrey identified himself as a moderate dissenter, favoring the former way and defending occasional conformity in the parish church, but insisting that the parish system was *jure humano* and so to be resisted where it trespassed upon sacred writ.¹⁰⁶ Subscription to the Act of Uniformity was Humfrey's real concern, since it required both Assent and Consent to everything in the Book of Common Prayer, and even though "some would blend the two terms *Assent* and *Consent*, and then interpret them by the words [*to the use*] in the Act...this is a shift which will not satisfie all persons."¹⁰⁷ There were elements in the BCP that Humfrey could neither assent nor consent to.¹⁰⁸ Throughout the 1670s and 1680s, Humfrey argued that "if they will abate to us in the *Circumstances*, or in the *Lesser things enjoyed*, so much as we may preserve our Consciences, and abate no more but that the *Establishment*...may be preserved in the *Substance*, or in the *greater concerns* of it, I see not, but for Peace sake, for our Souls sake, for the Churches sake, the thing should be done."¹⁰⁹ Even more, he could subscribe to the Act of Uniformity if he were granted an exception to the assent and consent language, or even if the bishop would allow him to subscribe so far as he could to the meaning of the law and state

that the Bishop shall frame his words accordingly." John Humfrey and Stephen Lobb, *An Answer to Dr. Stillingfleet's Sermon* (1680), 39-40.

¹⁰⁶ Humfrey and Lobb, *Peaceable Design*, 2-3; cf. idem, *An Answer to Dr. Stillingfleet's Sermon*, 3-4; John Humfrey, *The Healing Paper* (1678), 5-6.

¹⁰⁷ Humfrey and Lobb, *Peaceable Design*, 17.

¹⁰⁸ Humfrey and Lobb, *Peaceable Design*, 24, 48; Idem, *Answer to Dr. Stillingfleet's Sermon*, 9-13.

¹⁰⁹ Humfrey, *Healing Paper*, 1.

his objections to the aspects he disagreed with, which amounted to the same thing. “If we be tyed to the Meaning of the law-giver in every jot, the way is too *Streight*: To frame ours selves any Meaning without Regard to the Law giver’s is a Way too wide: But to subscribe to the Meaning of the Imposer so far as I can, and to forbear in what I cannot, is the way I think safe, and which I seek in this Paper.”¹¹⁰ He did not argue for toleration, but with Baxter for Comprehension: “let the Grounds of *Comprehension* be laid wide enough to take in all who can own and come to the publick Liturgy...we need not doubt but Time, the Mistress of the wise and unwise, will discover the peaceable Issue of such Counsels.”¹¹¹ At the same time, Humfrey believed that the Congregationalists could still be accommodated without ceding too much ground to the Catholics. Here Humfrey disagreed with Baxter. Where Baxter insisted in *Cure of Church-Divisions* that pleas for tolerance dimmed the chances of comprehension and encouraged papists, Humfrey saw comprehension and toleration as compatible. There was a “difference between a toleration and a toleration, viz. between a Limited and an unlimited Toleration.”¹¹² Popish worship was idolatrous, and prima facie one could distinguish idolatrous and non-idolatrous Congregational worship. The Supremacy of the pope gave rise to the presumption that Catholics were disloyal, whereas all Congregationalists paid obeisance to the king.¹¹³ Moreover, toleration to Congregationalists was possible, because in Humfrey’s view the parochial or congregational church government is *jure divino*,

¹¹⁰ Humfrey, *Healing Paper*, 14.

¹¹¹ Humfrey and Lobb, *Peaceable Design*, 59. Humfrey and Lobb argued the case for terms of comprehension broad enough to encompass some *Congregationalists* as well. Ibid., 66-70.

¹¹² John Humfrey, *A Modest and Peaceable Enquiry* (1681), 35.

¹¹³ Humfrey and Lobb, *An Answer to Dr. Stillingfleet’s Sermon*, 32; Humfrey, *Modest and Peaceable Enquiry*, 37.

whereas “the Diocesane, or National Government as such is *Jure Humano*, and for its particular Form, must be such in all ages, as our Civil Governours judge most meet, as a Means for the Preservation of Parochial Discipline, and the great Ends of the Civil Constitution.”¹¹⁴ Humfrey’s belief that political authority in the church was primarily exercised in the congregation and only subsequently in the national church represented a shift toward “Duckling” convictions about the church, and was certainly different than the proclamations of earlier Presbyterians during the Interregnum.¹¹⁵ Humfrey would, however, have been willing to conform if these terms were acknowledged, and he believed that a number of like-minded Presbyterians and Independents would as well. Despite Humfrey’s conciliatory tone, he was nonetheless completely unwilling to subscribe on the terms Stillingfleet had set forth, and he accused Stillingfleet of abetting popery by dividing Protestants through untenable impositions:

Tis well known unto you, that the *Ruin of England*, and of all the Churches of Christ in it, hath been ever since the *First Reformation*, aimed at by the *Papists*, whose rage hath not only appeared in the many little Plots that have been from time to time discover’d....For which reason, this is no time to add fewel to the Fire of Protestant Dissentions. Nor is it meet to insist on any matter of *Indifference* so far as thereby to hinder a *firm* and *lasting Union* among *Protestants*. If the Dissenters can without offense to God, and wrong to their *own Consciences* comply with the *Terms* impos’d by you for *union*, their non-compliance is a sin, that in its tendencies advances Popery: But if the Dissenter cannot conscientiously conform to your *Impositions*, as they really cannot, and you *can* without *sin* make such easie *Overtures* for Peace, as may be *grateful* to Dissenters, your refusing in this case to comply, doth sufficiently evince *You* to be the *Divider*, the *Promoter* of the *Papacy*.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Humfrey and Lobb, *Reply to Dr. Stillingfleet’s Defence*, sig. c1r.

¹¹⁵ See, e.g. Daniel Cawdrey, *A Review of the Survey of Church Discipline* (1651), 56; Samuel Hudson, *Vindication of the Essence and Unity of the Catholike Church Visible* (1650), 129-30.

¹¹⁶ Humfrey, *A Modest and Peaceable Inquiry*, sig. A2r. Cf. also 25-6: “This is the *state* of the Case; The Dissenters *would* Unite, but *cannot*; The Episcopals *can*, but *will not*. The *Cannot* of Dissenters, and the Episcopals *Will-not* doth make the Division. But who is the *Faulty Divider*? If the true Reason of our Division lay on the Dissenters *Will-not*, when they *Can*, ‘twould be easie to conclude them

Another position within the broad range of godly Dissent was occupied by John Howe. Unlike Humfrey and Baxter, Howe was not committed to comprehension, but neither was he particularly committed to a toleration that would ensure the vibrancy of parallel dissenting institutions. Martin Sutherland has characterized Howe's ecclesiology as "invisibilist," focusing on charity and sincerity of conscience rather than uniformity and even doctrinal agreement, and this focus led away from an emphasis upon the ecclesiastical institution, whether the national church or parallel Dissenting churches. Howe's ecclesiology, according to Sutherland, insofar as it was successful, ensured the weakness of Dissenting institutions.¹¹⁷ Indeed, Howe's *The Living Temple* in 1675 asserted that it was the "good man" rather than the church that was the temple of God, a position which implicitly exalted the conscience of the individual and made the church a matter of edification and personal consent rather than a necessity for salvation.¹¹⁸ Howe's response to Stillingfleet's sermon in 1680 more or less accused Stillingfleet of being a "new forcer of conscience" in Milton's memorable phrase.¹¹⁹ He was so

Obstinate, and Perverse; what not to do what they *can* for Peace? But since they *would*, but *cannot* without sin, how can they be the Dividers?"

¹¹⁷ Sutherland, *Peace, Toleration, and Decay*, 6-7.

¹¹⁸ Howe, *The Living Temple* (1675), 226-7, 286-7. In the second part of *The Living Temple*, Howe urged his readers to "Look to Emmanuel; consider Him in the several Capacities, and in all the Accomplishments, Performances, Acquisitions, by which He is so admirably fitted to bring it about, that God may have his Temple in your Breast. *Will you defeat so kind, and so glorious a Design? Behold, or listen, Doth he not stand at the Door, and knock?*" Howe, *The Living Temple, Part II; Containing Animadversions on Spinosa* (1702), 467. As such, Sherlock's critique of Owen's individualism addressed *supra* is a better fit for Howe. Owen clearly affirmed that there was no salvation outside the mystical body of Christ, even though this mystical body was the invisible church expressed in particular, visible churches rather than a national church.

¹¹⁹ John Milton, "On the New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament," in *Poems, &c. upon several occasions both English and Latin, &c.* (1673), 69. Sincerity was perhaps the chief virtue for Howe. Throughout his published work he cautions against censoriousness against other Christians

uncharitable to nonconformists that “He *seems* rather contented that we should not be Christians at all, than not to be Christians of this particular mold.”¹²⁰ Howe contended for the inviolability of the sincere conscience: nonconformists could not subscribe to the Act of Uniformity, and Christ had not given anyone the ability to “to oblige us to the things we scruple, or disoblige us from the things we practice and judge it unproved.”¹²¹ Howe’s case against Stillingfleet revolved around a perceived lack of sympathy for nonconformist scruples on the bishop’s part.¹²² As Howe made no mention of the practical divinity that attempted to resolve cases of conscience, it appears as though to Howe the predominant consideration was whether the conscience was sincere, regardless of whether it was doubting or errant. Scripture was the rule by which conscience was formed, but it appeared that interpretation of Scripture was up to the sincere conscience of the individual.¹²³ Stillingfleet, among

who believe they are doing God’s will: “I can at least refrain from censuring my fellow Christians...most of all when the matter wherein I presume to sit in judgment upon another is of so high a nature as the posture of his heart Godward: a matter peculiarly belonging to another tribunal, of divine cognizance, and which we all confess to be only known to God himself. And if I would take upon me to conclude a man insincere, and a hypocrite, only because he is not of my mind in these small things that are controverted among us, how would I form my argument? No one can, with sincerity, differ from that man whose understanding is so good and clear, as to apprehend all things with absolute certainty, just as they are; and then go on to assume 'But my understanding is as good and clear as', &c. It is hard to say whether the uncharitableness of the one assertion, or the arrogance of the other is greater; and whether both be more immoral or absurd. But the impiety is worst of all... 'Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth' Rom. xiv.4.” John Howe, A Sermon concerning Union among Protestants (1683), in *The Works of the Rev. John Howe*, 3 vols. (1724), iii.177-8; see also, Idem, *The Case of the Protestant Dissenters, represented and argued* (1689), sig. A1r.

¹²⁰ John Howe, *Answer to Dr. Stillingfleet’s Mischief of Separation* (1680), 9.

¹²¹ Howe, *Answer to Dr. Stillingfleet’s Mischief of Separation*, 22-3.

¹²² “Is meer scrupling a humane device in the worship of God, and an inability to see with other mens eyes, and to mould and form our judgments and consciences, as some other men can do theirs, a crime so inexpressible, that nothing less than our eternal ruine can satisfy for it?” Howe, *Answer to Dr. Stillingfleet’s Mischief of Separation*. 37.

¹²³ On the authority of Scripture as the rule of faith and practice, see John Howe, *Heads of Agreement Assented to by the United Ministers of London* (1691), 14-15.

others, saw this exclusive focus on sincerity as extremely dangerous, as we argued above.¹²⁴

Vincent Alsop's argument similarly focused on conscience, but less on its imperviousness to "heteronomous" authority and more on its consensual character. Conscience, Alsop acknowledged, could not "alter the nature of things," making something that is wicked good, for instance, but it could make a thing indifferent in itself evil in its exercise for the person judging it to be evil.¹²⁵ Stillingfleet acknowledged that conscience was to be followed above law (ecclesiastical or civil) in matters "notoriously and plainly evil" but that the magistrate was to serve as the rule of conscience in all other cases. Alsop contended that by allowing the one exception, Stillingfleet legitimated the entire cause of Dissent: "whatever my Reason judges evil, is *notoriously* evil as to me, for I have no way to make out the *notoriety of the evil of a thing*, but *my Reason* informing it self from Gods Word."¹²⁶ Thus, conscience could not be forced but only persuaded, because a "tender Conscience is a good Conscience."¹²⁷ Stillingfleet's charge of schism against the Dissenters was thus refracted back on himself. If it were true that separation could not be principled such that infinite fragmentation would result from allowance of any form of legitimate separation, it was more true that impositions led inexorably to popery:

¹²⁴ On practical divinity, casuistry, and cases of conscience, see T. Wood, *English Casuistical Divinity during the Seventeenth Century, with Special Reference to Jeremy Taylor* (London: SPCK, 1952); Kenneth Kirk, *Conscience and Its Problems: An Introduction to Casuistry* (1927); Albert Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin, *The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Edmund Leites, ed., *Conscience and Casuistry in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); John Morrill, Paul Slack, and Daniel Woolf, eds., *Public Duty and Private Conscience in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

¹²⁵ Alsop, *Melius Inquirendum* (1678), 363.

¹²⁶ Alsop, *Melius Inquirendum.*, 367.

¹²⁷ Alsop, *Melius Inquirendum*, 372-3.

To separate (says he) *considering the variety of mens fancies about these matters, is to make an infinite Divisibility in Churches, without any possible stop to further Separation.* Which is nothing but the Echo of that Charge, which from their *Roman Adversaries* has so long and loudly run bout their own Ears. I shall only say, That *the power which he ascribes to National Churches, considering the great variety of the fancies and humours in finding out and imposing their own Inventions, will but make burdens innumerable and intolerable, without any possible stop to further and greater vexations;* only let him not always miscall *Conscience* by the scandalous name of *Fancy!*¹²⁸

Alsop's method in *Mischief of Impositions* was calculatedly mocking. Each charge Stillingfleet made against the Dissenters, Alsop turned back on Stillingfleet. William Claggett referred to this method as "a very clownish dirty way of Writing," which "has done a great disservice to the Dissenters, who are desirous of Union."¹²⁹ Rather than address Stillingfleet's objection that an erring conscience could not be satisfied, Alsop retorted, "Another thing collected is, *That it is endless to hope to give to tender Consciences;* and therefore they resolve never to begin. And is it not endless to give assent and consent to the Impositions, for who knows where they will end?"¹³⁰ Similarly to Howe, Alsop's argument turned on the defense of sincerity of conscience in the interpretation of the rule given in Scripture over against those who would insist that conscience could only function with the bounds proscribed by the church.¹³¹ This is not to say, *pace* Sutherland, however, that Alsop therefore held

¹²⁸ Alsop, *Mischief*, sig. D3r.

¹²⁹ William Claggett, *Reply to a Pamphlet Called The Michief of Impositions* (1681), sig. A3v, 2.

¹³⁰ Alsop, *Mischief*, 71.

¹³¹ Alsop wrote that "[Stillingfleet] tells us, the *English Reformation retains the most Primitive Church-Government.* These things are wisely and warily pen'd (thought I;) *A Scripture Creed, and a Primitive Church-Government!* Confession founded on *H. Scriptures,* and Government founded on *a word called Primitive;* why should we not have a *confession* founded on *a word called Primitive;* why should we not have a *confession* founded on something else *than Scripture,* as well as *a Government?* Or why not a *Church-Government* founded on the *Scripture,* as well as *the Doctrine?*" Alsop, *Melius Inquirendum*, 34, cf. 176-7. Alsop sounds like the "ancient" *jure divino* Presbyterians in passages where he insists

to an invisibilist ecclesiology, any more than did John Owen.¹³² Rather, it reflected a creeping Congregationalism in Alsop's brand of Presbyterianism. Alsop contended that ceremonies were in themselves indifferent, and that there were no "greater Enemies to pure, spiritual, Gospel-worship, than Ceremony-mongers, and suspertitious Zealots" like the Anglican polemicists who insisted upon uniformity in liturgy and ceremony in the church.¹³³ The indifference of the ceremonies, Alsop contended, made it a greater sin to impose them upon tender consciences than the sin of tarrying in an errant conscience: "Though I would grant them *faulty so far* as any keep off [from communion with the Established church] through Prejudice, Error, ignorance; yet so far as these are *involuntary*, they are *more excusable*, than to go directly cross to their own Consciences here."¹³⁴ Although Alsop acknowledged that "others at a distance can fore-see *Ruine* coming upon us by our sad *Divisions*," yet "we must not sin against Consciences. Certainly, that could not be a *good Agreement*, which is made up by Sin."¹³⁵ Forced uniformity was contrary to the Christian religion, which "numbers among its peculiar Glories, and *choicest*

upon the rule of Scripture, but this emphasis is always combined with a repudiation of the desideratum of uniformity, so his argument is 1) insistence upon the authority of Scripture and 2) conscientious interpretation of the Scripture by each individual. Ibid., 194-5, 248-52, 335-6. Alsop is convinced that "being secure that their *Rule is good*, and sincerely endeavouring to come up to it, and reform by it, they cannot be *fatally wide*, nor *mortally differ*: All that are *agreed in their Rule*, have this singular advantage, that they can debate their differences amicably upon common Principles, whereas they who *differ in the Rule*, must needs differ in all the rest...they that differ in *the Foundation*, must necessarily disagree in *the Superstructures*." Ibid., 252.

¹³² Martin Sutherland, "Strange Fire: John Howe (1630-1705) and the Alienation and Fragmentation of Later Stuart Dissent" (PhD Diss., University of Canterbury, 1995), 206-8.

¹³³ Vincent Alsop, *An Exercitation on that Historical Relation, Matth. 15:1-9. Mark 7:1-11, concerning eating with unwashen hands* (1680), 6. On the condemnation of the imposition of all human traditions, see Ibid., 28-9, and 35: "A lawful practice, enjoyn'd by lawful Authority, is not thereby, and purely on that account, made necessary: but there is something else required, viz. That the matter of the law be necessary antecedently to the law, either in its own Nature, or in respect of some Circumstance...or else it obliges not."

¹³⁴ Alsop, *Reply to the Reverend Dean of St. Pauls* (1681), 30, cf. 59-60; Idem, *Melius Inquirendum*, 194-5, 214.

¹³⁵ Alsop, *Reply to the Reverend Dean of St. Pauls*, 84.

Singularities, that it teaches us to maintain brotherly Love, under *differing Apprehensions, and variety of Practices*, in lesser matters, which neither weaken Holiness, nor cross the design of the Gospel.”¹³⁶ It was not the fact of the invention that Alsop protested, but its imposition upon a sincere conscience. Sincerity here, however, did not reflect an emergent individualism in Alsop’s thought, but rather a novel line of argumentation supporting an older Reformation polemic against the tyranny of popery.¹³⁷ Stillingfleet, Alsop argued, would not “say, the Churches in other Nations that have not the same Rule with you, are *Schismatics*,” and even those who came to England were permitted different polities and rites.¹³⁸ Furthermore, “it is one thing for us to *bear with your Conformity*, and another thing by Word and Deed to *declare our approbation* of your conformity, or to conform because you do, and require us to do so, tho we suspect it to be sinful.”¹³⁹

Communion would be a possibility if there were no impositions. But since there were elements in the English church that savored of popery (particularly human inventions in worship and polity and the rise of Arminianism), since the tyrannical imposition of ceremonies and bishops itself savored of popery, and since the English church deprived the Bartholomean ministers of their ministry if they did not conform, it was the English church that was at fault both for schism and for fostering the revival of Roman Catholicism in England:

I once heard a person upon his Arraignment for Burglary plead strongly, that he had served his Majesty faithfully in his Wars; the Judg I remember took him up somewhat too short: Friend! You are not Indicted for your *Loyalty*,

¹³⁶ Alsop, *Melius Inquirendum*, sig. B2r ,19-20.

¹³⁷ Sutherland, “*Strange Fire*,” 208.

¹³⁸ Alsop, *Melius Inquirendum*, 47-8.

¹³⁹ Alsop, *Melius Inquirendum*, 87.

but for *breaking a House*: The Nonconformists agree with the Church of *England* in more, and more material points, than *England* can be supposed to agree with *Rome*; and yet all [Stillingfleet's] oyley Oratory, will not perswade the Dissenters that they suffer not from their Brethren...The difference between the Church of *England* and *Rome*, is very considerable, it is *Essential*, it constitutes them two distinct Societies, and such as cannot Coalesce without fundamental alterations in *the one*; and yet there might possibly remain some things, which might speak too near an approach.¹⁴⁰

Where ministers could not conform to the terms of the communion with the national church, it became “unavoidably necessary” to set up parallel Dissenting insitutions.¹⁴¹ This was not unlawful separation, because the impositions were the source of schism because they violated the apostolic rule in Scripture: “’Tis that which has ever been lamented and by all moderate persons complained of, That unnecessary Impositions have been made the indispensible conditions of Church Communion, without precept or precedent from the word of God.”¹⁴²

Firmin's position vis a vis Presbyterian Dissent

It was after Stillingfleet's comprehensive riposte to the literature produced in response to his sermon that Firmin went after Stillingfleet. His treatise took on not only the Dean but also a broad swath of the Anglican polemics that emerged in the 1670s, including Simon Patrick, Samuel Parker, and William Falkner, in addition to Stillingfleet. Firmin's convictions were rhetorically similar to Humfrey and Baxter, allowing for the existence of bishops and claiming that if the English church were

¹⁴⁰ Alsop, *Melius Inquirendum*, 70, 72-5, 121-23, 211-213.

¹⁴¹ Alsop, *A Reply to the Reverend Dean of St. Pauls*, 33.

¹⁴² Alsop, *Melius Inquirendum*, 161. In another tract, Alsop reproves Stillingfleet by querying “Can you ever prove, that there are no Officers, Laws, Rules and Orders in your Church, different from what there were in the true Primitive Church?...Will you undertake to find there all our *Ecclesiastical Canons*, even *Rules for kneeling in the Act of Receiving, for signing with the Cross in Baptism*, for excluding the Parents, and setting up *God-Fathers and God-Mothers* in their stead?” Alsop, *Reply to the Dean of St. Pauls*, 42.

purified, he would be in favor of comprehension. He remained committed to Presbyterianism, even though he continued to defend the New England divines and their principles.¹⁴³ Indeed in 1672 he had applied for preaching license as a Presbyterian in Ridgewell.¹⁴⁴

As we have already seen in evaluating Alsop's and Howe's responses to Stillingfleet as well as in our examination of Firmin's writings from the 1650s, however, self-identification as a Presbyterian did not mean that one was all that favorable to comprehension. Alsop's prevarications against impositions and Howe's

¹⁴³ Firmin continued, for instance, to advocate for the combination of Presbyters for the purification of the churches: "Learned and pious *Ames*...tells us, *That a Church in the New Testament is a Parochial Church; such a company or congregation as ordinarily meet in one place to worship God.* (Sure I am that ordinarily there is but one teaching Elder in such a Church.) *And this Church hath as much power as the National Church of the Jews met together....*Mr. *Tho. Hooker* giving the true sense of *Independency*, saith, *it importe thus much, Every particular congregation, rightly constituted, and completed, hath sufficiency in it self to exercise all the Ordinances of Christ...*But then it seems it must be *completed*; and to this compleating are required a Pastor, Teacher, Ruling-Elder, Deacon, one at least of all these...and without these, though a particular Congregation may be called a true Church, as a man that hath but one eye, one arm or leg, may be still defined *Animal rationale*, as having a reasonable soul; yet he is but maimed, no intire man; such is that Church...I pray how many such Congregations have we....Our Brethren of the *Presbyterian* judgment, I suppose, yield the question, *they may and ought to unite, to make up one Governing Church*; but I do not fully understand their meaning. Suppose twenty Parishes and Congregaitons that meet together to worship God, and twenty Ministers belonging to them, are these twenty Parishes distinct Churches as to Word and Sacraments, so that he that is Pastor in one Church, hath nothing to do in another Parish, as to feeding them with *Word and Sacraments*, but as to Government and Jurisdiction one minister with the rest of the Classis have power over them all? If this be the meaning, I am not satisfied in it....Dr. *Stillingfleet* hath declared his judgment, *they may unite*. I wish he had pleased to have opened his mind fully about it....If he will yield but this, *That constitution of a Church wherein a Pastor cannot possible feed with Word and Sacraments, watch over and govern his flock according to Christ, be it Diocesan or Parochial, that Constitution is not according to Christ, and consequently unlawful, (as Scripture-light, and nature's light will prove it)* I should, it may be, come up to him, to perform our duty by *Subsitutes*; they may please them who make their *own brains*, not *Gods word*, their rule, and such we little regard....God hath now brought me to old age in my Pilgrimage; divers disputes about Church-work and Government I have read; absurd, unscriptural practices in Churches I have *seen*; woful disorders and wretched effects I have *heard and known*; great scandal, but so circumstanced, that a single Pastor could not proceed by *Mat. 18, 15, &c.* to remove it; I have *met* with one of the ablest Divines in *England*, and exercised in Government, was of the same opinion with me, all arising from this notion of a single Pastor with such a people making a Church; and all which mischiefs might be avoided, if the uniting of several particular congregations into one particular Church were admitted, which Scripture-examples, and Scripture-reasons will sufficiently justifie." Firmin, *The Questions between the Conformist and Nonconformist Stated* (1681), 76-8.

¹⁴⁴ *Calendar of State Papers Domestic Charles II*, Green, M.A.E., F.H.B. Daniell, and F. Bickley, eds., 28 volumes (London, 1860-1947), vol. 14, 260.

arguments for conscience sound Congregationalist or Independent, more at home with wits like Andrew Marvell than with ecclesiastical statesmen like Baxter.¹⁴⁵ The unique configuration of Firmin's Presbyterianism had to do with his endorsement of the New England Congregationalists, whom he defended to his death as non-separatists. His writings in the 1650s, as we examined them in an earlier chapter, defended their non-separating Congregationalism as a check to and condemnation of English Congregationalism, which Firmin found to be censorious, fissiparous, and schismatic. As we have also seen, Firmin told Baxter in a letter in 1660 he was not opposed to all forms of episcopacy.¹⁴⁶ At least rhetorically, he advocated for a modified version of James Ussher's reduced or primitive episcopacy, as did many other moderate Dissenters in the 1660s, and he could have accepted a national church structure that allowed but did not impose set prayers, liturgies, and ceremonies, that did not require re-ordination of presbyters, and that expanded the number of bishops and decreased the size of dioceses so that they could function as pastors and superintendents rather than lords. The dioceses were at present "so

¹⁴⁵ Baxter himself, of course, was not above tolerationalist discourse in favor of conscience, as we have seen, though his arguments tended to be universalist rather than tolerationalist. The kind of partisan historiography displayed in *Church History of the Government of Bishops* (1680) paralleled that of Marvell's *A Short Historical Essay Touching General Councils, Creeds, and Impositions* (1680). Arguing for the consensualist, anti-authoritarian nature of the Christian religion, Marvell argued that "It is not [the Council of Nicea's] censure of *Arianism*, or the declaring of their opinion in a controverted point to the best of their understanding, (wherein to the smallest of mine, they appear to have light upon the truth...)...But it is their imposition of a new Article or Creed upon the Christian world, not being contained in express words in Scripture, to be believed with Divine Faith, under Spiritual and Civil Penalties, contrary to the Privileges of Religion, and their making a Precedent follow'd and improv'd by all succeeding Ages for most cruel Persecutions...to frame a particular Doctrine, they departed from the general rule of their Religion; and for their curiosity about an article concerning *Christ*, they violated our Saviour's first Institution of a Church, not subject to any Addition in matters of Faith, nor liable to Compulsion, either in Belief or in Practice." Marvell, *Short Historical Essay*, 19. See Paul Lim, *Mystery Unveiled: The Crisis of the Trinity in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), ch. 5.

¹⁴⁶ *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter*, eds. NH Keeble and Geoffrey Nuttall, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), ii.10; see also Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist Stated*, 8, 103-4.

large, that 'tis impossible for a *Bishop* to perform the Duties the Lord requires of a Pastor to one quarter of the Diocess."¹⁴⁷ But he also believed with the Congregationalists and traditional English Presbyterians against the hierarchical Presbyterians that the individual congregation with its officers could exercise the power of the keys and as such that each congregation was a church organical and political.¹⁴⁸ In other words, ecclesiastical power emerged bottom up from the people rather than descending top down as in the hierarchical Presbyterian view. This idea appears again in his response to Stillingfleet and aligns Firmin with the "Duckling" Presbyterians like Alsop: "As to your Discourse about *particular Congregations*, and *Diocesan Churches*, it is not my purpose to meddle with it; only I desire you to tell me why a Pastor of a single Congregation may not be as fit to govern that Congregation, as your single Bishop to govern a thousand Congregations, as it is with your Church?"¹⁴⁹

His response to Stillingfleet, Patrick, Parker, and Falkner in 1681 continued many of these themes. One difference in 1681, however, was that like other non-conformists including John Collinges and Richard Baxter, he insisted that the questions between the conformists and non-conformists were not properly stated and could not be resolved clearly until they were correctly formed. Collinges, in response to Falkner, had argued in the 1670s that most conforming divines were arguing that non-conformists chafed at ceremonies *simpliciter*. But the real question, Collinges argued, was whether it was lawful to impose the ordinary use of prayers,

¹⁴⁷ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and non-conformist*, sig. B3r.

¹⁴⁸ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist Stated*, 76-7.

¹⁴⁹ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Nonconformist Stated*, sig. B3r.

liturgies, and ceremonies upon gifted ministers. Collinges argued that the gifted minister “needeth not compose his form syllabically before he come; but can trust his Affections to thrust out words.”¹⁵⁰ Firmin was manifestly skilled in the art of reframing the question, and in his preface he argued that Stillingfleet had erred by presuming definitions and formulations that were question-begging. Prior to assuming that Dissenters were schismatic because not in the church of England, it was necessary to establish a proper definition of schism and, if there was schism, who was responsible for it.¹⁵¹ Firmin did not see any necessary schism because “there will be found many thousands in *England* who were never admitted into your Church, and if not admitted into it, then not united to it as such a Church; no members of your body: how then can you charge them with this sin of *separation* from it?”¹⁵² Even if there had been schism, Firmin parried, the party responsible for the schism is not the one separating but the one who tyrannically imposed conditions not of Christ’s making on another party within the church.¹⁵³ The church of England was not the same Church of England when the old nonconformists Ball, Hildersham, Gifford, and so on condemned separation from the church because “they were not required to *assent* and *consent*, &c. but now it is imposed with these terms; and I am confident that divers who have subscribed to these terms, do but

¹⁵⁰ John Collinges, *A Reasonable Account, why some Pious, Nonconforming Ministers in England judge it Sinful for them perform their Ministerial Acts, in publick, solemn prayer by the Prescribed Forms of others* (1679), 26, 59, 69, 112-13, 120-1. Set prayers were unlawful because “we believe the Holy Scripture to be a full; and perfect rule; as of Doctrine, so of worship, but as to the Acts and Means of it,” so normative approaches to scripture in constructing worship were unlawful. *Ibid.*, 75, 134-5. If set prayers are lawful, so are written sermons, and the minister can discharge his duty by reading both. But since the latter is false, so is the former. *Ibid.*, 100-1.

¹⁵¹ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, sig. A3v.

¹⁵² Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, sig. A3v.

¹⁵³ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist.*, sig. A4r.

lye.”¹⁵⁴ Moreover, Stillingfleet’s principles would inevitably lead to the resurgence of popery: “I find that you have declared: 1. *That the Church of Rome is a true Church.* 2. *That they retain the fundamentals of Religion.* 3. *That salvation is to be had in the Church of Rome.* Lay all together, here is a fair Bridg laid to go over to Rome.”¹⁵⁵ It was not nonconformists that were likely to bring in popery, because they had all energetically contended against it, at least as much as the bishops had.¹⁵⁶

Like Collinges, Firmin insisted that on the disputed question of imposed forms of prayer, the right question was

Whether the Lord Jesus hath given such power to any ordinary persons (Civil or Ecclesiastical) to compose and impose their Forms of Prayer upon his Ministers in the Gospel-Church , whom he hath sufficiently qualified for his work, unto which he hath called them; so that in their ministration and worshipping of God by prayer, his ministers must be tyed up to those very forms and syllables, and not vary from them?¹⁵⁷

Firmin disputed that there were any binding forms of prayer set forth by the Scriptures, including the Lord’s Prayer. Even if the Lord’s Prayer were such a set form, Christ’s authority in setting up this form did not give rise to authority in ordinary members of the church to do the same.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, repetition of the Lord’s Prayer encouraged lax piety among the laity.¹⁵⁹ The exclusive use of forms was also dishonorable to the ministry, since even a boy could be taught to read the prayers.¹⁶⁰ Most importantly, to deny a minister gifted in prayer the ability to pray freely “is a sin against him, who hath *given gifts*, who *requires gifts* of all those whom

¹⁵⁴ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, sig. B1r.

¹⁵⁵ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, sig. B2v.

¹⁵⁶ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, sig. B2r.

¹⁵⁷ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, 8.

¹⁵⁸ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, 12.

¹⁵⁹ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, 13.

¹⁶⁰ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, 24.

he sends, and to whom they must give an account how they improved and *stirred up* the gift he bestowed upon them.”¹⁶¹ The Anglican arguments in favor of the imposition of forms Firmin found unpersuasive. Simon Patrick argued that it was merely the ill temper of nonconformist ministers that kept them from using the forms, and that the forms were necessary to keep the minister from using “uncouth words.” To this Firmin responded that the saints in Scripture did not use forms, and that if forms were necessary to prevent uncouth words in prayer, then they were *a fortiori* necessary for the sermon, but no such requirement could be found in the Book of Common Prayer.¹⁶² William Falkner argued that forms were necessary in those parts of the liturgy such as baptism which are complex theologically and need a form to explain them, to which Firmin responded that “He that doth not understand the nature of those Ordinances and is not able to unfold them to his people, is not fit to be a Minister.”¹⁶³ None of Firmin’s arguments, he acknowledged, were dispositive against the lawfulness of forms, but like other nonconformists, he believed that the imposition of forms was unlawful.¹⁶⁴ All the New England ministers, especially John Norton and John Cotton, acknowledged the lawfulness of forms, but they scrupled against their imposition just as other nonconformists did.

Firmin similarly reframed the issue presented on doctrinal ceremonies. Where Falkner and Patrick, among others, argued for the lawfulness of ceremonies, and hence to their imposition as a matter of order, Firmin saw these as two discrete questions. Imposition of “things indifferent in their own nature” required divine, not

¹⁶¹ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, 27, cf. 100-1.

¹⁶² Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, 16-18.

¹⁶³ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, 19.

¹⁶⁴ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, 27.

merely human authority, and for the ceremonies set up in the Book of Common Prayer the church did not have divine authority.¹⁶⁵ Firmin found Stillingfleet's and Falkner's appeal to the normative use of Scripture in ceremonies unpersuasive, because "a Law is a *positive* thing...To say *not contrary to the Word*, what Law is this? *Non ens* is no Law. How can these particular Laws be said to be *according* to the Law, and *agreeable* with the Law, when no such Law can be found? If the Law can be found, then that distinction is but vain."¹⁶⁶ Falkner's distinction between "essential" and "circumstantial" additions to worship failed as well. Firmin analogized Falkner's arguments to the Roman Catholic apologist Thomas Carre's and urged that any addition to the simplicity of worship was a corruption.¹⁶⁷ "Circumstantials" in worship, which all nonconformists agreed were left to the church to order, could not have "a mystical signification of any spiritual grace or duty," which the church's ceremonies clearly did.¹⁶⁸ Like earlier Puritans, Firmin decoupled time and place from vesture: "*Time and Place* are but *circumstances*, inseparable from the Worship of God; hence 'tis all one to us, whether nine, ten, or eleven of the clock, whether in the Hall or the *Parlor*; if it be best for edication...but the Livery hath a *moral signification*, ordained by men for another end, to put us in mind of our Duty to God, and a means to stir up our dull minds to the performance of it."¹⁶⁹ Ceremonies were

¹⁶⁵ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, 33. Firmin set up a parallel between divine and human imposition of ceremonies here in which he could not resist a Bartholomean dig: "God punisheth the priests, and that severely, if they observe not his Ceremonies, *Exod.* 28.43....*Man* punisheth the Ministers of the Gospel severely for not observing his Ceremonies; Casting them out of the Lords work; spoiling of their goods; Imprisonments; Excommunications, &c."

¹⁶⁶ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, 40.

¹⁶⁷ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, 45.

¹⁶⁸ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, 46.

¹⁶⁹ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, 59-60. Firmin argued that the Anglicans were not even agreed among themselves as to the meaning of the surplice. *Ibid.*, 68.

altogether indifferent unless the “positive law” of God’s command made them necessary, and no human ordinance could attain a similar level of authority.

In his third chapter, Firmin trained his gaze on the requirement of subscription to ecclesiastical government. Against Stillingfleet, Firmin argued that Christ had instituted a form of government, and that that form of government was thus *jure divino*.¹⁷⁰ If there were no such appointed government, then any government would serve, including a monarchical one such as was found in the Church of Rome.¹⁷¹ Firmin argued that in the apostolic original, all gospel ministers were given equal authority in the churches. He allowed that after a time, a moderator was used to coordinate discussions between the various churches, but this was not part of the apostolic deposit, nor did this bishop have authority over the churches. Presbyters were ordained first, and only then bishops, and the bishop remained a pastor. Reordination was thus unlawful because the bishop did not become something other than what he was in his ordination as Presbyter. Thus, for Firmin, bishops in their contemporary form were patently opposed to Christ’s institution of ecclesiastical government, pace Stillingfleet.¹⁷² There were different sorts of episcopacy, as nonconformists had argued since the Restoration:

But good Brother, what Episcopacy is it you mean? If you mean only *Episcopus Praeses*, I am of your opinion, it was the government in the Apostles time when Elders in a particular Church were multiplied: And if we would but exercise more meekness and patience one with another, Consult

¹⁷⁰ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, 69.

¹⁷¹ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist.*, 69-70.

¹⁷² IF he will yield but this: *That constitution of a Church wherein a Pastor cannot possible feed with Word and Sacraments, watch over and govern his flock according to Christ, be it Diocesan or Parochial, that constitution is not according to Christ, and consequently unlawful (as Scripture-light, and nature’s light will prove it) I should, it may be, come up to him, to perform our duty by Substitutes; this may please them who make their own brains, not Gods word, their rule, and such we little regard.* Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, 77-8.

the Scriptures more attentively, we shall find that the true Government and Constitution of the Church takes in something of *Episcopacy*, something of *Presbytery*, something of *Independency*....But Sir, if you mean *Episcopus Princeps*, (which is *our Case*), one that hath Superiority of power above *Presbyters*, with which *these* must not meddle, and this Bishop such large *Diocess* as *ours* are, and this Bishop also the *Sole Pastor* over the *Diocess*...Sir, this *Episcopacy* you and Mr. *Noyes* have to prove, that it was ever in the Apostles time, or of Christs Institution, for this we utterly deny.¹⁷³

Firmin's fourth chapter treated the question of schism. Firmin urged once again that the question was disordered, because the prior question of what constituted the church had to be settled before this question could be addressed. Firmin defined schism as "a renting or dissolving that Union which Christ our Head requireth in his visible body."¹⁷⁴ Christ had a natural and a mystical body, and his mystical body "hath its bands or ligaments," both invisible and visible. Its invisible bonds are the Holy Spirit and charity, and its visible bonds are sacraments. Schism was in the visible body of Christ, which Firmin understood to be "all that make profession of their Faith in the Lord Jesus, and the Doctrine of the Gospel and do in their conversation visibly walk according to his Rules in his Gospel."¹⁷⁵ The division into particular congregations is accidental, "it being the consequent of that vast number which makes up this *one* body."¹⁷⁶ Firmin's articulation of the nature of the visible Catholic Church bore greater similarity to the New England divines and to John Owen and Vincent Alsop than it did to moderate Dissenters like Baxter or Humfrey, both of whom were willing to acknowledge that the King was the "Constitutive Regent" of the English Church and that the parish was lawful *jure*

¹⁷³ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, 103-4.

¹⁷⁴ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, 80.

¹⁷⁵ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, 82.

¹⁷⁶ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, 83.

humano so long as it remained amenable to Reformation by pastors and bishops.¹⁷⁷ However, Firmin agreed with other moderate Dissenters in concluding that Bishops were lawful so long as they were *Episcopus Praeses*, i.e. so long as they remained pastors first and overseers second. Baxter's argument that "I am for *more Bishops*, and not for fewer," and Humfrey's assertion, "Let there be as many Bishopricks as there are considerable Parsonages, or Parsonages indowed," were arguments that Firmin would have wholeheartedly endorsed.¹⁷⁸ Firmin's Presbyterianism, flexing as it could in some contexts toward Congregationalist-inflected Presbyterianism and in others toward moderate episcopacy, thus occupied an ambiguous middle ground between the Duckling party, whose practical conclusions he favored, and the Don party, with whose concessions to primitive episcopacy he seemed to agree.¹⁷⁹

The emotional tenor of Firmin's piece, however, shared much more in common with Alsop and Howe than with Baxter or Humfrey. Although he allowed that primitive episcopacy would be lawful, he scathingly denounced episcopacy in its present state in England: "If by *Episcopal Government* they *mean such* as now is among us, let them first prove it is of *Divine Institution*, which all the Commencers in *Cambridg* or *Oxford* shall never be able to do, so long as there is a Bible; and if they cannot do that, then where is the *schism*? It's rather our duty to separate from what is not of Christs planting in his house."¹⁸⁰ When a church imposed a pattern of worship not drawn from Scripture as the terms of communion, hence not

¹⁷⁷ Humfrey, *An Answer to Dr. Stillingfleet's Book*, 12; Humfrey and Lobb, *An Answer to Dr. Stillingfleet's Sermon*, 26.

¹⁷⁸ Richard Baxter, *Church History*, Preface; Humfrey, *Healing Paper*, 57-81.

¹⁷⁹ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Nonconformist*, 103-4.

¹⁸⁰ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Nonconformist*, 81.

conforming to the rule established by Christ, “that *imposing Church is the schismatical Church*, and the guilt of *Schism* lyes at their door.”¹⁸¹ This rule was so important to Firmin that he asserted that “there is a great difference between a Church in which there are some corruptions, but no *imposition*, and a Church where there is Imposition of Humane Inventions, not *agreeable* to the Word: with the first we would not doubt to communicate, but not with the second.”¹⁸² In a postscript to Stillingfleet, Firmin argued with Stillingfleet’s assessment that imposing of adiaphora was unnecessary to salvation by countering that it was not only salvation, but also the glory of God that should be taken into account.¹⁸³ God’s glory required a more consensual approach to ecclesiastical polity than was possible under impositions.

Conclusion

The 1670s and 1680s saw a calcifying of approaches to ecclesiastical polity between Anglicans and Dissenters. Political circumstances, including the difficulties endured by Dissenters under the Clarendon Code, as well as the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis of the late 1670s and 1680s, all played their part in this conflict. The suspicion on both sides that popery would be imposed upon the country was an animating feature of the polemics that drove apart not Anglicans and godly Dissenters during this time period. At the same time arguments about the nature of conscience grew more expansive for Dissenters. Dissenters like Vincent Alsop and

¹⁸¹ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, 83.

¹⁸² Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, 84.

¹⁸³ Firmin, *Questions between the Conformist and Non-Conformist*, 100.

John Howe came to see conscience as inviolable, which meant that only consensual practices in the church could be legitimate. All impositions, whether of popish or reformational varieties, came to be seen as equally tyrannical, such that by analogy impositions themselves could be seen as popish. This movement from “Don” to “Duckling” thinking among Presbyterians led to an increased sense of resignation if not comfort with the existence of parallel dissenting institutions alongside of the national church, a movement which accelerated the rise of denominations in the following decade. Firmin, though an advocate of comprehension under certain conditions with the national church in the early 1660s, found himself by the 1680s mostly on the duckling side of moderate Dissent. His argument against impositions were less about reformation of the church, as were Humfrey’s and Baxter’s, and much more directly focused on the issue of conscience, as were Alsop’s and Howe’s. For Firmin, however, his appreciation of the New England divines, a feature of his thought from the 1650s, made this position a far more natural and sensible progression than it would have been for other Presbyterians.

The next chapter concerns Firmin’s other set of writings in the 1680s against the “Anabaptists.” In the 1680s, Firmin was fighting a two front polemical war against both Anglican apologists and radical Dissenters. Firmin, like many of the godly in the era, believed that godly Dissent was being squeezed out between these two seemingly intractable forces, and in this next chapter we examine Firmin’s attempts to ward off radical Dissent in polemical context.

Chapter V

“Out of whose Hive the Quakers swarm’d”: Firmin, Federalists, and Anabaptists in the 1670s and 1680s

“[They] *separate* from Rome as the false Church, and yet own their *Baptisme*, the Foundation Stone thereof.”¹

“[Anabaptists] seldom stopped at the denial of Infant-Baptism, but have proceeded further to the vilest opinions; and seldom any came to notorious Heresies but by this dore.”²

“The most copious Harangue of Words, how many Scriptures soever are alledged therein, signifieth nothing, save only to shew how tenacious Men are of Error; and how they will wrest and pervert the Scriptures to confirm themselves and others therein, when once embraced by them.”³

Giles Firmin’s writings in the 1680s were bifocal. On the one hand, he was engaged, as the previous chapter indicated, in an attempt to defend godly Dissent from the attacks of Anglican apologists, in particular Simon Patrick, Samuel Parker, William Falkner, and Edward Stillingfleet. On the other, Firmin attempted to shore up the strength of godly Dissent against the centripetal forces that he worried were fragmenting it and diminishing its coherence. It was commonplace for Dissenters to lament the disorder, disharmony, and fragmentation of Dissent during this time period and for both radical and godly Dissenters to blame the other for troubling the peace of the churches.⁴ Firmin’s polemical gaze during this period was trained on radical Dissenters, and in particular the “Anabaptists,” whom he saw as undermining the integrity of Dissent. Firmin’s contributions to the debates between paedobaptists and anti-paedobaptists appear in two treatises in the 1680s, *The*

¹ Henry Danvers, *A Treatise of Baptism* (1673), 258.

² Richard Baxter, *Plain-Scripture Proof of Infants Baptism* (1656), 143.

³ Joseph Whiston, *The Right Method for the Proving Infant-Baptism* (1690), 9.

⁴ Michael Winship, “Defining Puritanism in Restoration England: Richard Baxter and Others Respond to *A Friendly Debate*,” *Historical Journal* 54.3 (September 2011): 693-4.

Plea of the Children of Believing Parents (1684) and *Scripture-Warrant Sufficient Proof for Infant Baptism* (1688), principally attacking Henry Danvers and Thomas Grantham. As we will see, however, they were part of a broader skirmish kicked up originally by the publication of Danvers's *Treatise of Baptism* in 1673.

In many respects, the disputes of the 1670s and 1680s were part of a broader, swirling polemical warfare that had been raging since the 1640s and 50s, when Richard Baxter and John Tombes originally squabbled over the issue.⁵ Thus, in a sense 1673 is an arbitrary point to begin discussion of the conflict, since a steady stream of treatises appeared throughout the Restoration period, and the principle reason for beginning this chapter with that year is that the late Danvers's *Treatise of Baptism* was the work Firmin targets in his *Plea for the Children* in 1684.⁶ There was, however, a sharp uptick of interest and controversy around the issue because of Danvers's treatise.⁷ Likewise, 1688 as a stipulative end point is somewhat arbitrary, as the debate among Dissenters rolled on well into the next century, but Firmin's last contribution to the debate is to Grantham in that time frame. However, the decade and a half covered by this chapter is more than enough to grasp the structure of the polemics between paedobaptists and anti-paedobaptists in the period, which had largely been frozen into place by the 1670s.

⁵ A thorough account of this struggle can be found in Paul Lim's *In Search of Purity, Liberty, and Unity: Richard Baxter's Puritan Ecclesiology in Seventeenth Century Context* (Leiden: EJ Brill, 2004), 61-5

⁶ Thomas Grantham, the other focal figure for this chapter, had already published *The Baptist against the Papist* (1663) and *The Paedo-Baptists Apology for the Baptized Churches* (1671) by the time Danvers's treatise emerged for instance.

⁷ Richard Greaves, Barry Howson and others have noted that this treatise occasioned a massive pamphlet war and essentially restarted the debate, particularly between Baptists and federalists, whose positions were strikingly similar. Barry Howson, *Erroneous and Schismatical Opinions: The Question of Orthodoxy Regarding the Theology of Hanserd Knollys* (c. 1599-1691) (Leiden: EJ Brill, 2001), 73; Richard Greaves, *Saints and Rebels: Seven Nonconformists in Stuart England* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1985), ch. 8.

As Paul Lim has recently argued about debates on the Trinity and Arminianism, “Rather than the Restoration being a major rupture, thus making it little connected to the battles of the 1640s and 1650s, it is clear that strikingly similar battles were raging in the mid-1670s as well.”⁸ Similarly, in the debates over infant baptism, Obediah Wills declared that Danvers’s treatise had nothing in it but “what is borrowed from Mr. *Tombes* his *Exercitation* and *Examen*, long since answered by M. *Marshall*, Dr. *Homes*, Mr. *Geree*, Mr. *Blake*, Mr. *Baxter*,” but since “the Contest hath taken a Nap for about 20 years, it was thought fit to give it one lusty jog more, and awake it again.”⁹ Almost the whole of the debate, where it was not a dispute about historical precedent or the authority of history, revolved around whether there existed a *jure divino* command to baptize infants and whether it was lawful to deduce such a command “by good and necessary consequence” from the precedents available in Scripture. What was new in the 1670s and 1680s, however, as distinct from the 1640s to early 1660s, the other context in which Firmin wrote about infant baptism, was the social and political context in which these arguments were deployed. The principal disputants in the new context of Dissent were not arguing for the purification of the national church, as Firmin and the other federalists¹⁰ were doing against Cawdrey and Blake, but for the integrity of Dissent, which three decades after Firmin’s initial salvos seemed to Firmin to be tottering on the edge of extinction. Federalist arguments for infant baptism thus took on a

⁸ Paul Lim, *Mystery Unveiled: The Crisis of the Trinity in Early Modern England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 214.

⁹ Obediah Wills, *Infant Baptism Asserted and Vindicated by Scripture and Antiquity* (1674), sig. A2v.

¹⁰ As noted in ch. 1, Cawdrey and Blake were also federalists in some sense as well. The conclusions they drew from federal theology led to much broader baptismal privileges and a strong defense of a Presbyterian national church. In this chapter, the term federalist is limited to the godly who restricted baptismal privileges to the children of those known to be godly.

different hue than they did in the 1650s. Firmin, rather than being suspected of “radical” Independency, was in this context the voice of caution and moderation over against the radicals Grantham, Danvers, Kiffin, Paul, and De Laune, *inter alia*.

Firmin’s and the other federalists’s changed location in the debate (now conservative rather than radical) thus says more about the culture of late seventeenth century Dissent than it does about them. Whereas Firmin’s position in the 1650s could seem to Daniel Cawdrey dangerously like a “Trojan horse” that would inevitably allow sectaries and Jesuits to “propagate all monstrous and soul destroying errors; and to ruin not only the Presbyterian but the Independent Churches also,” by the 1680s, his federalist position was on the conservative end of dissent insofar as it was paedobaptist and defensive of a minimalist understanding of a political Catholic church.¹¹ In the 1680s, Firmin and other federalists were blaming the Baptists, as they had once been blamed by Cawdrey and Blake, for the success of Quakers:

I cannot but observe the judgment of God (I can call it no other) That the two great Corporations I know, where there were great Assemblies of *Anabaptists*, (It is the same in many other places in *England*) the greatest number of them turned *Quakers*, the *Anabaptists* Society dwindled to nothing. Thus they who threw off *Infant-Baptism*, throw off the *Ordinance of Baptism* it self, *The Lord’s Supper*, and the great Gospel-truth, setting up *Self*, and a *Heathenish morality*, being now fallen into the *Mare mortuum*, from which few or none return.”¹²

This chapter, then, proposes to use Firmin’s disputes with Baptists in the 1680s in their polemical context as a heuristic for understanding the difference that

¹¹ Daniel Cawdrey, *The Inconsistencie of the Independent Way* (1651), sig. A4v; See also Idem, *Independencie a Great Schism* (1657), 72-3.

¹² Giles Firmin, *The Plea of The Children of Believing Parents* (1683), 17-18. See also *Scripture-Warrant Sufficient Proof of Infant Baptism* (1688), 82.

Dissenting identity made for a longstanding debate about the church's worship and practice.

Henry Danvers, Thomas Grantham, and the Paedobaptist/Anti-Paedobaptist debate

Although Danvers's *Treatise of Baptism* was originally published in 1673, with updated editions in 1674 and 1675, Firmin did not respond to it until 1684. It seems odd that there would be such delay except for the somewhat obvious problem that Firmin lived in a rural backwater and had a low profile in the culture of 17th century dissent. He consistently complained that as a "country Divine" he did not have regular access to the most recent books and that he did not have time to read the ones he possessed. In addition, however, Firmin's polemics, here as elsewhere, were almost always responsive and defensive rather than preemptive. This latter factor was driven by the fact that it was usually his pastoral context that drove his perception of books that were most dangerous and most in need of address.

In the *The Plea of the Children of Believing Parents*, Firmin discloses to the reader that he would not have put his arguments in print except that he had received a challenge to do so by an anonymous Baptist. He had received an Anabaptist work that had been "very much cryed up" as "unanswerable" in Ridgwell, and he had held forth against it in public. Evidently this work was *A Treatise of Baptism* by Henry Danvers, the particular Baptist, though Firmin was not aware of the author, since the treatise bore only the initials "H.D." Firmin criticizes the book "for...*Falshood* in the Historical part (which if my Memory fails me not, took up

above half his Book.) His fraudulent dealing. 3ly, His raising a dust upon the Scriptures he quotes, to trouble his Reader. 4ly, For his *Logick*.” The Baptist epistoler who challenged Firmin to respond to Danvers’s historical arguments accused Firmin of ad hominem attacks upon Danvers, which Firmin repudiates: “for any other Opinions, or any thing concerning his Conversation, I speak not one word: for how could I, when I knew nothing of him, and only heard three times (as I remember) there was one Collonel Danvers, an *Anabaptist*, and that was all; nor was I certain the Book was his.” Since the Baptist challenged Firmin to respond in print, Firmin felt obliged to do so.

The other target of Firmin’s ire in the 1680s was Thomas Grantham, the General Baptist autodidact from Lincolnshire. In 1688, in a seething rejoinder to Grantham’s *Presumption no Proof* (1687), which principally addressed federalist arguments for infant baptism by Samuel Petto (but also dismissively addressed Firmin’s arguments in *Plea for the Children*, which someone had declared “unanswerable” to Grantham), Firmin states that he had withheld his further writings against Anabaptists until Grantham’s pamphlet was published. His friend John Faldo “wrote me word, the Brethren there, had concluded, this was not a convenient time for Dissenters to write against Dissenters,” but in the interim a “young furious Zealot against Infant-Baptism (calling it an Antichristian cheat)” had derided his work, so Firmin’s honor required him to reply.¹³ Both Danvers and Grantham were prolific defenders of credobaptism in the 1670s, and Grantham

¹³ Giles Firmin, *Scripture Warrant*, sig. A2r.

continued to publish on the subject into the 1690s. Danvers writings on the subject ceased after 1676 for reasons discussed below.

Henry Danvers was a controversial figure in the Restoration period, not only because he was Baptist and hence numbered among an especially maligned group of Dissenters, but also because of his political machinations. Authorship of a monarchomachian text from 1663, *The Myserie of Magistracy Unveiled*, has been attributed to Danvers. That text equated false rulers with the beast rising from the bottomless pit, who could be recognized by “force & tyrannous usurpation, fraud of Antichristian intrusion, to impose and thrust themselves into office,” and saints were instructed to “yield most unwilling subjection” to them.¹⁴ Despite his personal sanctity, Richard Greaves has demonstrated that Danvers was a notoriously seditious figure in the early Restoration, being imprisoned in the Tower in 1676 for treason and dying in exile in the Netherlands in 1687 or 8. Greaves is right about the perception that Danvers was a dangerous figure, but wrong to see the martial language of Danvers’s apocalyptic as a summons to radical political action.¹⁵ Like Christopher Hill, Greaves wrongly believes that Danvers’s radical rhetoric translated into commitment to radical praxis.¹⁶

¹⁴ Henry Danvers, *The Myserie of Magistracy Unveiled* (1663), 44-6.

¹⁵ Richard Greaves, “Henry Danvers,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, eds. HCG Matthew and Brian Harrison, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/7134?docPos=2> (accessed Sept. 22, 2014); Idem, “The Tangled Careers of Two Stuart Radicals: Henry and Robert Danvers,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 29 (1981): 32-5; Idem, *Deliver Us from Evil: The Radical Underground in Britain, 1660-1663* (Oxford University Press, 1986); See also Warren Johnston, *Revelation Restored: The Apocalypse in Later Seventeenth-Century England* (Boydell, 2011), 78.

¹⁶ See especially Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (New York: Penguin, 1984); Idem., *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill*, vol. 2, *Religion and Politics in Restoration England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), 276, 295n. 47.

Danvers' *A Treatise of Baptism*, as Firmin indicates, was concerned to demonstrate that the church's primitive practice was believers's baptism, that infant baptism was an imposition of the popish antichrist, and that the arguments of paedobaptists "appear substantial Arguments for the Baptists, and full and clear Evidence against themselves."¹⁷ The treatise offered a lengthy genealogy of the church's declensions from the purity of its primitive practice of baptism, an argumentative trajectory with a lengthy pedigree in Reformation and post-Reformation Christianity. Irena Backus has helpfully summarized the uses and abuses to which history as authority was put during this period:

History was a vital omnipresent force in the Reformation era and theologians of different confessions drew different inspirations from it....Discovery and promulgations of historical method was a source of inspiration to representatives of all confessions. Historical scholarship during the Reformation era had two main components. One of these was a genuine interest in the past; the other was the concern to affirm confessional identity by privileging a particular historical method.¹⁸

Debates concerning the legitimacy of the church's practice of baptism remained as ubiquitous and interminable in the later seventeenth century as they were in the sixteenth.

Danvers's book was directed at the most prominent "Prelatick Protestant"¹⁹ defenders of infant baptism, and in particular Richard Baxter. The treatise was occasioned by the acrid debate touched off by John Bunyan's *Confession of My Faith* (1672) and its sequel *Differences in Judgment about Water Baptism* (1673).²⁰

¹⁷ Henry Danvers, *Treatise of Baptism*, 94.

¹⁸ Irena Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378-1615)* (Leiden: EJ Brill, 2003), 390, 394.

¹⁹ Danvers, *Treatise of Baptism*, 184.

²⁰ On this debate see Michael A.G. Haykin and C. Jeffrey Robinson, "Particular Baptist Debates about Communion and Hymn-Singing," in *Drawn into Controversie: Reformed Theological Diversity and*

Bunyan's initial salvo urged that baptism was not the initiating "church rite" admitting the baptized into communion with the visible church, but rather an edifying, though "shadowish, figurative" ordinance representing the work of Christ and bringing to mind the reality of the baptized's new life.²¹ Admission to church fellowship should be premised instead on "faith, experience, and conversation," rather than by outward ritual performance.²² As such, Bunyan urged that he could have church fellowship with those who had never been baptized.²³ The conclusion was driven by Bunyan's disjunctive reading of Gen. 17. Although the Jews had a "carnal" rite to accompany their outward administration of the covenant, the "Gospel concision knife, sharper than any two edged sword" was the "word of Faith and holyness."²⁴ More important, Bunyan asserted later, was the fact that the proper antitype to circumcision was "circumcision of the heart" rather than water baptism.²⁵ Furthermore, the Gospel could be preached just as well without baptism being administered, and at any rate what united Christians was "One Spirit, one Hope, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism (not of Water, for by one Spirit are we all Baptized into one body."²⁶ Thus, the bond between believers was an interior, invisible bond manifested and recognized in conversation rather than in ritual

Debates within Seventeenth-Century British Puritanism (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 285-96.

²¹ John Bunyan, *A Confession of My Faith* (1672), 64.

²² Bunyan, *Confession*, 78.

²³ Cf. Bunyan, *Confession*, 108: "Take two Christians equal in all points but this, nay let one go beyond the other far, for grace and holynesse; yet this circumstance of Water shall drown and sweep away all his excellencies, not counting him worthy of that reception, that with hand and heart shall be given a novice in religion, because he consents to Water."

²⁴ Bunyan, *Confession*, 86.

²⁵ Bunyan, *Differences in Judgment about Water Baptism No Bar to Communion* (1673), 84. On the context of this and subsequent treatises on the issue of baptism, see Richard Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory: John Bunyan and English Dissent* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2002), 95, 297-301.

²⁶ Bunyan, *Differences in Judgment*, 112, 86.

performance. Bunyan's interiorized interpretation of baptism in Ephesians 4 was the corollary of his revised typology of circumcision.²⁷

Members of "the Baptized way," as Bunyan called them,²⁸ as well as some godly Dissenters, were alarmed at the trajectory of Bunyan's argument, which seemed to obviate the practice of baptism entirely. Thomas Paul and Benjamin Kiffin replied immediately with *Some Serious Reflections* arguing that Bunyan was an "ill bird" whose work encouraged disorder in the churches as well as a diminution in holiness on the part of visible saints by encouraging inattention to the ordinance of baptism.²⁹ For Paul and Kiffin, Bunyan's interpretation of the uniting bond between Christians as Spirit baptism rather than water baptism was singular and heterodox, and they found his aspersions upon the ordinances as "meer shews" and "shadowish circumstances" arrogant.³⁰ Bunyan retorted, "why may not I give it the Name of a *Shew*; when you call it a symbole, and compare it to a Gentlemen's Livery?"³¹

Bunyan found the argument from the good order of the church to be unavailing, because the practice did not have anything to do with the institution of the church: "if Baptism be without the Church, as a Church, if it hath nothing to do in the Constituting of a Church; if it be not the door of entrance into the Church, if it be no part of Church-worship as such; then, although all the Members of that Church were baptized, yet the Church is a Church without Water-baptism."³² If the church *qua* church did not require baptism, then neither did its members need to submit to the

²⁷ See Bunyan, *Differences in Judgment*, 113-114.

²⁸ See, e.g. Bunyan, *Differences in Judgment*, 44.

²⁹ Thomas Paul and Benjamin Kiffin, *Some Serious Reflections on that Part of Mr. Bunyan's Confession of Faith touching upon Communion with the Unbaptized* (1672), 4-5, 7, 18, 54.

³⁰ Paul and Kiffin, *Serious Reflections*, 13, 23.

³¹ Bunyan, *Differences in Judgment*, 38.

³² Bunyan, *Differences in Judgment*, 50, cf. 80-1.

practice in order to commune with the church. While Bunyan was mostly indicating that he could commune with the unbaptized in the treatise, he made the case that baptism in general was true *adiaphora*, and thus that he was willing to have communion with those who practiced infant baptism or who had been baptized as infants.³³ Later opponents of Henry Danvers like Richard Baxter and Obediah Wills would seize upon this idea to demonstrate that Danvers was sectarian, holding on to his narrow conception of baptism in the teeth of more collegial, broad-minded Baptists like Bunyan, even while they repudiated Bunyan himself.

Henry Danvers jumped into the fray following the publication of Bunyan's second defense, fighting a two front polemical war. On the one hand, Danvers attacked Bunyan's practice of communion with the unbaptized, and on the other argued for the non-apostolicity and non-historicity of the practice of infant baptism against Roman Catholics, Thomas Blake, and Richard Baxter, representatives of divergent streams of thought on the justification for the practice. The *Treatise* ended with a vituperative assault upon Bunyan, though the two had formerly been friends, savaging the work for being full of "manifold *Absurdities*, Contradictions, unbrotherly Tauntings and Reflections, and Contemptuous traducing the wisdom of Christ."³⁴ Although Bunyan replied with *Peaceable Principles* in 1674, defending the plea for unity against "the rigid way of our brethren" who are "seeking to break

³³ Bunyan, *Differences in Judgment*, 58. Greaves indicates that this was genuinely Bunyan's practice at the church at Bedford: "Because only visible saints are proper subjects of baptism, infants are not....Yet he was willing to permit those baptized as infants to join the church, refusing to let such an 'infirmity' preclude them as long as they were visible saints." Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, 297.

³⁴ Danvers, "A Postscript," *Treatise of Baptism*, 41.

us to pieces,”³⁵ the original impetus for the dispute was lost in the controversy generated by Danvers’s repudiation of paedobaptism.

In particular, it was the historical character of Danvers’s argument in the treatise that generated such heat. Danvers’s aim was to show that the norm for the first three centuries of the church was believer’s baptism, adducing the testimony of Tertullian, Novatian, Cyprian, and Clement, *inter alia*, to confirm the point (all the while insisting that these testimonies were not “proofs” but “confirmations”³⁶) and that baptism of infants was elective in the fourth, adducing support from Augustine, Gregory Nazianzus, and others. It was not until the fifth century in Danvers’s genealogy that paedobaptism was imposed and antichrist came to the throne of the church. Danvers proceeded in the treatise by arguing that “the approved Practice, and known Custom of the Primitive Church was to baptize the *Adult*, as all Ages acknowledge” and that “not only the Children of *Pagans* were as the *Catechumens*, to be instructed and taught in the Faith, in order to their Baptism; but the Children of the Christians also.”³⁷ As he put succinctly in the second edition of the treatise in response to the aspersions cast upon his historical arguments by Richard Baxter, “*Infants-Baptism* was not in use for two or three hundred years after Christ nor enjoined as necessary till the Fifth Century, by P. *Innocent* the First, in the Councils of *Milevitan* and *Carthage*.”³⁸ From Baxter’s own writings Danvers pulled the principle that individuals were at liberty to baptize their children or not.³⁹ Children

³⁵ John Bunyan, *Peaceable Principles and True*, in *The Works of ...John Bunyan* (1832), 2:258.

³⁶ Danvers, *A Second Reply* (1675), 69.

³⁷ Danvers, *Treatise of Baptism*, 108.

³⁸ Danvers, *Treatise of Baptism*, 2d. ed. (1674), 365.

³⁹ Danvers, *Treatise of Baptism*, 2d. ed., 366-8.

dying without baptism, treated as they were as catechumens, did not therefore die outside of Christ because they remained on the margins of his mystical body. The argument from the necessity of baptism for salvation thus had no weight, and all paedobaptists were simply guilty of favoring the traditions of men over the express word of God, even though “it must be *remembred*, that all *Humane Authority* urged from *Antiquity*, is at best but *Argumentum ad Hominem*: it being *Scripture-Authority* only, that is of *Divine force*, and, as coming from God, can oblige the *Conscience*.”⁴⁰ All paedobaptists remained wedded to popish practices, therefore, and “that which is most to be lamented is, That the *Protestant Reformers*, who detected and cast away so many *Antichristian Abominations*, should yet hold fast such a Principal *Foundation-Stone* of their *Building*.”⁴¹ The federalists among the Reformed who insisted, as did Baxter and Firmin, that the right of the child to baptism depended upon the imputation of the parent’s right to baptism to the child, were no different,

for when the unsoundness and rottenness of the antient ground of *Infants-Baptisme* appeared, they being loath to part with the Tradition, endeavoured to build it upon this new Foundation; for when it was discovered that *Infants* might be saved without *Baptism*, and that they were not damned if they died without it, and that the Sacrament did not give Grace by the bare work done, nor took not away *Original Sin*, it was high time to lay a new foundation for it, or else it would have faln, therefore is the new way of Covenant-Holiness found out.⁴²

⁴⁰ Danvers, *Treatise of Baptism*, “The Preface;” Idem, *Second Reply*, 128-9. Michael Atwol Smith writes that Danvers “did not cite the fathers as authorities for doctrine of practice; rather, he used the patristic writings as prooftexts for his concept of the beginning and early development of the church in hopes of persuading his opponents that his position was historically correct. In anticipation of some Baptists objecting to any use of the Fathers, Danvers maintained that he was only turning the weapons of the paedobaptists back upon themselves, an honored and permissible method of debate.” Smith, “The Early English Baptists and the Church Fathers,” Ph.D. Diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982, 85. On this point see Danvers, *Second Reply*, 69.

⁴¹ Danvers, *Treatise of Baptism*, “The Preface.”

⁴² Danvers, *Treatise of Baptism*, 188.

It was Zwingli and the New England Congregationalists, according to Danvers, who pioneered this new argument for infant baptism, but it too was as flawed as the older Augustinian argument from original sin. Rather than cutting off papacy at the root, “[They] *separate* from *Rome* as the false *Church*, and yet own their *Baptisme*, the Foundation Stone thereof.”⁴³

John Tombes had unsettled Presbyterians and Independents in the 1640s and 1650s by making similar arguments, and Danvers was accused by his opponents of merely rehashing these same arguments. In any case, however, Danvers’s treatise unsettled many in the world of Dissent, and the treatise removed the dispute from an in-house squabble among Baptists into an intra-Dissent conflagration. The language of the pamphlet war was rarely civil. Even where it was putatively courteous, there was still an undertone of scorn and satire in most cases. While describing Richard Blinman’s riposte to his *Treatise of Baptism* as “Sober and Christian” as opposed to Obediah Wills’s pedantry and viciousness, Danvers nonetheless insisted upon calling Blinman “Blindman.” Blinman of course took offense and declared that “it seems by his Frontispiece to Mr. *Wills*, he knew my name to be *Blinman*, though he was pleased to call me *Blindman*, in the head of every leaf; whether designedly or no, he best knows.”⁴⁴

Danvers’s treatise was excoriated by Obadiah Wills, Richard Baxter, and Richard Blinman, with Wills accusing Danvers of “notorious *Plagiarism*,” copying

⁴³ Danvers, *Treatise of Baptism*, 258.

⁴⁴ Henry Danvers, *Innocency and Truth Vindicated* (1675), 179; Richard Blinman, *Rejoynder to Mr. Henry Danvers His Brief Friendly Reply to My Answer* (1675), sig. A3r.

from John tombes “in no less than 49 places”⁴⁵ and of obstinacy for condemning “all that stand in his way, Espicoparians, Presbyterians and Independents, yea stearnlly reproaching those who are *Antipaedobaptists* that are come off from their former Rigidness, and for so large Communion with all Believers as Believers.”⁴⁶ Danvers was more than willing to requite the insult after several exchanges: “I desire you to consider whether you are not evidently guilty of *False accusation*, and notorious *false speaking*” and “is it not evident that you are hanously guilty of *Forgery*; viz. pretending Authors say *so* and *so*, when they say no such thing, or the quite *contrary*.”⁴⁷ Danvers responded to the original assault with an expanded second edition of his treatise (1674), and subsequent ripostes to Danvers came flooding in from the pens of Wills, Baxter, Blinman, John Barrett, Samuel Petto, an Anonymous author comparing Baptists and Quakers, and Joseph Whiston. Danvers again responded with *Innocency and Truth Vindicated* (1675), *Rejoynder to Mr. Wills* (1675), *A Second Reply* (1675), a third edition of the treatise, and *A Third Reply* (1676).⁴⁸ Although Danvers was locked in the Tower in 1676 and not able to respond to further replies to his work, a deluge of responses continued to pour in and the debate widened to encompass a wider variety of figures. Thomas Grantham, who had already written against infant baptism in 1663 and 1671, contributed an array of tracts throughout the 1670s and 1680s, and responses to Danvers and Grantham, *inter alia*, came from the pens of Simon Patrick, Samuel Petto, Richard

⁴⁵ Wills, *Infant Baptism Asserted and Vindicated*, sig. A6r.

⁴⁶ Wills, *Infant Baptism Asserted and Vindicated*, sig. A7v.

⁴⁷ Henry Danvers, *A Rejoynder to Mr. Wills His Vindiciae* (1675), 53, 72.

⁴⁸ Richard Greaves maps out the trajectory of the controversy in some detail in *Glimpses of Glory*, 63f, and *Saints and Rebels*, ch. 8, but without any detail of the exegetical and theological considerations informing the dispute.

Baxter, Richard Burthogge, George Hickeys, John Barrett, John Horn, William Walker, John Humfrey, Gabriel Towerson, as well as Firmin. As mentioned above, the debate had largely crystallized by the 1670s, such that Firmin could declare Grantham's arguments so hackneyed "that it is a tedious thing to write any more about it."⁴⁹

What was striking about this iteration of the conflict, however, was the diminished scope of doctrinal expression among Dissenters. By and large, all moderate dissenters had by the 1670s become *de facto* federalists given their exclusion from the English church. Although they differed from each other on how to characterize what the covenant seal of baptism meant and how to justify it exegetically, theologically, and historically, they were united in denying that it was regenerative, even though some like Obediah Wills were willing to defend the theology of the English church on that point insofar as it differed from the Roman Catholic doctrine of baptismal regeneration, at least for the purposes of debate with Baptists.⁵⁰ This meant that mediating positions defensive of a national church such as had appeared in the works of Thomas Blake, Cornelius Burgess, and Daniel Cawdrey were nowhere to be found by the 1670s. In effect, Presbyterians had all become federalists, at least on the question of Baptism, by the 1670s.⁵¹

The pastoral, polemical and exegetical context of the transition evident in the debate will be evaluated thematically below. In each of these texts, the following themes emerge: 1) Each side, paedobaptist and anti-paedobaptist, saw the other as

⁴⁹ Firmin, *Scripture-Warrant*, 4.

⁵⁰ Obediah Wills, *Infant Baptism Asserted and Vindicated*, 258.

⁵¹ Mark Goldie argues that "the profound paradox of Restoration Presbyterianism was that it held to a 'church type' theory but, by opting for ejection, now observed 'sect-type' practice, and it suffered the consequences. The surprise is how little and how slowly their exclusion from the national church weakened their faith in the legitimacy of the idea of a national church." Goldie, ed., *The Ent'ring Book of Roger Morrice*, 7 vols. (Boydell, 2007), i.227; See also Winship, "Defining Puritanism."

giving rise to monstrous distortions of true Christianity. In the case of paedobaptists, the Baptists represented a slippery slope to Arminianism, Quakerism and finally to Ranterism and Familism and so to civil disorder and chaos. By no means was this a new argument; as Paul Lim has indicated, it was commonly made in the 1640s as well. The Presbyterians had early on established the theme: “leave Calvinism-Presbyterianism, then all hell will break loose!”⁵² The federalists of Presbyterian and Independent leanings followed suit in the 1670s and 1680s. Likewise, the Baptists excoriated paedobaptists for failing to be fully Protestant and allowing Popery in through the back door. As Henry Danvers put it, “[They] *separate from Rome as the false Church, and yet own their Baptisme, the Foundation Stone thereof.*”⁵³ 2) There were three key exegetical foci of the debate: the meaning of the Abrahamic covenant in Gen. 17, the meaning of *hagia* in 1 Cor. 7:14, and the meaning of “make disciples” in Mt. 28. Disagreements about these three exegetical touch points informed much of the debate between paedobaptists and Baptists. There was in addition a corresponding hermeneutical dispute about how to read the antitype to circumcision in the Old Testament and its connection to the Covenant of Grace. For most federalists, this was the dispositive issue. As Firmin put it concisely, “If God hath now since Christ is come, nulled and repealed this Covenant with *Abraham* and his Seed, I say, if this can be infallibly proved, the controversie between us and the Anabaptists is at an end; for then, no Covenant, no Seal.”⁵⁴ In particular, although all the federalists and Baptists believed in a regulative use of

⁵² Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 90.

⁵³ Henry Danvers, *A Treatise of Baptism*, 258.

⁵⁴ Firmin, *Scripture Warrant*, 7.

Scripture, such that one had to have a warrant for everything done in worship (except “circumstantials”), the disjunction Baptists saw between circumcision and baptism meant that they were looking for an “express precept” to baptize infants whereas federalists insisted that the precept could be deduced “by good and necessary consequence” through the typological reading of Scripture. 3) There was a corresponding philosophical issue. These divines, disconnected though many of them were from the intellectual life of London, Oxford, and Cambridge,⁵⁵ were still steeped in the vocabulary of Protestant scholasticism, and thus the debate about baptism concerned the proper “matter” and “form” of baptism. Those favoring baptismal regeneration in the Church of England had different answers to these questions, but federalists agreed with Baptists that the matter of the church was “visible saints,” which made the ensuing discussions about how to distinguish the matter in federalist terms from the Baptist matter an interesting one. The question of the “form” or the mode in which baptism had to be conducted, was a different matter, with different biblical metaphors undergirding the federalist and the Baptist answers to the question. 4) An underlying pastoral issue, which may have been every bit as important, at least from the Baptist perspective, as any of the others was the fate of infants dying without having been baptized. The federalist answer that children other than the “covenant seed” of saintly parents were damned, no less than the Catholic answer that all infants who were not baptized perished forever,

⁵⁵ The Baptists seemed to take a kind of perverse delight in their “mechanick” status. Thomas Grantham, in responding to Firmin’s charge that he is invincibly ignorant, wrote, “I grant I am not so well read as himself, if that will please him. And my rejoicing is in this, that in Simplicity and Godly Sincerity I wrote that Book which he despises; and I hope God will bless my Endeavours, in which I trust, I have no other scope but his Glory and the good of *all Men*; heartily desiring that all Truth were restored to its Primitive Purity and Simplicity.” Grantham, *The Infants Advocate* (1688), sig. A3v.

was “the cruelest Doctrine that can be.”⁵⁶ A God that would damn all infants who possessed only original but no actual sin was a God they could not worship. For Baptists like Thomas Grantham, this was a driving concern. Grantham ended his tract *Presumption no Proof* (1687) with the epigram, “Glory to God in the Highest for his free Grace towards all Dying Infants, and let all good Christians say, Amen.”⁵⁷ Federalists, in turn, had to evaluate how their own position stacked up pastorally against such a charge. Although one could find each of the foregoing arguments and turns of phrase in the Puritan tradition (Danvers and Grantham, for instance, consistently invoked Thomas Barlow, Jeremy Taylor, and Henry Hammond, who they believed argued for believer’s baptism or at least against the federalist position earlier in the 1650s, to which the federalists could only claim bad faith in interpretation), the changed “exogenous” political circumstances of Dissent as well as the “endogenous” reshaping of the Puritan tradition from within to harmonize tensions (e.g. how one could hold to “visible saints” as the matter of the church and go on baptizing infants) reshaped the boundaries of the debate, such that federalism, formerly a minority position, became the dominant expression of moderate Dissent by the 1670s. The doctrinal basis for infant baptism was in a sense then more precarious for Dissent as well, precisely because the federalists had become the conservative wing of the movement and Baptists the moderates. Whereas previously federalists found themselves arguing against conservatives that the idea of a Christian nation in which all who bore the name Christian should be

⁵⁶ Grantham, *Infants Advocate*, 7.

⁵⁷ Grantham, *Presumption no Proof*, 34.

baptized was a pagan notion, they now found themselves defending the practice of baptizing infants *simpliciter*.

Of Quakerism, Popery, and the slippery slope

In 1676, George Fox dashed off a broadside in which he thundered against externals in worship: “So see and examine, if this hath not been your own Condition, like the *Jews*: For your several sorts of Crossing and Sprinklings, and Washings with outward Water, that is used in *Christendom* by the Priests, which they call *Baptism*, doth not bring their People into one Body, nor to drink into one Spirit, as Christ’s Baptism with his Spirit doth.”⁵⁸ All Protestantism had an iconoclastic edge to it, concerned as it was in its inception that certain traditions, doctrines, and practices were unfaithful to the apostolic witness in Scripture. The key lay in determining just how much iconoclasm was consistent with civic order and a certain degree of hierarchy in the offices of the church. Almost everyone agreed that Quakers were the chief fomenters of public disorder with their putative rejection of the authority of Scripture, their curiously Ranter-ish doctrine of the “inner light,”⁵⁹ and their rejection of all external forms in worship, and in particular the “Quaking Pope, George Fox, with whom it is as impossible to Write calmly and Christianly as it is to write Sense” was iconic of public disorder.⁶⁰ And so the most effective way for moderate Dissenters to show the danger of the “Baptized Way” was to show that it led directly to Quakerism and to the breakdown of society. The charge usually

⁵⁸ George Fox, *Concerning the True Baptism and the False* (1676), 7.

⁵⁹ “A Light that is kindled (I fear) by Hell fire,” as one pamphlet puts it. Anon., *Baptism, Infant-Baptism, and Quakerism* (1674), 14.

⁶⁰ Anon., *Baptism, Infant-Baptism, and Quakerism*, 40.

revolved around the imputation of moral failure on the part of those drawn to “Anabaptistry” – their hearts were schismatic, so they were instable and incapable of submission to just authority and so they would inevitably destroy order altogether. Besides Arminianism, which was for Firmin nearly synonymous with Anabaptistry, antinomianism and spiritual despair usually followed suit, and he would not even “write what Corruptions in Doctrine I have heard among them besides these: Out of whose Hive the *Quakers* swarm’d for the greater part, is well known: going from Gospel Light to Natural Light, and further they cannot go.”⁶¹

Interchangeable with the Quakers were the Muenster and Leyden rebels. In the imagination of most Protestants, these were Anabaptists whose enthusiasm had reached new heights in their apocalyptic language, conquest of cities, and institution of polygamy, abolition of private property, and other evils. A whole range of apocryphal stories about the Anabaptists had emerged in the imagination of the Presbyterian and Independent pugilists, which Danvers chastises: “For if Mr. *Edwards* in his *Gangraene* be to be believed (which it may be other Nations do that have got it) what Monsters of Men hath he represented the Independents and Anabaptists to be: Or Mr. *Baxter* himself to be credited in that horrid Calumney of the Anabaptists, Baptizing naked in these Countries...What unnatural Brutes would they be esteemed”?⁶² It was easy enough for moderate Dissenters to make the association of anti-paedobaptism with the other range of bizarre behaviors

⁶¹ Firmin, *Scripture-Warrant*, 82. Of course, the charge of schism had been invoked in the earlier polemical battles as well. Cawdrey accused John Owen in 1657 of a schismatic heart that would lead not only to Independency but to Quakerism and Ranterism. Cawdrey, *Independencie a Great Schism*, 72-3.

⁶² Danvers, *Treatise of Baptism*, 325.

practiced by the Muenster and Leyden rebels, but Danvers made their job easy for them by attempting to rehabilitate the Anabaptists's reputation. The more important point for Danvers was that even if "some Anabaptists in *Germany* did turn Ranters...can that justly be reflected upon the Principle, and upon the Innocent in other parts of the world, that hate and abhor all such ways and courses?"⁶³

However, the federalists seized upon the fact that Danvers tried to resuscitate the memory of the Muenster radicals as a sign that he wanted the same to occur in England. Obediah Wills was only too happy to show him how disturbing the German Anabaptists were, and when Danvers attempted to defend his sympathetic treatment, to tell the world "as for his other witnesses, *Munzer* and *John of Leyden*, with the rest of that Faction, though he doth pertinaciously persist against the clearest evidences, in palliating or rather denying the horrid crimes laid to their charge, and withal (very disingenuously) reflects dishonour upon those of the Reformation, I shall not be at so much expence of time and Paper as to expose his gross aberrations herein, but quietly permit him to enjoy the comfort and honour of such witnesses."⁶⁴

The ultimate telos of public disorder, the Puritans as good classicists knew, was tyranny. The most proximate tyranny they could think of was Popery, and so they urged the Baptists to cease their fissiparous tendencies, as Presbyterians had urged Congregationalists in the 1650s, lest the whole nation be placed back under the yoke of Catholicism. An anonymous pamphleteer urged, "Shall it ever be the Character of the Non-Conformists, the more Liberty they have, the more they will

⁶³ Danvers, *Treatise of Baptism*, 327.

⁶⁴ Obediah Wills, *Vindiciae Vindiciarum* (1675), 154.

Divide & break one another? If this be Non-Conformity, Lord deliver every good Christian from it. Do you long to be hurried together into Prisons again? Will no place Unite you, but a nasty Dungeon? Nothing Sodder you but Persecution? Oh beware, beware; the next time he may Chastise you with Faggots, with Scorpions, with Devils; and do not think if once you are under Hatches again, that a few...sighs, Prayers, or Promises shall redeem you; you may e're long (you know not how soon) be doing Pennance together in Popish Limbo's."⁶⁵

The federalists were at times willing to take some measure of responsibility for the rise of Anabaptistry themselves, at least rhetorically. Firmin argued that because "even good Men did not improve their *Father-Abrahams-Covenant*, nor their *Infant-Baptism Covenant*, as they ought," the effectiveness of infant baptism had lost its plausibility.⁶⁶ A pamphlet written in 1678 lamented the rise of the sect, "who are now known by the name of *Socinians*, who decry, disclaim, (yea disdain) all Water-Baptism" and argued that "it hath no little conduced to mens calling in question on the Lawfulness of Infant Baptism, because they themselves have no more found (and others near 'em have no more evidence) the usefulness and profitableness thereof."⁶⁷ The pamphlet gave a detailed list of ways that parents could help a baptized child "make use and improvement of its Infant-Baptism."⁶⁸ In this more self reflective, penitential key, the paedobaptists could acknowledge that it was in many cases a search for purity that motivated the Baptists in rebaptizing and gathering churches. Moreover, some pugilists like Richard Baxter were willing to distinguish,

⁶⁵ Anon., *Baptism, Infant-Baptism, and Quakerism*, 48.

⁶⁶ Firmin, *Plea of the Children*, 4, 6-7, 9.

⁶⁷ Anon., *Some Brief Directions for Improvement of Infant Baptism* (1678), 9, 31-2, 43.

⁶⁸ Anon., *Some Brief Directions for Improvement of Infant Baptism*, 23.

at least for the sake of argument, between “two sorts of men called *Anabaptists* among us: The one sort are sober Godly Christians, who when they are rebaptized to satisfie their Consciences, live among us in Christian love and peace....The other sort hold it unlawful to hold Communion with such as are not of their mind and way, and are schismatically troublesome and unquiet, in laboring to increase their Party.”⁶⁹ Likewise Obediah Wills declared that the Baptists’s “very constitution inclines them to nothing more than to rent, and tear, and divide the Church: The Zeal for their Opinion hath and doth still prove the greatest hindrance to the conjunction of Christians here in this Nation,” but he did not begrudge Baptists their convictions about how and when to administer the rite *per se* so long as they did not separate from lawful churches.⁷⁰ Hence he praised Bunyan for his willingness to commune with paedobaptists in his church, at least for the sake of putting Danvers in his place.⁷¹ Although this argument had a lengthy pedigree (it was, of course, the one used by Presbyterians like Firmin seeking a godly establishment during the Interregnum to persuade “sober” Independents not to gather churches from among the godly), the argument did not translate very well in the context of Dissent, in which by definition all of the parties to the debate belonged to gathered churches.⁷²

⁶⁹ Richard Baxter, *More Proofs of Infants Church Membership* (1675), sig. A4r.

⁷⁰ Wills, *Infant Baptism Asserted and Vindicated*, 295.

⁷¹ Wills, *Infant Baptism Asserted and Vindicated*, 351.

⁷² In one of the quaeries sent to Thomas Grantham by Presbyterians, the interlocutor asks, “Whether the Anabaptists schism, or separation from Communion with our Churches be not worse yet then their simple Opinion? And whether it be not desirable, and possible, that some may be found out, and terms laid down, in which good and sober men on both sides would agree and hold communion?” to which Grantham responds his own anti-quaery: “Whether the Papists may not on fairer Grounds Query thus with the Protestant, then you can do with us, especially when the Cause you manage against us is so doubtful in the judgment of its best friends.” Grantham, *The Quaeries Examined* (1676), 39. With some fairness, RW Dale points out that “To Anglicans, Congregationalists who separate from the English Church on account of its corruption are Donatists. To Romanists, the separation of England from the Western Church on account of its corruption involves all Anglicans in

There was a peculiar irony in the fact that the very divines who were on the receiving end of this argument in the 1650s were now administering it to the Baptists in the 1670s and 1680s. Aside from these caveats, however, federalists by and large were certain that it was the peculiar Baptist distemper that led them to separate from the godly, and this schismatic tendency would lead them to Quakerism, Ranterism, and beyond the nation into a new Popish tyranny.

By no means, however, were the paedobaptists alone in employing slippery slope arguments against their opponents. Already in 1663, Thomas Grantham had written against an unnamed “Papist” that the Church of Rome could not be the true church because it lacked true baptism, it was a national church, and it lacked the “true Ecclesiastical Marks of truly Antient Primitive or Apostolical Gathering, Constitution and Government,” and only churches which possessed the latter, namely the Baptist churches, were true churches.⁷³ By 1671 he was applying these arguments to all paedobaptists, particularly federalists. Although they thought they were deriving the doctrine from Scripture, they were taking on a practice of Antichrist, since it was “innovated, after the holy Scriptures were written” and “came in stealing (as it were) being for a considerable time left at liberty (a sign it was not from Heaven).”⁷⁴ The reason it became normative in the Popish churches was that it was believed necessary to the salvation of infants, but “the grounds upon which paedobaptism was at first urged, are now in a manner wholly declined, and

the sin of Donatism.” And, one might add, to Congregationalists, Baptists gathering churches out of their numbers involves them in the sin of Donatism. Dale, *History of English Congregationalism* (1907), 18n.2.

⁷³ Thomas Grantham, *The Baptist against the Papist* (1663), 41-2, 58. Grantham complained in this treatise that Baptists were often accused of being Jesuits in disguise, subverting the national church. *Ibid.*, “The Author to the Reader.” See also *Christianismus Primitivus* (1678), book ii, part ii, ch. 1.

⁷⁴ Thomas Grantham, *The Paedobaptists Apology for the Baptized Churches* (1671), 61.

new grounds daily invented whereon to build it, which are no sooner laid, but raised again by some of its own favorites.”⁷⁵ By holding on to the practice, and by holding on to the form of “sprinkling” rather than trine immersion, they have opened the door to Popery. Against Edward Stillingfleet, Grantham argued that any clarification sought outside of Scripture in the tradition to confirm the practice of infant baptism was “altogether unlike a Protestant: What are the Sacraments darkly laid down in the Scripture that we know not when and to whom they belong without Tradition?”⁷⁶ To allow this point would be to admit “other innovations of Popery, or other sects.”⁷⁷

At times Grantham could suggest an analogy between the tyranny of Presbyterians and Catholics. In one of the quaeries sent to him by Presbyterians, the interlocutor asked why Grantham “unchurches” almost all churches on earth, to which Grantham replies that this was exactly the same question put to Luther by the Catholics, and the Presbyterians should be ashamed to “take up the Papists weapons.”⁷⁸ The federalists, by telling Christians “that if we have Communion with wicked men and Ministers in the Lords supper, and in their Parish-worship, we are not defiled thereby,” were weakening the defenses of the godly against sinister Jesuits who said the same thing.⁷⁹ Against the Presbyterian claims that the schism of the Baptists was aiding the Papists, Grantham could likewise retort,

If now we may hold Communion with the Paedobaptist, then come the Quakers and plead, *That though they do indeed deny our Faith towards God, or*

⁷⁵ Grantham, *The Paedobaptists Apology*, 63.

⁷⁶ Grantham, *A Religious Contest* (1674), 34.

⁷⁷ Grantham, *A Religious Contest*, 23.

⁷⁸ Grantham, *The Quaeries Examined*, 36.

⁷⁹ Danvers, *A Second Reply*, 195.

*the Lord Jesus Christ, as our own carnal imagination; yet they grant that Faith mentioned...to be true Faith...and urge that our separation from them is unwarrantable...if we yield to those who have no Baptism, or that have set up their own Tradition instead of sacred Baptism...we cannot possibly make any one of these great Truths the boundaries of our Communion in a Church-capacity. And if none of these Principles be necessary in that case, it will be hard to assign any Doctrine or Practice in Religion which will have Authority above these, to limit the Communion of Men professing Christianity: yea Popery it self will obtrude upon us, and we cannot avoid it, if this gap be once opened.”⁸⁰ And that if “the Reformed Christians once get over this stumbling block of Paedo-Rantism and resolve upon the way of Believers Baptism, which is so perspicuous in the Scripture...it would certainly prove the best Expedient to bring down the Papal Confidence: for as they know (and acknowlwedg) that usage to stand upon the authority of Tradition, and not upon the Scripture Warrant, so they glory over the *Protestant* for his inconstancy, in denying unwritten Tradition, and yet their very Baptism hath no other Foundation: But were the Doctrine of Baptism purged from this Leven, and restored to its Primitive Purity, it would find all the Universities of the *Papists* as much business to defend their Infant Sprinkling, as ever they were at to defend Transubstantiation.”⁸¹*

Henry Danvers, writing against Richard Baxter, was willing to call him a crypto-Papist even though he was “sometimes a violent impugner of Popery,” because he “hath also writ much for it....And that not only for the doctrine of Popery, but for much of their Discipline also.”⁸² Not only that, but Baxter, that critic of papal tyranny, was “notoriously guilty” of dogmatic and “severe censuring and judging of others that embrace not [his] sayings as Oracles, and magisterially too.”⁸³ Both federalists and Baptists, then, were willing to invoke the specter of Popery against each other. By weakening Dissenting churches, either by schism or by impurity,

⁸⁰ Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, iv.174.

⁸¹ Grantham, *The Controversie about Infants Church-Membership and Baptism* (1680), 4.

⁸² Danvers, *A Second Reply*, 218-19.

⁸³ Danvers, *A Second Reply*, 260-1. Danvers accuses Baxter of “a *recriminating* instad of confessing, a giving the lie to (instead of *answering* and *disproving*) his Reprovers.” Danvers, *A Third Reply, or a Short Return to Mr. Baxters Brief Answer to My Second Reply* (1676), 13.

respectively, each side was creating the conditions within which Catholics could return to power within England and establish a new sort of tyranny.

Exegetical and hermeneutical disputes

Rowan Williams has noted in his discussion of Origen's theology that he was the first Christian theologian to "comment *in extenso* and by *continuous* exposition, upon the Scriptures," such that canonical, theological exegesis took on a "problem-solving" function for him against his opponents. A "prayerful Catholic reading" of the whole biblical text could defeat opponents such as Celsus and Heracleon because they had failed to read the text with due subtlety and understanding. But once the problem-solving function of exegesis was recognized, it also became "more and more the primary field of doctrinal conflict."⁸⁴ Although few Reformed theologians would identify with Origen's spiritual readings of the texts of Scripture, they would agree that prayerful, virtuous reading was necessary to properly understand the text of Scripture and that the meaning of particular passages was the hinge upon which controversy about paedobaptism turned.

The texts upon which the controversy between the Baptists and the federalists was premised were the same that informed the controversy that emerged in the 1640s: Genesis 17, 1 Corinthians 7, and Matthew 28. Both Baptists and federalists agreed that in order for infant baptism to be licit, there had to be warrant *jure divino* from Scripture, but the disagreement was about what that might mean. Baptists like Danvers and Grantham demanded an express dominical

⁸⁴ Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (Revised ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 148.

command for baptism. Danvers argued that “If *Infants Baptism* had been any *Appointment* or *Ordinance* of Jesus Christ, there would have been some *Precept*, *Command*, or *Example* in the Scripture to warrant the same, but in as much as the *Scripture* is wholly silent therein, there being not one *Syllable* to be found in all the *New Testament* about any such *practice*, it may well be concluded to be no *Ordinance* of Jesus Christ.”⁸⁵ Federalists urged, with more subtlety, that one could make a deduction by “good and necessary consequence” from the Scriptures to the practice by appealing to the continuity between Old and New Testaments.⁸⁶ Obediah Wills argued that “A thing may be commanded in Scripture *implicitly*, and by good consequence; and what is thus commanded, is as valid and obliging, as if it were in so many letters and syllables; and thus we affirm Infant-Baptism commanded. There are in Scripture clear Grounds and Principles from whence by just and warrantable Consequences it may be deducted, that the Children of Believers have right to Baptism.”⁸⁷ The exposition of these texts and the sense on the part of federalists that baptism of the children of believing parents could be sustained as an implicit command required belief in the continuity of the covenant of grace, the meaning of the seal of baptism and the benefits conferred by it, and the typological relationship between circumcision and baptism, all of which were contested the Baptists.

⁸⁵ Danvers, *Treatise of Baptism*, 97-8; Grantham, *The Paedo-Baptists Apology*, 40.

⁸⁶ On this principle of Reformed exegesis, see Richard Muller, “The Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law in Seventeenth Century Reformed Orthodoxy: A Study in the Theology of Herman Witsius and Wilhelmus a Brakel,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (1994): 75-101. The language of “good and necessary consequence” is from *Westminster Confession of Faith*, http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs/ (Accessed October 18, 2014), i, 6. See Giles Firmin, *Plea of the Children*, 13: “They who desire the Reformation of the Church, do not say everything must be expressly set down in Scripture; but if it be contained in the Scripture, and by necessary consequence deducted from thence, we are bound to believe, or practice it.”

⁸⁷ Obediah Wills, *Infant Baptism Asserted and Vindicated by Scripture and Antiquity*, 137.

Federalists on one level tried to meet Baptists on their own ground, to give them an express command for the baptism of infants, by adducing Matthew 28:19: “Go ye therefore, and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Richard Baxter argued from the “exposition of the universal church” that this text included infants as disciples to be baptized.⁸⁸ That infants were not in a position to learn was immaterial because “*Ideots* having not the use of reason from birth, are in the same case with Infants,” and that “As a mans *hand* or *foot* doth not *understand* by *teaching*, and yet is *part of a Disciple* that’s made such by teaching; so *Infants understand not*, and yet are *Infant Disciples*, as being *naturally* so much *appertaining* to their Parents, that by Gods Law the *Parents Will* goeth for *theirs* in consenting for their good. They are *Subjects* before they *obey*...and so they are *Disciples* before they *learn*; and made such by *that teaching* which *made their Parents such*, and taught them to dedicate them to God.”⁸⁹ It was by being “Branches of such a root as is called out of the World, they are called with him the Root and Branches going together, and they Members of the same church with their Parents under Ordinances” that infants acquired the right to baptism as disciples.⁹⁰ Baptists, presupposing that discipleship required actual teaching and thus the ability to understand in the subject, easily rejected this explicit command. “Personal and actual faith they have none, for they have no acts of understanding,” declared Thomas Grantham,⁹¹ and disciples are to be made by “actual teaching.” “If

⁸⁸ Baxter, *More Proofs of Infants Church-Membership*, 209. But Joseph Whiston disagreed that infants were to be disciplined by being baptized. *Infant Baptism from Heaven*, 29.

⁸⁹ Baxter, *Rich. Baxter’s Review of the State of Christian’s Infants* (1676), 18-19.

⁹⁰ Firmin, *Scripture Warrant*, 30.

⁹¹ Grantham, *The Paedo-Baptists Apology*, 41.

those that are to be baptized according to actual teaching or learning from another, then no infant ought to be baptized according to this Text, but the first is true: Ergo, so is the latter.”⁹² Likewise Danvers urged that “Infants of 8 or 10 dayes old can neither judge nor speak” and thus they should be treated like catechumens, not disciples capable of baptism.⁹³ Joseph Whiston countered by distinguishing between the divergent ends of baptism, and argued that infants were capable of receiving two: “to seal confirm and ratify the Covenant with the Promises thereof” and “to give those a solemn admission into the visible Church, who have an antecedent right thereunto.” To argue against baptizing infants on the grounds that they are incapable of some ends of baptism, even though they are capable of the “main and Principal Ends and uses of Baptism...is a wild way of arguing.”⁹⁴ Baptists remained unconvinced, as we will see below, because they rejected Whiston’s (and the other federalists’s) account of the ends of baptism.

Federalists also tried to show that the Baptist rejection of an independent command for baptism was self-defeating. Richard Blinman, writing under the pseudonym Ereunalathes, seized upon this latter point to demonstrate the unsustainability of the Baptist requirement of an express command for each practice instituted in worship. In Danvers’ treatise, he addressed the objection “that there is no express Command or Example for Womens receiving the Lord’s Supper” by adducing Acts 1:14, where “we read that *Mary* and the other Women were gathered together...and continued steadfastly in the Apostles Doctrine and

⁹² Grantham, *The Religious Contest*, 10-11.

⁹³ Danvers, *Treatise of Baptism*, 48, 108.

⁹⁴ Whiston, *Infant Baptism from Heaven*, 40-1.

Fellowship, and breaking of Bread and Prayers, *Chap. 2.42. 44*. It being expressly said, That all that believed were together.”⁹⁵ He added that 1 Cor. 11 also provided a warrant for women taking the Lords Supper. If as good a warrant for infant baptism could be adduced, he would accept it. Blinman’s treatise set out to prove that “this Example that you bring (and the command also...) is not so express, nor so clear, as you make it to be,” “that there is as much room for Objections against it as there is for Objections against the Baptizing of Infants,” and “all the evidence that your Example and Command will afford you, for Womens receiving the Lords Supper, you must deduce, by way of consequence, and that very darkly too, from what you bring.”⁹⁶ The women were not expressly referred to as believers in Acts 1:14, the assembly mentioned in 2:42-4, in which the breaking of bread is mentioned, is not the same assembly as 1:14 and does not expressly mention the women, and moreover, the gender of the Greek phrase in 2:44, *pantes de hoi pisteuontes*, limits the referent of those who were breaking bread to the men.⁹⁷ Likewise with other texts Danvers adduces to prove the institution explicitly. The term *anthropos* in 1 Cor. 11 can have a general signification, but when paired with masculine nouns it refers to men.⁹⁸ Thus to infer that women were part of the assembly breaking bread together, one must do so implicitly, by good and necessary consequence. By analogy, one must also allow arguments for the inference by good and necessary consequence for baptism.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Danvers, *Treatise of Baptism*, 105-6.

⁹⁶ [Richard Blinman], *An Essay Tending to Issue the Controversie about Infant Baptism* (1674), 2, 75.

⁹⁷ Blinman, *An Essay*, 3-4.

⁹⁸ Blinman, *An Essay*, 8-9.

⁹⁹ Blinman, *An Essay*, 76. Obediah Wills made similar arguments as well.

Baptists, unsurprisingly, did not find Blinman’s point compelling, but in a sense the treatise also missed the point, which was that Baptists rejected the continuity in the covenant of grace asserted by federalists between the Abrahamic and Christic administrations. When pressed to defend the practice of infant baptism, federalists univocally pointed to the institution of circumcision in Gen. 17 as the confirmation that the children of believing parents belonged in the covenant with their parents and so should receive the seal of the covenant. Whiston asserted that “the New Testament Dispensation, differs not at all from the Old; in regard of the matter or subjects the Church is constituted or made up of; they were then the spiritual seed of *Abraham*, including their Infants, and so they are still.”¹⁰⁰ The argument here depended upon the continuity of the covenant of grace between the two Testaments: circumcision sealed the covenant in the Abrahamic and Israelite administrations of the covenant of grace in the same way that baptism sealed the covenant of grace in its Christic administration. As Firmin put it, circumcision and baptism were both “initiating” ordinances in different dispensations for the covenant of grace.¹⁰¹ The federalists sought further confirmation from 1 Cor 7:14, which suggested that the children of believers were “holy” (*hagia*) and which the federalists interpreted as meaning that they belonged in the covenant with their parents. Obediah Wills claimed that this term did not mean regeneration in this context, but instead “the Children of either believing Parent, are holy with a holiness-relation put upon them, and separation to God, as his peculiar people, by virtue of which, they have a right to the external privileges of the Covenant, whereof

¹⁰⁰ Whiston, *Infant Baptism from Heaven*, 45.

¹⁰¹ Firmin, *Scripture Warrant*, 28.

they are as capable as the children of the faithful *Israelites*.”¹⁰² The continuity between the two testaments was such that one would expect to find an express command from Christ not to baptize infants rather than a positive command for its institution: “the *New Testament* doth give us *clear Texts* to prove the *Church-membership* of *believing Parents*; you cannot give us *clearer Texts* for their *unchurching*, unless you give us *express Scriptures*.”¹⁰³

Danvers, like Grantham, Hanserd, and other Baptists insisted that the Old Testament type did not find its fulfillment in Baptism in the New Testament. They did not agree exactly on how to conceive of the relationship between the Abrahamic covenant and the covenant of grace under Christ, but they agreed upon a disjunction between them. For Danvers, the Abrahamic covenant was a “mixt” Covenant, partially regarding Abraham as father of the “Natural *Israelites*” and partially regarding him as father of “Spiritual Israel.” Circumcision was a seal of Abraham’s faith which preceded circumcision, but it was not administered to infants as a seal of their faith, first because it was nowhere called a seal in the New Testament (it is called a “figure” in 1 Pet. 3:21) and secondly because it “belonged to all the natural Linage, and posterity of *Abraham* good and bad, without any such limitation, as was put on Baptisme.”¹⁰⁴ The disjunction is sharp, because baptism follows repentance and is “to evidence present regeneration, whereof it is a lively sign or symbol,”¹⁰⁵ whereas circumcision was administered to all without regard to regeneration.

¹⁰² Wills, *Infant Baptism Asserted and Vindicated*, 160.

¹⁰³ Firmin, *Plea of Children*, 57.

¹⁰⁴ Danvers, *Treatise of Baptism*, 206-7, 219. See also Thomas De Laune, *Truth Defended* (1677), 15-16.

¹⁰⁵ Danvers, *Treatise of Baptism*, 18.

Moreover, there was a disjunction in the kind of sign baptism was in comparison with circumcision. Circumcision was a “sign not *improper* for Infants; because it left a *signal* impression in their flesh to be remembered all their days, but so cannot Baptisme be to any Infants.”¹⁰⁶ Federalists did not see this as a weighty objection, because just as baptized infants had to rely upon the testimony of others to do determine the meaning of that baptism, so also did circumcised infants rely on the testimony of others to know what the meaning of their circumcision was.¹⁰⁷

There was no sense of baptism “sealing” anything for the Baptists, since the only seal in the New Testament is the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁸ Baptism was a figure or sign representing to one already regenerate the mystery of salvation that had taken place inside of him or her.¹⁰⁹ As such, there was no positive benefit to be had from an infant receiving it; it did not regenerate nor confer any grace in and of itself. The federalists were uncertain about how to articulate what baptism in fact did accomplish in the infant. They allowed that grace might be communicated through it in the case of elect infants, but this did not happen in every case. As will be discussed below, some of them talked about it as the entrance or initiatory rite into the church, but this formulation did not receive universal acceptance either. They all insisted, however, that a seal was something other than a mere sign.¹¹⁰ On this point, Baptists and federalists were deeply divided.

¹⁰⁶ Danvers, *Treatise of Baptism*, 218.

¹⁰⁷ Firmin, *Plea of the Children*, 48.

¹⁰⁸ Danvers, *Treatise of Baptism*, 218, 221.

¹⁰⁹ E.g. Thomas De Laune, *Truth Defended*, 13-14.

¹¹⁰ Firmin, for instance, preferred to leave the mystery unexplored, though he insisted that “it doth not consist with the *Infinite wisdom* and *holiness of God*, to Institute any *Ordinance* in his *House* that is of *trivial concernment*, whatever they seem to be a *carnal heart*: they are things of *great weight*.” *Plea of the Children*, 69.

Frustrated that their “literal” canonical exegesis was not persuasive to the Baptists, the federalists in this dispute found themselves in the posture that conservatives like Blake and Cawdrey did in the 1650s. Although ostensibly they were making doctrinal inferences from objective canonical exegesis, as Paul Lim has indicated analogously in the context of antitrinitarian disputes in the 1670s and 1680s, the federalist disputants were now “keenly aware that no biblical exegesis could stand on its own unless one could demonstrate that one’s exegesis put him in the middle of the historical stream of ‘faithful exegetes.’”¹¹¹ The Baptists were suspect to the federalists because they were offering a novel reading of the text of Scripture, as Firmin indicated in *The Plea of the Children*: “To me it seems strange, and so strange, that I will never believe it, That Christ should Promise his Spirit to the Church, and that good Spirit should suffer both his *Martyrs* and choice *People* to err in such a Point (if it be an Error) from the Apostles days to this day.”¹¹² This was in a sense tantamount to arguing that infant baptism was probably right because it was the longstanding tradition of the church, which is of course just the position Firmin and Baxter had rejected when Cawdrey or Blake advocated it in the 1650s.

It was a shibboleth of the entrenched party within the church to demand proof of the point at which the apostasy of the church had entered, and Cawdrey and Blake demanded that federalists disclose the point at which the church failed by baptizing the children of all who were born within a Christian land. They had defended themselves by appeal to the plain sense of the text, and bade good riddance traditional exegesis if it conflicted with the plain, literal sense of the text.

¹¹¹ Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 221.

¹¹² Firmin, *Plea of the Children*, 3, 12.

The federalists now found themselves in the uncomfortable posture of defending the tradition of baptizing infants against Baptists who claimed that the plain letter of the text could not sustain it.

Obediah Wills insisted that the Baptist reading was idiosyncratic and novel, and therefore represented a new kind of hermeneutical tyranny akin to Popery: “But you must understand he means by himself and his party that have made such inquisition and search into Scripture, that they only have found what is there; what they judge to be the sence of Scripture is so, and we must all come and learn of them what may be inferred from it, what not. Away with this Popery.”¹¹³ By contrast, the federalists contended, they were reading the text of Scripture according to the *analogia fidei*, which avoided the extremes of Baptists and the Papists: “I shall readily confess, that Infant-Baptism of Inchurch-Parents, keep us upon the old bottom of that Ancient Covenant of Grace, made with *Abraham*, and his Church-Seed, as well as his spiritual Seed; and that is no dishonour nor damage to us. But it keeps us not upon the old Romish Antichristian bottom; nor doth it make us symbolize with the Church of *Rome*, as it is now Antichristian; but the Church of *Rome*, as it was once Apostolique, planted and watered by the Apostles.”¹¹⁴ The federalists were putatively charitable in this moderate self-fashioning: they were willing to keep communion with Anabaptists so long as the latter would not separate, despite differences of opinion on exegesis. We have already mentioned Obediah Wills’s commendation of Bunyan over against Danvers, and Giles Firmin added his own allegation of schism against the Baptist pugilist: “you are the

¹¹³Wills, *Infant Baptism Asserted and Vindicated*, 158.

¹¹⁴ Blinman, *An Essay*, 215.

Schismatick, for I have kept Communion with a godly *Anabaptist*; but one tells me, that he desired Communion with one of your Churches, but they would not admit him to Communion, because he would not be Dipped.”¹¹⁵ Danvers insisted, in his response to Wills, that the only way to justify the federalist position was by appeal to tradition: “though Mr. *Wills* affirms that there is such a vast *difference* betwixt the Church of *Rome*, and *them*, in the point of *Tradition* about *Infants Baptisme*, wherein he owns them too corrupt; yet for my part I see not, as Mr. *Wills* represents, the Protestant sentiments about it, where the vast *difference* lyes, and what reason he had to conclude, they themselves, that hold with the *Fathers* herein, are so *Orthodox*, and the Papists so *corrupt*, and Heterodox.”¹¹⁶ Thomas De Laune penetratingly argued that “the way of arriving to *Scripture-knowledge*, is not through the gaudy portals of *Philosophy*, and artificial ratiocinations, but by an earnest waiting, and

¹¹⁵ Firmin, *The Plea of the Children*, 23.

¹¹⁶ Danvers, *Truth and Innocency Vindicated*, 73. Once accepting the argument from tradition, one must accept the baptismal regeneration that goes with it, because the regenerative effect is the just the reason for baptizing infants that emerged in the fourth century. *Ibid.*, 139. It was an inconvenient fact that the for the federalists, as the Baptists never tired of pointing out, that they were placing an old practice within a new explanatory framework. The “new wine” would surely burst the “old wineskin”! “The great Argument now for faederal holiness from the 1 Cor. 7.14 to qualify for Baptism, is not owned by the Ancients.” Danvers, *A Second Reply*, 44, and “for when the unsoundness and rottenness of that ancient ground did appear to those Reformers that turned from other parts of Popery, they being loath to part with this Tradition, endeavoured to build it upon this new foundation, for when it was discovered that Infants might be *saved without Baptism*, and that they were not *damned* if they *dyled* without it; and that the Sacrament did not give *grace* by the bare *work done*, nor took not away *Originall sin*, nor that *Gossips* were any appointment of Christ; it was high time to lay a new Foundation for it, or else it would have *fallen*: therefore is this new way of *Covenant-holyness* found out, which is not above 150 years since, for *Zwinglius* wrote his book of Baptism about 1525.” *Ibid.*, 46-7. See also, Danvers, *A Rejoynder to Mr. Wills His Vindiciae*, “A Postscript by H.D.”: “though *Papists* and some *Protestants* may plead *Antiquity* since the 5th century, and no higher (the Milevitan Synod that first imposed it, being in the year 416) for the necessity of Baptism of Children to take away Original sin, regenerate and save their Souls, with the Concomitants of *Chrism*, *Exorcism*, *Gossips*, &c. yet the Protestants with whom we have to do (owning this to be a poisonous Antichristian Doctrine) cannot pretend higher for their Christning Children upon the federal right then the 15th or 16th century. And that therefore (they rejecting the grounds of the Ancients) their Infants Baptism upon this new Medium is a very novelty. So that I hope we shall hear no more of Antiquity for Infants Baptism of any sort.”

address to the Lord in *Prayer* and *Scripture meditation*.”¹¹⁷ The exegetical and hermeneutical questions at the heart of the controversy elicited rival, mutually incommensurable answers from the Baptists and the federalists, and the rhetorical ploys that the federalists were forced to rely upon in the debate indicated the degree to which the polemical ground on paedobaptism had shifted post-Restoration.

The matter and form of baptism

The question of who was a fit subject for baptism could, in a sense, be answered identically by federalists and Baptists. Both agreed that the “matter” of the church was “visible saints,” which meant that adults evidencing repentance according to the “Rational-Charity” of the church were the fit subjects of baptism. That federalists admitted as much led to the embarrassing reality that Baptists could ransack federalist writings for support for their own cause. This was an effective rhetorical practice, even though Obediah Wills could protest that “you know *Baxter, Piscator, Perkins, Pareus, Calvin*, all speak of grown Persons” and that “as for the Infant Seed of Believers the case alters there; for they being taken into the Covenant with their Parent, it is instead of Profession.”¹¹⁸ As Wills suggests, however, federalists dissented from the Baptists by arguing that children were accepted in the covenant not in virtue of themselves, but insofar as they are the seed of believing Christians. The agreement upon the question of the matter seemed

¹¹⁷ Thomas De Laune, *Truth Defended*, sig. A4v.

¹¹⁸ Wills, *Infant Baptism Asserted and Vindicated*, 283. Joseph Whiston, *Infant Baptism from Heaven and not of Men, The Second Part* (1676), 15; John Collinges, *The Improvableness of Water-Baptism* (1681), 27; Samuel Petto, *The Difference between the Old and New Covenant Stated and Explained* (1674), 263. On the covenant theology of Samuel Petto, see Michael Brown, *Christ and the Condition: The Covenant Theology of Samuel Petto* (1624-1711) (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2012).

dispositive to the Baptists. Danvers wrote that the danger of an impious person baptizing his or her children was so great that the admission that visible saints were the only fit subjects of baptism pulled up the practice “root and branch.”¹¹⁹

While being careful to distinguish their position from baptismal regeneration, federalists wanted to urge that the inclusion of children within the covenant conveyed special privileges to them, such that the seal of the covenant should be maintained. Thomas Hooker had earlier distinguished, for instance, between the “internal” and the “external” covenant on the basis of 1 Cor. 7:14, which described the federal “holiness” of the children of believing parents.¹²⁰ Wills similarly distinguished between “common” and “saving” grace, the former of which consisted of the privileges of access to the gospel and membership in the visible church, but from which it was possible to fall away. Baptism might also convey special grace in some cases, but this could not be guaranteed, as many seeming Christians did in fact exhibit only temporary faith. However, this falling away was not an argument in favor of adult baptism, because adult converts were just as likely to fall away as children raised in the church.¹²¹ Although he did not share it, Wills was also willing to distinguish the baptismal regeneration proclaimed in the Book of Common Prayer from the Catholic teaching for the sake of polemics.¹²² Here the federalists found themselves in disagreement with each other as much as the Baptists on the question of whether baptism signified entry into the visible church

¹¹⁹ Danvers continues, “for if *impious* and *prophane* do baptize any without Faith, and do go out of Christ’s Order, what can more *enervate* such a Practice?” Danvers, “An Appendix to the Preface,” *Treatise of Baptism*, 3d. ed. (1675), sig. a1r. See also, Danvers, *A Rejoynder to Mr. Wills His Vindiciae* (1675), 11, 15.

¹²⁰ Thomas Hooker, *The Covenant of Grace Opened* (1649), 78-9.

¹²¹ Wills, *Infant Baptism Asserted and Vindicated*, 188.

¹²² Wills, *Infant Baptism Asserted and Vindicated*, 268.

or not. Whereas Hooker, Wills, and others seemed to think this a reasonable expression of what was happening, siding in this sense with the Anglican polemicists against the Baptists, Baxter and Blinman thought that this way of expressing the sense of the rite obfuscated more than illuminated and gave the Baptists an argumentative foothold more than was necessary. For them children already belonged in the covenant prior to the baptism, and baptism sealed and solemnized what was already the case. According to Blinman, for instance,

The End of Baptism I conceive is not, that the Baptized Person, may orderly thereby, have an entrance into the visible Church. Nor was Circumcision of old, the visible door of Entrance into the Old-Testament-Church. For, Baptism presupposeth the person to be a Member of the visible Church, and so did Circumcision. And though some of those that are for Infant-Baptism, use such expressions; yet I suppose by their discourse in other places, they mean, that it was only a solemn establishment and sealing of that Covenant in which they were before.¹²³

Although the matter of the church was for Blinman and Baxter, as with the Baptists, “visible saints,” the federalists wanted to include children as, in Blinman’s expression, “Mediate-Members.”¹²⁴ Baxter preferred to say that “the Covenant or Law of Grace giveth visible Church-membership conditionally to all that hear it,” or that provided that the covenant is eventually owned, the seal is effectual.¹²⁵

¹²³ Blinman, *An Essay*, 37. Though elsewhere Blinman seems to own the language of internal-external covenant as part of the meaning of “federal holiness.” Ibid., 86. Blinman disowns baptismal regeneration more firmly than does Obediah Wills. Ibid., 83. Richard Baxter, *Plain-Scripture Proof*, 73; idem, *More Proofs of Infants Churchmanship*, 124-5. Paul Lim points out that part of the clarificatory value of the position endorsed by Baxter and Blinman was that it made clear that there were not two “church militants,” a visible and an invisible one. “The ecclesiological co-inherence of the invisible and visible church could become more realized as baptism served the function of admitting only those who had a clear interest in seeing their children and themselves included as members of the visibly covenanted community, and this without separating from the parochial contexts of Baxter’s Kidderminster.” Lim, *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity, and Liberty: Richard Baxter’s Puritan Ecclesiology in Its Seventeenth-Century Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 64-5.

¹²⁴ Blinman, *An Essay*, 54.

¹²⁵ Baxter, *More Proofs of Infants Church Membership*, 99.

Moreover, the argument that seemed to avail with Danvers and other Baptists, that 1 Cor 7 did not provide a sufficient exegetical basis to baptize the infants of believers because some whose children were baptized would prove hypocrites could easily be turned back upon the Baptists: “It seems then, that you Baptize no Hypocrites; and I heartily wish you did not. Do you certainly and infallibly know, that all that are Baptized in your way, are true real Christians, and not Hypocrites? Surely that cannot be known by you.”¹²⁶

The form of baptism occasioned much greater disagreement. Baptists argued that the only administration of baptism that had warrant from Scripture was a trine immersion of a believing person manifesting repentance, whereas federalists defended the traditional practice of ablution or washing, which the Baptists insisted upon calling “sprinkling.”¹²⁷ The disagreement largely revolved around the question of what was signified by baptism, and both sides were able to draw upon scriptural imagery to defend their understanding. Both parties were clear that the sign must image the thing signified. For the Baptists, it was clear from Romans 6:1ff and Col. 2:11ff that there was a visible “agreement between Baptism and the death, burial, resurrection of Christ, our death to sin, burial, and rising with him to a new life.”¹²⁸ The only symbolic action that could image such a signification was immersion under the water for death, and rising again out of the water for resurrection. Henry Danvers also indicated that “the eminent thing signified and represented in Baptsme, is not simply the blood of Christ, as it washeth us from our sin; but there is

¹²⁶ Blinman, *An Essay*, 100; See also Baxter, *Rich. Baxter’s Review*, 25; Firmin, *Plea for the Children*, 10.

¹²⁷ Blinman, *An Essay*, 186-200; Wills, *Infant Baptism Asserted and Vindicated*, 242-3.

¹²⁸ Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, ii.ii.28.

another representation therein of Christ's Death, Burial and Resurrection in the Baptized, being first buried under Water, and then rising out of it, and this is not in a bare conformity to Christ, but in a representation of a Communion with Christ in his Death and Resurrection."¹²⁹ The federalists, by contrast, insisted that "if Circumcision signified Heart Circumcision, to those that were Circumcised, then it must also signifie Remission of sin and Justification by the Blood of Christ; and Sanctification also," and thus baptism as the antitype to circumcision also signified cleansing from sin. As such, washing was the appropriate modality of administering baptism, because "unless you rinse or rub, as well as dip, you will not easily make clean work of it; and if this your similitude hold, you must not only dip the person you Baptize, but you must rinse or rub him too, to signifie his cleansing."¹³⁰ Baptism by "dipping" also possessed a potentially salacious consequence as well. Unless one baptized the person naked, one would only be baptizing the person's clothes rather than the person him or herself. But Christ, who was "a pattern of holiness" surely would not have been baptized naked; likewise it would have been "unsuitable to Christian-modesty" for Philip to baptize the Ethiopian Eunuch naked.¹³¹ The federalists, while contending for the traditionalist practice of ablution, also asserted for the most part that the mode was indifferent.¹³² This was, to a great extent, moderate self-fashioning, as the federalists had no intention of expanding or altering their practice to include immersion, but they allowed that both practices

¹²⁹ Danvers, *Treatise of Baptism*, 251.

¹³⁰ Blinman, *An Essay*, 169, 199; Firmin, *The Plea of the Children*, 113: "If cleansing of the Soul from Sin be the thing Baptism holds out, then, what doth primacily, properly, and effectually cleanse, is there signified, *but the Antecedent is true*: Cleaning is as much given to the Blood of Christ, as to the Spirit."

¹³¹ Blinman, *An Essay*, 192, 195. See also Baxter, *Rich. Baxters Review*, 37.

¹³² E.g. Samuel Petto, *Infant Baptism of Christ's Appointment*, 77.

were lawful to demonstrate their magnanimity and eagerness to commune with all “sober” or “godly” Anabaptists.

Pastoral concerns

In his magisterial work *A Secular Age*, philosopher Charles Taylor posits a substantive connection between what he calls “providential deism,” which imagines the world as a neutral space in which mystery is evacuated so that human purposes can be imposed upon it, and the secularization of public space in the west. He argues that “if we set aside one of the central mysteries of traditional Christian faith, that of evil, of our estrangement from God, and inability to return to him unaided, but we see all the motivation we need already there, either in our self-interest well understood, or in our feelings of benevolence, then there is no further mystery in the human heart.”¹³³ As part of an explanatory matrix for understanding the rise of “exclusive humanism” as part of the modern “social imaginary” of the west, Taylor’s observation is an interesting one, but it remains to be explained how providential deism, or less anachronistically, Socinianism, which involves “the growth of confidence in the human power to do good,” “the ‘decline of hell’, and the rise of universalism” and a “growing revulsion at predestined damnation, even within Calvinist societies,”¹³⁴ became plausible in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I want to argue for the purposes of this chapter, in conversation with the controversy swirling around paedobaptism in the 1670s and 80s, that there was a pastoral dimension to the problem. In particular, a belief in the rational accountability of

¹³³ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 223.

¹³⁴ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 262.

human beings coupled with concern about the fate of infants dying without the sacraments of the church was a tremendous motive force for Baptists like Grantham and Danvers to deny that baptism for infants was necessary for them to be in saving covenant with God.¹³⁵

Key to Danvers's description of the historical development of baptism was his assertion that it was only when baptism became regarded as regenerative that it came to be regarded as normative for infants.¹³⁶ The thought that infants could not be saved without access to the church's sacraments frightened individuals into adopting the innovation for their children. Behind this rationale, however, lay a perverse understanding of the God of Christianity. This was a God who damned the vast majority of infants ever born, even though they had never added their own actual sin to the original sin they inherited, though they could neither understand nor hinder nor accept God's action upon them. If what the federalists were saying were true, then "if *Isaac* had died before the eighth day, he should not be saved, when yet it was not lawful to circumcise him."¹³⁷ The Latin church believed the sacraments worked *ex opere operato* to convey grace so long as the person did not place a barrier in the way of their effectiveness, and infants could not do so, hence they were saved by the sacrament. Christendom existed because the church wanted to make this saving practice available to as widely available as possible. This was in a sense a generous teaching according to the Baptists; even though it was unbiblical

¹³⁵ William Brackney notes in passing that Grantham's concern for the fate of unbaptized infants is fairly distinctive but does not analyze this pastoral concern. Brackney, "Thomas Grantham, Systematic Theology, and the Baptist Tradition," in *From Biblical Criticism to Biblical Faith: Essays in Honor of Lee Martin McDonald*, eds. William Brackney and Craig Evans (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007), 213.

¹³⁶ *Treatise of Baptism*, *passim*.

¹³⁷ Grantham, *Infants Advocate*, 7.

and wrongheaded, it evidenced a pastoral sensitivity. The federalists, according to Danvers, De Laune, Grantham, and others, were even more perverse than the Papists because they “have got Infant-Baptism into a very little Corner, it belongs only to *Children of believing Parents (in an Independent or Presbyterian sense)* so that a great Part of the World called Christendom, will have no right to it.”¹³⁸ The Baptist reproached the federalists for worshipping a Moloch-God who would consign innocent infants to the flames of everlasting hell.

For Baptists, there was no reason to baptize infants, not only because Baptism was a mere “shew” to manifest present repentance and to recall to the regenerate person the death and resurrection of Christ, as argued above, but also because God would not condemn anyone below the age of rationality, because they were incapable of responding to the message of the gospel. Moreover, circumcision was by no means the only mode of entrance into the covenant of grace, which was much broader than the covenant of circumcision made with Abraham:

You must allow that the Covenant of Grace was not restrained to *Abraham* and his Seed, but did belong to many at that time both Parents and Children; many holy Patriarchs being then living, and some outlived *Abraham* himself, and yet none of these were concerned in the Covenant of Circumcision, as made with *Abraham*, Gen. 17, but only in the Covenant of Grace as made with *Adam and Noah*, which had now continued more than 2000 years, during all which time no Infant was concerned either in Circumcision or Baptism, and yet were as much of the Church as was needful for their Salvation.¹³⁹

In contrast to Samuel Petto and other federalists, Thomas Grantham rejected the idea that “Christ died but for some Infants only” because they were all “equally

¹³⁸ Grantham, *Presumption no Proof*, sig. A4v.

¹³⁹ Grantham, *Presumption no Proof*, sig. A4v.

precious in his sight.”¹⁴⁰ Grantham found Petto’s notion that “the Parents may so forfeit their Covenant Interest, and consequently, their infant seed may loose it also, because their Right was by their Parents” repulsive.¹⁴¹ The covenant of grace was established with all humankind via Adam and Noah, it was never repealed by God, and no infant ever repudiated it through sin, and “therefore no infant was ever cast out of this Covenant.”¹⁴² Federalists claimed that infants were “great sinners,” but Grantham had never seen proof that infants had transgressed any law of God: “it remains for you, or some body else, to shew what Sin has been committed by them, or any of them, for which they incur the Damnation of Hell.”¹⁴³

Federalists were placed on the defensive by this innovative universalist teaching about infants. Samuel Petto confessed that he was “sorry this Man granteth Infants being in that Covenant upon such a corrupt, unscriptural Principle, viz. That all Infants are in a visible State of Salvation by the Covenant of Grace” and warned that “it is the Covenant which I called the great Charter of Heaven, viz. of the God of Heaven: And as others, by denying Infants Interest therein, do take from it, so let him take heed of adding to it.”¹⁴⁴ Baxter argued that the federalists’s hands were tied on this issue. God had set the terms upon which children could be included within the covenant of grace, and condition was that the parent’s consent to the covenant: “Because I and ten thousand more Christians would sit in our closets and offer to God all the infants in the world; that is, consent that he be their reconciled

¹⁴⁰ Grantham, *Presumption no Proof*, 14, 18-19.

¹⁴¹ Petto, *Infant Baptism of Christ’s Appointment*, 55

¹⁴² Grantham, *Presumption no Proof*, 20-3.

¹⁴³ Grantham, *Presumption no Proof*, 27.

¹⁴⁴ Samuel Petto, *Infant-Baptism Vindicated* (1691), 7, 15.

God, and they his children and in Covenant with him: what good man would not desire their salvation?"¹⁴⁵ Firmin quibbled with Grantham's exegesis on the covenants with Adam and Noah: "I take that to be a Covenant with all the Creatures as well as with *Noah*, that God will drown the world no more" rather than a covenant of grace.¹⁴⁶ Although Firmin denied that God had created anyone in order to damn him, he was also highly critical of Grantham's insistence that all infants were saved:

As for the *greater part of the World being Damned*, this offends you: I pray whose Opinion are you of? *Huberus? The Promiscuous Salvation of All: Or are you of Caelius Secundus Curio's Opinion, That the number of the Elect and Saved, is much greater than the number of the Reprobate and the Damned? Whether you, or these, or Christ be truest (Math. 7.14, Few find it;) the Day of Judgment will determine.*¹⁴⁷

Firmin was especially aghast that Grantham denied that infants sinned: "Do you ask what have they done? Did you never see *Revenge, Wrath, Pride, Envy, Self-Love, Rebellion against, and striking of Parents*, acting in little Children?"¹⁴⁸ In the denial of the sins of infants, the federalists thought they saw Pelagianism, "a Proud disease, to lift up sinful man, and debase the Grace of God."¹⁴⁹ If adults were passive in conversion, then infants incapable of contributing to their salvation were capable of conversion as well. The denial of this proposition was the real problem with the Anabaptists: "The Foundation of Anabaptism, lies in denying *Original Sin*, as did *Pelagius*, and he was against Baptizing infants upon this ground."¹⁵⁰ Grantham's was

¹⁴⁵ Baxter, *More Proofs for Infants Churchmanship*, 199-200.

¹⁴⁶ Firmin, *Scripture Warrant*, 19, 20-1.

¹⁴⁷ Firmin, *Scripture Warrant*, 54, 65.

¹⁴⁸ Firmin, *Scripture Warrant*, 24.

¹⁴⁹ Firmin, *Scripture Warrant*, 44.

¹⁵⁰ Firmin, *Scripture Warrant*, 79.

not a pastoral teaching for Firmin because it only gave comfort to the parents of the children who died. It would actually create perverse consequences for the children themselves once they grew up and discovered themselves sinners: “What Comfort is this to the Seed of the believing *Jew*, when grown up, and hath the Sense of Sin and Apprehensions of the anger of God against him? *Comfort? O what a Torment* doth this prove to think, When I was an Infant if I had died, I had been saved: O that I had died then, but now I am grown up I shall be damned!”¹⁵¹ Moreover, if everyone is saved as an infant, how does one go about determining “what years Children must or may be, before they come to that *capacity*, to understand, learn, and embrace the doctrine they hear, as to an outward appearance”?¹⁵² Martin Finch was likewise convinced that Calvinism rather than Grantham’s Arminianism *cum* Pelagianism was more apt to offer encouragement to the humble sinner:

Take a Person that is thoroughly convinced of Sin, that sees, and is sensible that he hath a *Depth of Sin in his Nature*, that sees himself *vile and abominable*, by reason of the universal Corruption of his Nature, as well as actual Sins, more than the Hairs of his Head, which cannot be numbred. You come to this humbled, convinced Person, with your Arminian Doctrine and tell him that God did not decree any Person to Salvation from Eternity....You must tell him, according to the tenour of your Doctrine, No, there were many of them in Hell when he died, and never shall be set at liberty from their Everlasting Chains of Darkness....Now therefore our Doctrine can say to such a convinced, humbled Sinner, that is ready to despair; God hath from Eternity decreed, of his mere Grace in Christ, to give Grace and Glory to certain Persons; and some of these Persons; and some of these Persons that God intended to make everlasting Monuments of his Free Grace, are not only by Nature Children of Wrath, as well as others, but in time are Monsters in respect of Actual Sin...but being elected to Life, and Christ dying for them, they are converted and saved: And who knows but that you are of that number?¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Firmin, *Scripture Warrant*, 36.

¹⁵² Firmin, *Scripture Warrant*, 72.

¹⁵³ Martin Finch, *An Answer to Mr. Thomas Grantham’s Book* (1691), 106-7.

The problem lay just at this point of limited atonement, however. It was the limitedness of God's mercy and vast numbers of humanity consigned to damnation, particularly the infants who were incapable of rational response to the gospel, that had become too burdensome to believe for general Baptists like Grantham. Although federalists did their best to answer the charge of the cruelty of their teaching about God, the eternal fate of infants not visibly in covenant was a question mark upon the federalist teaching in subsequent eras.

Conclusion

The 1670s and 1680s saw a resurgence in the conflict between paedobaptists and anti-paedobaptists. By and large, the terms of argument were similar to the 1640s and 50s, when the first controversy over paedobaptism erupted. However, the changed political and cultural conditions in which the debate in the 1670s and 80s took place reordered the way in which the arguments were deployed. From the context of Dissent, there was no longer a Presbyterian argument to be made for a national church composed of well-catechized "visible saints." To the extent that paedobaptists remained outside the national church rather than conforming, they were forced, at least *de facto* into a federalist argument for the practice of infant baptism. Although the federalist argument was radical and regarded as fissiparous in the 1650s, it now lay at the conservative end of the spectrum in the 1670s and 80s. Examining the polemical context in which these arguments were deployed thus tells us much about the trajectory of Dissent in the later part of the 17th century.

In the final chapter of the dissertation, we will examine Firmin's contribution to the debates surrounding justification in the 1690s. By the late 1680s, moderate Dissenters had managed to create a fragile alliance with one another around questions of ecclesiology and had begun to form joint institutions. The republication of Tobias Crisp's putatively antinomian sermons by his son, however, exposed serious disagreements between Presbyterians and Independents over the question of justification. The following chapter analyzes this controversy and assesses Firmin's place in it.

Chapter VI

“The Gospel is a Law”: Firmin, Free Grace, and Justification in 1690s Context

In a previous chapter on Firmin’s views on effectual calling laid out in *The Real Christian*, I examined Firmin’s continuities and discontinuities with the Puritan tradition of practical divinity based on his deployment and critique of texts from that tradition. Though highly critical of Thomas Shepard, Thomas Hooker, John Rogers, Daniel Rogers, Richard Rogers, William Perkins, and Richard Baxter, Firmin nonetheless thought of himself as primarily in continuity with them. Nonetheless, Firmin’s discontinuities are marked, even if not unprecedented within the tradition. Specifically, his view that one’s duty was to accept Christ, whether prepared to do so or not, was somewhat idiosyncratic, but certainly found resonances among the “imputivists” among the antinomian preachers, even if Firmin repudiated the rest of the antinomian logic. However, the duty to accept Christ as he was offered also had resonances with the moderate “evangelical Calvinists” like Joseph Alleine and Richard Baxter, who in other respects seemed “latitudinarian.”¹

The suspicion that Firmin’s prioritization of the duty to accept Christ likely led to conflation of his views with antinomians and led to Firmin’s clarification of his position of *Panergia, or Mr. Davis’ Vindication Giving no Satisfaction* in 1693. Firmin’s

¹ Wallace, *Shapers of English Calvinism, 1660-1714* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 139ff. Wallace argues that “Restoration Dissent was a key moment in the flowering of evangelical Calvinism, and a stage in the transition from an earlier Puritanism to the evangelical Calvinism of the eighteenth century. The evangelical Calvinism of Joseph Alleine and the circle that promoted him can then be seen as transitional—a persistence but also a transformation—leading from key figures of an earlier Puritan age (Greenham, Sibbes) to some of the leading figures (Jonathan Edwards, Philip Doddridge, John Newton) and awakenings of the eighteenth century....running through all the stages of this evangelical Calvinism was the theme that souls were converted and sanctified by a supernatural grace, and that real religion was experiential.” *Ibid.*, 141. The latter theme surely had resonances with Firmin’s work.

treatise was also critical of the republication of Tobias Crisp's sermons by his son Samuel in *Christ Alone Exalted* and involved him in the controversy over free grace that split apart moderate Presbyterians and Congregationalists in the 1690s, which as Peter Toon has indicated, was an acrimonious dispute spanning the whole decade 1690-1700 and beyond. The 1693 publication gives us the opportunity to compare Firmin's position on preparation, effectual calling, and assurance with other godly Dissenters who responded to Crisp and Davis and their enemies, especially Daniel Williams. Unlike the "Don" party of Presbyterians in the late seventeenth century, with whom Firmin probably shared the greatest common ground questions of preparation and assurance, Firmin was neither an Arminian, an Amyraldian nor a Neonomian on the issue of justification. Here he overlapped primarily with "High Calvinists" like Stephen Lobb, George Griffiths, Nathaniel Mather, Comfort Starr, and Isaac Chauncy, while repudiating antinomian positions such as eternal justification.² However, greater than the danger of Arminianism, as Firmin saw it, was the danger of Antinomianism. Thus, Firmin also came down decisively against Davis and Crisp in a way that the divines with whom he agreed on justification did not. He saw himself, despite his differing formulation on justification, as in substantial agreement with Daniel Williams and Richard Baxter, precisely because all of them proclaimed "evangelical righteousness" necessary for salvation, even if Firmin located this righteousness under the rubric of sanctification rather than justification.

² E.g., Richard Davis, *A Vindication of the Doctrine of Justification and Union before Faith* (1698). On the debate concerning eternal justification in Reformed Theology, see Robert J. McElvey, "'That Error and Pillar of Antinomianism': Eternal Justification," in *Drawn into Controversie: Reformed Theological Diversity and Debates within Seventeenth Century British Puritanism*, eds. Michael Haykin and Mark Jones (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 223-259.

This chapter, then, will lay out the context of the struggle over justification in the 1690s and then examines Firmin's thought in relation to the primary tendencies within the debate.

Antinomianism and polemics

"Antinomianism" was a possibility contained within the logic of magisterial Reformation thought from the outset.³ The "material" principle of the Reformation, as confessional Lutherans would later describe it, justification by faith alone, imaged law and gospel as bondage and liberation in such a way that it almost inevitably gave rise to parties hostile to the law. Reformed theology, as a subset of Reformation thought, mostly kept the polarization between law and gospel in the act of justification but made room for a positive use of the law under the rubric of sanctification. Decisively for the development of Reformed thought in the later seventeenth century theology, however, Martin Bucer, who taught at Oxford under Cranmer's Archepiscopate, advocated a "double justification," an immanent one by faith and an eschatological one by works (though still by grace), such that law and gospel were not poles but organically related to each other.⁴ Richard Baxter and Daniel Williams, *inter alia*, found Bucer's alternative compelling, and it was reflected in Baxter's distinction between constitutive, sentential, and executive justification.⁵

³ Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Doctrine of Justification*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 5.

⁴ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 253.

⁵ Hans Boersma, *A Hot Pepper-Corn: Richard Baxter's Doctrine of Justification in Its Seventeenth-Century Context of Controversy* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2003), 90-1.

Among those divines that continued to opt for the Lutheran polarization of law and gospel, very few actually could be construed as Antinomian in any meaningful sense. Almost all of them allowed for the probative value of works in sanctification, and even those that did not rarely denied the prudential necessity of the “second” use of the law for ordering civil society.⁶ By the Restoration, however, as John Spurr has pointed out, in the Church of England and among moderate Dissenters, there was a tendency to equate Calvinist orthodoxy and Antinomianism.

There can be no doubt that, by the Restoration, the fear of antinomianism had seriously distorted Anglican perceptions and representations of Calvinism. Although antinomianism...was espoused by a mere handful in the 1640s, and although the practical antinomianism of the Ranters was mainly a bogeyman raised by their enemies, there was enough smoke for Anglicans to claim a Calvinist fire. After the Restoration, it became increasingly tempting for churchmen to bracket the fanatic with the sober Nonconformist and to portray Dissent as a single enthusiastic, schismatic sect with a common cant of extravagant antinomianism.⁷

Not only among “latitudinarian” divines within the Church of England, but also among the Baxterians like John Humfrey, William Bates, John Howe, and Daniel Williams, the equation between Calvinist orthodoxy and Antinomianism was nearly complete by the early 1670s. John Bunyan was representative of those Dissenters, usually Independent, accused of Antinomianism in responding to the charge with indignation: “These Sir are the Motives by which we Christians act; because we are *forgiven*, because we are *Sons*, and if Sons, then Heirs...We know that this Doctrine killeth Sin, and curseth it, at the very roots...Yea, we have a Double Motive to be

⁶ David Como, *Blown by the Spirit* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2004); Philip Gura, *A Glimpse of Zion's Glory* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1986); Michael Winship, *Making Heretics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

⁷ Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 321.

Holy, and Humble before him...Yet this Worketh in us no looseness, nor favour to Sin, but so much the more an abhorrence of it.”⁸ Some Calvinists active within the Church of England, however, such as Thomas Tully saw the irony in equating the Reformed theology of the 39 Articles with Antinomianism: “[Baxter’s] *Libertines, Antinomians, &c.* are whoever assert against Him the Justification of a Sinner by *Faith, without Works*, such as the Church of *England* with the rest of the Reformed Churches. These must be driven by Him with the Herd of *Libertines* as Beasts to the Slaughter.”⁹

Thus, the bugbear of Antinomianism, in the polemical literature almost always associated with the apocalyptic uprising at Münster and the practical antinomianism of the Ranters, Seekers, and Libertines, was largely a construction of the clerical and political imagination, but it had immense power for redrawing the lines of Reformed theology in the later seventeenth century. In this chapter we are primarily concerned with Antinomian disputes among the post-ejection Dissenters. These disputes were public, of course, so any hermetic treatment of the dispute is impossible, but the focus of the chapter will be on writings by the Dissenters. Richard Baxter, the source of much anti-Antinomian fervor, whose immense corpus of writings had an agenda-setting function for post-Interregnum nonconformity, had become convinced during the Civil War that the High Calvinism of the sort advocated by many illustrious pre-war divines like William Pemble, William Twisse, William Perkins, and others, at best allowed an Antinomian

⁸ Bunyan, *A Defence of the Doctrine of Justification* (1672), 10, 82-3.

⁹ Thomas Tully, *Animadversions on a Sheet of Mr. Baxters Entitled An Appeal to the Light* (1674), sig. G3v.

inference and at best was itself proto-Antinomian, and both he and his followers became convinced that revision was necessary to the doctrine of justification.¹⁰ As Tim Cooper has pointed out, there were essentially four waves of anti-Antinomian writings stemming from the Baxterians in the later seventeenth century: the 1640s, the 1650s, the 1670s, and the 1690s. This chapter is concerned only with the dispute in the 1690s, initiated by the republication of the sermons of Tobias Crisp, the “imputivist” antinomian Civil War preacher, by his son Samuel Crisp, which showcase the treatment of justification and assurance within which the trajectory of Firmin’s thought from the 1670s to the 1690s makes sense.¹¹

Antinomianism and Neonomianism in the polemics of the 1690s

The next three sections of this chapter will examine the context of the Antinomian crisis of the 1690s and the internecine strife over the shape of justification in the Dissenting community. The first section will give an overview of the controversy, the second will examine in greater depth the controversy over justification and assurance, and the third will examine the role of Richard Davis and his itinerant ministers played in the conflict. The final section will examine how Giles Firmin’s approach to justification compared with the views in play in the early 1690s.

¹⁰ One aspect of this, which will be canvassed in the section below, is Baxter’s treatment of imputation. He came to see the declarative, forensic nature of justification in the Reformation as making God a liar and resulting in loose living. He believed that the High Calvinist treatment of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, that “Christ did either satisfye, or Actively Obey, or both in our person...or that God doth so Impute to us his perfect Obedience, as to esteeme [us] as having done it ourselves or that it should have all the uses and effects for us, as it would have had if we had done it; I say, These assertions...discharge man from the Duty of Obedience.” Baxter, cited in Tim Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth Century England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2001), 68.

¹¹ For the term imputivist Antinomianism, see David Como, *Blown by the Spirit*.

The fracturing of godly Dissent into divergent camps, some of which opted for Calvinism and others of which were, in the felicitous if overstated phrase of Mark Goldie, in “retreat from Calvinism,” began not with the Restoration but with the publication of Richard Baxter’s *Aphorismes of Justification* in 1649.¹² Baxter’s overriding concern with antinomianism led him to emphasize duties within the Christian life as a check to a solifidianism, which he saw as inevitably promoting a lax lifestyle. Alongside of the classic “imputivist” antinomians like Tobias Crisp, John Saltmarsh, and John Eaton, who had been active in the New Model Army in the 1640s, by the 1660s, a party of “hyper-Calvinists,” in many ways a form of antinomianism redivivus, at least in Baxter’s view, had emerged within the ranks of Dissent, especially among Congregationalists and Particular Baptists, who preached doctrines like justification before faith, eternal justification, and absolute assurance of faith flowing from an absolute promise of God to save the elect.¹³ It is almost certainly the case that these preachers did not teach what was imputed to them, as is often the case with polemics, but in any case the function of these polemics was to cause the godly to fragment into divergent theological parties.¹⁴ Baxter believed that orthodox Calvinists, most populous among Congregationalists and Particular Baptists, were abetting the flourishing of the Antinomian party and indeed agreed in

¹² Mark Goldie, ed., *The Ent’ring Book of Roger Morrice, 1677-1691*, 7 vols. (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2007), i.257-60.

¹³ See Peter Toon, *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity, 1689-1765* (Olive Tree, 1967).

¹⁴ Cf. Tim Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth Century England*, 155ff. George Ella notes that “high Calvinism” or Calvinist orthodoxy and “hyper-Calvinism” were and are regularly equated and charged with antinomianism. Ella, “John Gill and the Charge of Hyper-Calvinism,” *Baptist Quarterly* 36.4 (1995): 160-2.

large part with their emphases.¹⁵ In the republication of Tobias Crisp's sermons by his son Samuel Crisp, which ignited a decade long polemical firestorm and resulted in the breakup of the Common Fund and the "Happy Union" of 1692 and the fragmentation of Dissent into clearly Congregationalist and Presbyterian parties, Crisp averred that

For my own part, the Lord knows, all I aim at is but this, That our God, in our Saviour Jesus Christ, might have the preeminence in all things; that not only our Salvation and Justification might have its rise from Christ alone, but that our Peace of Conscience might fetch its ground therefrom; and that he that gives to us the great Things of the Gospel, might speak the same things by himself, or by his Spirit unto us according to his Word, and so we rest satisfied upon that....To make the Evidence of the Spirit according to the Word of Grace, and the Faith of a Believer, to be no infallible testimonies of our interest in Christ, must of necessity produce this effect, To rest and build upon our own Works, and to give the glory of our Peace of Conscience and Comfort thereunto. But to preach that it is only the Spirit of God and Faith that doth evidence to us our interest in Christ, is to give unto the Lord Jesus the honour and glory of all, and to assume nothing at all unto our own Works.¹⁶

The balancing act between the necessity of the Spirit's witness and a transformation of conscience and the probative use of sanctification as evidence for justification on display in Crisp's writing seems a far cry from the Baxterian (or Firminian)

¹⁵ See, e.g. Richard Baxter, *Aphorismes of Justification* (1649).

¹⁶ Tobias Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1690), 493-4. Michael Brown also concludes that "Good works, according to Crisp, bring glory to God and evidence one's justification." Brown, "Not by Faith Alone: The Neonomianism of Richard Baxter," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 3.1 (Jan. 2011): 133-152. On the "Happy Union" and Common Fund, see Michael Watts, *The Dissenters*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), i.292-3; David Wykes, "The Dissenting Academy and Rational Dissent," in *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 121-130; Anon., "The Ancient Merchants' Lecture," *Transactions of the Congregationalist Historical Society*, 7 (1916-1918): 300-9; John Colligan, "The Antinomian Controversy," *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, 6 (1912-1914): 389-396. On the background of the question of predestination and justification, see Pieter Rouwendal, "The Doctrine of Predestination in Reformed Orthodoxy," in *The Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy*, ed. Herman Selderhuis (Leiden: EJ Brill, 2013), 553-590; Dewey Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination: Grace in English Protestant Theology* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 100, 119, 124, 127, 135-6, 162-4, 175.

accusation of absolute assurance by absolute promise. Instead, what is in evidence is what David Como has called the “imputivist” antinomian disdain for the duty of mortification and the corollary belief that justification as divine operation would produce assurance without any striving in the believer.¹⁷ In the half-century of polemics over justification, which Baxter pejoratively referred to as “continued backbitings about my judgment concerning justification,”¹⁸ Baxter’s animus toward antinomianism had crystallized and his friendliness toward Arminianizing theologies had grown. Goldie argues that

after 1640, the fear of Arminianism came to be offset by the opposite fear of the consequences of hyper-Calvinism. Baxter came to feel a pressing need to avoid a dire implication of Calvinist orthodoxy: he became obsessed with the threat posed by ‘antinomianism.’ An Antinomian is one who claims that because he or she is a member of the elect, chosen by God, everything he or she does is sanctified. Absolute righteousness flows from absolute assurance of salvation.¹⁹

Baxter’s definition of antinomianism in fact corresponded not at all to the actual teaching of the reputed antinomians, which goes some distance toward explaining why High Calvinists like John Owen and Stephen Lobb accused Baxterians of promoting Arminianism and “Socinianism” and Baxterians accused High Calvinists of opening the door to sectaries and antinomians.²⁰

¹⁷ See Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 193: “In the minds of Eaton and his closest followers, assurance was to flow directly and without mediation from faithful apprehension of Christ and his meritorious, saving works.”

¹⁸ Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, ed. Matthew Sylvester (1696), iii.183.

¹⁹ Goldie, *Ent’ring Book of Roger Morrice*, i.257.

²⁰ Stephen Lobb, *The Growth of Error* (1697), 2-3: “The the *Amyraldians* [e.g. Baxterians], amongst whom, they who are sincere in what they Profess, as I doubt not, but there are many such, cannot see wherein they differ from their Brethren, except in the *way* and *method* of Explaining, and Defending the same Doctrine; and therefore assume to themselves the Title of *New Methodists, firmly adhering to old Truths*...Now, of these, how many slide into *Arminianism*? And from thence pass over unto the Tents of *Socinus*;: Though they set up for Men of a *middle way*, between the extreams of *Calvin*, and the Excesses of *Van Harmine*; yet, on the turn from the former, they fall in so far with the latter in their Concessions, that its become impossible for them to make a just Defence of what they hold in

Political circumstances shaped the form of Dissent in the 1660s as well. Congregationalists were by the logic of their position committed to the sole authority of the particular church. The Presbyterians, by contrast, were divided among themselves from the late 1660s, with the Baxterian party, known as the “Dons,” arguing in favor of Comprehension, and the party which crystallized around Vincent Alsop, known as the “Ducklings” arguing for permanent separation. The division between these two parties intensified after Charles II’s Declaration of Indulgence in 1672 and again when James II renewed the Indulgence in 1687, symbolically cemented by the fact that Alsop and Stephen Lobb joined in publically offering an address of thanks to James II after the indulgence in 1687, while the Baxterians refused.²¹ These functionally “Congregational” Presbyterians make it difficult to talk about anything like a single “Presbyterian” party within early Dissent.²² But by the turn of the eighteenth century, the lines between these two parties within Presbyterianism virtually ceased to matter, since Comprehension as a plausible goal receded into obscurity and divines began focusing attention away from the political task and toward the cultivation of “holy living” in a fashion nearly indistinguishable from Anglican moralists like Jeremy Taylor and Edward Fowler.²³ The promotion of Daniel Williams’ *Gospel Truth Vindicated* in 1691 in *The Athenian*

opposition to the othe Parts of the *Arminian System*; and therefore at last, fall in entirely with them, and run their length.” On the cozy familiarity between Arminianism and Socinianism, see *Ibid.*, 50-59, 202-8. See also John Owen, *Vindiciae Evangelicae* (1658); Tim Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), ch. 2.

²¹ Goldie, *Ent’ring Book*, i.237; see also Martin Sutherland, *Peace, Toleration, and Decay* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 6-7; David Field, *Rigide Calvinisme in a Softer Dresse: The Moderate Presbyterianism of John Howe, 1630-1705* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2004), 12-13.

²² See R.A. Beddard, “Vincent Alsop and the Emancipation of Restoration Dissent,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 24.2 (Apr. 1973): 161-84.

²³ Martin Sutherland, *Peace, Toleration, and Decay*, 83, Goldie, *Ent’ring Book*, i.256-61.

Mercury by the bookseller John Dunton also helped the Dons and Ducklings to close ranks to shut out orthodox and hyper-Calvinists alike, such that Calvinism became more closely confined to Congregationalism and Independency more generally.²⁴

The effort to unify the various parties surveyed above was the pulse behind the formation of the original Pinners' Hall Lectures. Weeks after the initial Declaration of Indulgence in 1672, two Bartholomean ministers, Anthony Palmer and George Fownes, applied for a license to preach in part of an old Augustinian monastery that had been converted in 1636 into a factory for pins and needles (hence "Pinners' Hall"). By the end of the year, several wealthy merchants belonging to Dissenting churches established weekly lectures to promote the theology of the Reformation and "to show the substantial agreement in all essentials of Presbyterians and Independents."²⁵ The first lecturers were drawn from the "Dons" and included Thomas Manton, William Bates, Richard Baxter, and William Jenkyn, as well as reputable Congregationalists such as John Owen and John Collins. The lectures immediately were imperiled by theological disagreements between the Baxterians and the orthodox Calvinists, and this disagreement intensified after the Antinomian Controversy of 1690 exploded with the re-publication of the sermons of Tobias Crisp by his son Samuel Crisp. The initial blast was not enough to distract Congregationalists and Presbyterians from giving up party titles to be called the "United Brethren" and from drawing up the "Heads of Agreement Assented to by the

²⁴ On Dunton's relationship to non-conformity, see Helen Berry, "John Dunton," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, eds. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/8299> (accessed Sept. 23, 2014).

²⁵ Anon., "The Ancient Merchants' Lecture," 300-1.

United Ministers formerly called Presbyterian and Congregational” of 1691, although this document focused only on polity and communion between churches. This agreement, it can be noted in passing, indicated how far even the Baxterians had drifted from the vision of Comprehension in disclaiming any political authority for the “Catholick Visible Church,” instead vesting authority in the local congregation.²⁶

Although the divines found agreement found on the issue of ecclesiology, on the question of soteriology the controversy had only begun by 1691, and the conflict that dominated the Dissenting community for a decade over the shape of justification and assurance re-exposed faultlines that had been present since the 1640s but which had come to prominence particularly in the 1670s and submerged briefly in the 1680s.²⁷ The controversy began over the inclusion on the frontispiece of *Christ Alone Exalted* of a list of divines subscribing to the authenticity of the sermons published in the collection. The subscription was, by all accounts, only attesting to the sermons’ authenticity, but it seemed to indicate agreement with their content as well. Still, the attestation incensed Baxter, who in a lecture at Pinners Hall accused the signatories of hanging out a “sign to shew where Jezebel dwelt,”²⁸ and published his *Scripture-Gospel Defended* in late 1690, shortly before his death, attacking Antinomianism and presenting what Isaac Chauncy later termed a Neonomian approach to justification. Samuel Crisp then published *Christ Made Sin* n

²⁶ John Howe, *Heads of Agreement Assented to by the United Ministers formerly Called Presbyterian and Congregational* (1691), sig. A2r, 1-2. See also, Williston Walker, “The ‘Heads of Agreement,’ and the Union of Congregationalists and Presbyterians Based on Them in London, 1691,” *Church History*, 4 (1892): 29-52.

²⁷ Much of the following chronology draws from Colligan, “Antinomian Controversy.”

²⁸ Samuel Crisp, *Christ Made Sin...Evinc’t from Scripture* (1691), sig. A2v.

1691, which published Baxter's sermon from Pinner's Hall and defended a strict High Calvinist doctrine of imputation against Baxter and Daniel Williams. Williams then preached a sermon at Pinner's Hall in which he mentioned the controversy "once, and but once," but that single reference incensed Thomas Cole, the minister at Silver Street Independent Meeting House, who then replied to Williams in his own Sermon at Pinner's Hall.²⁹ A personal friend brought them together at a private house in the presence of three other ministers, after which Williams and Cole declared there was no real difference between them. However, Williams later alleged, "the calm did not endure" and Cole "soon after broke into the wonted exclamations...and I was counted the chief mark. Though often provoked, I never expressed my resentment [at Pinner's Hall] except in the first discourse."³⁰ Williams apparently discerned that Cole was working on a manuscript against him and preempted him by publishing the second major salvo in the controversy, *Gospel Truth Stated and Vindicated* in 1692. Cole's own Pinner's Hall lectures were published in the same year as *A Discourse of the Christian Religion*, taking Williams to task for his movement away from the Protestant doctrine of justification. The Independent ministers also wrote a statement of objections in the same year, with the result that the United Brethren put together a committee of ten ministers to evaluate Williams' book. The polemical exchange began in earnest from this point. Robert Traill wrote *A Vindication of the Protestant Doctrine of Justification* in 1692, in which he urged that the extreme of Antinomianism had been dutifully repudiated

²⁹ Daniel Williams, *Defence of Gospel Truth* (1693), sig. A2v.

³⁰ Williams, *Defence*, sig. A2v.

by the Baxterians, but not the other pole of Arminianism.³¹ John Humfrey published *Peace at Pinner's Hall Wish't*, a sermon he preached at Pinner's Hall in 1692, reiterating some of his thoughts on justification from a 1672 pamphlet called *The Middle Way in One Paper of Justification*, to which Isaac Chauncy responded with *Examen Pacificae, or a Friendly Examination*. Chauncy also responded to Williams' book with *Neonomianism Unmask'd*, a dialogue between "Neonomian," "Antinomian," and "Calvinist," the aim of which was to prove that Neonomian (Williams) in effect repudiated the consensus on justification shared by Antinomian and Calvinist. In 1693, Williams published *A Defence of Gospel Truth*, defending himself against Chauncy, and Chauncy responded with *A Rejoynder to Dr. Williams*. Stephen Lobb also entered the fray with *A Peaceable Enquiry*.

1694 was the decisive year in the controversy, as parties hardened along denominational lines, with Williams the leader of the Presbyterians and Chauncy and Lobb as the leaders of the Independents. The publication of *Crispianism Unmask'd* by John Edwards, *An Apology for the Ministers Who Subscribed* by William Lorimer, and *Man Made Righteous* by Williams stirred up further bad blood between the two parties and led to the exclusion of Williams from the Pinner's Hall Lectures by the Independents. In protest, the Presbyterians set up a rival lecture at Salters Hall at the same time on the same day. The fracture symbolized by the splitting of the lectures proved decisive, as the breakup of the Common Fund and establishment of separate denominational funds soon followed on the heels of the lecture.³² The controversy lost much of its heat after the death of Lobb, and although the

³¹ Robert Traill, *A Vindication of the Protestant Doctrine concerning Justification* (1692), 23.

³² On the fragmentation of the lectures, see Goldie, *Ent'ring Book*, i.263.

controversy continued into the eighteenth century, a truce of sorts was reached with the publication of Williams's *An End to Discord* in 1699, which stated the mutual opposition to Antinomian errors and Socinian treatments of Christ's satisfaction and concluded that "matters standing thus, will afford no ground to hereticate each other."³³

1692-3 also saw the London dispute expand to the counties. Daniel Williams was involved with a dispute with an Independent minister in Rothwell in Northhampton named Richard Davis, accused of irregular ecclesiastical practices (especially crossing parish boundaries and using itinerant ministers) and of preaching Antinomian doctrines, and Williams's friends in the county published a treatise against Davis called *A True Account of a Most Horrid and Dismal Plague* in 1692, which included an approving citation to Firmin's work on effectual calling against Davis's insistence that faith was assurance of faith,³⁴ to which Davis responded with *Truth and Innocency Vindicated* in the same year. It was the publication of Davis's pamphlet that elicited a response in 1693 from Giles Firmin, *Panergia, or Mr. Davis' Vindication Giving no Satisfaction*. Davis's pamphlet mentioned Williams by name, as well as other "perverters of the Gospel, and favourers of the *Neonomian* Party, clucking under Mr. *Williams' Wings*, as their great Patron and Defender,"³⁵ and almost immediately all of the Presbyterian London ministers distanced themselves from Davis's publication in *The Sense of the United*

³³ Daniel Williams, *An End to Discord* (1699), 75.

³⁴ P. Rehakosht, *A Plain and Just Account of a Most Horrid and Dismal Plague* (1692), 14. This evidently please Firmin immensely, who brought it up in his own refutation of Davis. Firmin, *Panergia*, 1.

³⁵ Richard Davis, *Truth and Innocency Vindicated* (1692), 84-5.

Ministers in and about London concerning Mr. Davis in the winter of 1692/1693.

Both Williams' denunciation of Davis's views as Crispian and Davis's own defense of Crisp and criticism of Williams connected the Rothwell incident to the broader Antinomian controversy of the 1690s.

Free grace and justification, 1690-1694

"It cannot be Denied but many in their Opposition to *Antinomianism*, have faln in with *Arminian*, etc and that Divers in running from *Arminianism* etc have plung'd themselves into the *Antinomian* Gulph, and that they who lend their Strength against the one Error, are in danger of being accused for Inclining too much towards the other."³⁶

"I have talked with some of [the Dissenters'] teachers, who confess themselves not to understand the difference in debate between them: and yet the points they stand on, are reckoned of so great weight, so material, so fundamental in religion, that they divide communion, and separate upon them."³⁷

The central controversy in the Antinomian Controversy of the 1690s was the content and place within the *ordo salutis* of the doctrine of justification. As C.F. Allison among others have indicated, the difference between the High Calvinists and the Baxterians was over the seemingly arcane issue of whether faith was a "condition" or an "instrument" in the event of justification, but the scholastic distinction on which the debate turned was in fact at root whether the gospel was "a promise" or "a law."³⁸ Most Calvinists disagreed with implications of eternal

³⁶ Stephen Lobb, *A Peaceable Enquiry into the Present Controversie among Our United Brethren about Justification* (1693), 17-18.

³⁷ John Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, ed. John C. Higgins-Biddle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 170.

³⁸ C.F. Allison, *The Rise of Moralism: The Proclamation of the Gospel from hooker to Baxter* (reprint, Vancour: Regent College Publishing, 2003), 6, 132, 179-80; Cooper, John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity, 75-6; Hans Boersma, *A Hot Pepper Corn*, 45-6, 69, 103-4, 176-. It is important to note that this discussion was considerably more nuanced than Allison's distinction

justification or justification before faith, which the imputivist antinomians drew from the High Calvinist doctrine of justification. Stephen Lobb and John Owen, for instance, both insisted that “If the *Elect*, as they receive Being, are in the sight of God *actually justified* by this *secret* Application of their sins unto Christ, ‘tis *impossible*, that any one Elect soul, can be truly considered as *born*, or as *conceiv’d in sin*.”³⁹ At the same time, however, High Calvinists agreed with the antinomians in expressly asserting that “Grace being the *gift of God*, the first thing which the soul is capable of in the work of Regeneration, or conversion is the *receiving* the gift, or infused habit; the soul doth *recipere effectum agentis*, which is as much as, *Pati*, whence the soul, the *first instant* or moment of conversion, must be considered as *Passive*.”⁴⁰

Although union, which preceded and was the cause of justification, increased a new habit of evangelical righteousness within the believer, which enabled a cooperative

allows. Boersma, for instance, points out that Lewis Du Moulin, John Eyre, and John Crandon, because of their insistence upon justification before faith, did not call faith an instrument. Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 177-8. Du Moulin for instance urges that “Faith is not the instrument of Remission of sins, unless it be made the efficient cause, though less principal, why God forgiveth sins; doth an eternal cause need a temporary an transient Instrument to produce an eternal effect?” Quoted in Baxter, *Richard Baxter’s Confutation of a Dissertation for the Justification of Infidels* (1654), 299. Boersma also points out that “Owen distinguishes between stipulations about the future that are *sub conditione* and those that are *sub termino*. In the former case, the future event is uncertain; in the latter, it is certain. Having defined the nature of a condition in such a way as to imply uncertainty, Owen concludes that ‘it oppugns the whole nature of the Deity, and overthrows the properties thereof, immediately and directly.’” Owen is thus not opposed to placing “conditions” upon justification in terms of the temporal ordering of salvation, though he is opposed to construing the fulfillment of those conditions not only as contingent but genuinely uncertain as in Arminianism. Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 104. Stephen Hampton is also critical of Allison presentation. Hampton, *Anti-Arminians: The Anglican Reformed Tradition from Charles II to George I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 43-50.

³⁹ Stephen Lobb, *The Glory of Free Grace Display’d* (1680), 54; John Owen similarly argued that “Notwithstanding the full, plenary Satisfaction of Christ, yet *all* Men continue equally to be born by Nature children of Wrath, and whilst they believe not, the wrath of God abideth on them--they are obnoxious unto, and under the Curse of the Law.” Owen, *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith* (1677), 305. Boersma points out that a number of earlier High Calvinists such as William Pemble, William Twisse, Lewis Du Moulin, and John Eyre all insisted upon justification before faith, such that faith was a good work and as such part of sanctification rather than the condition of justification. Boersma, *A Hot Pepper Corn*, 123.

⁴⁰ Lobb, *Glory of Free Grace*, 76.

effort of the believer and the triune God in the process of sanctification, such that it was error to declare that sanctification was imputed, it was grave error to assert that the believer was active in the act of justification.⁴¹ Orthodox Calvinists insisted upon the necessity of both passive imputation to the believer of Christ's passive and active righteousness together with the inherent righteousness increased within the believer which applied the merits of Christ to the sinner. The sinner would thus be judged on the basis of his sincere obedience in sanctification, which was, as much as justification, a gracious process, but one in which the sinner's redeemed understanding, will, and affections were invested. Anthony Burgess is typical in affirming that

for all that they are not *Conditions* of his *Justification*, they are *qualifications* and *determinations* of the *Subject* who is *justified*, but no *Conditions* of his *Justification*...It's a thousand times affirmed by our Divines, Many things are required to the constitution of some Subject, which yet are not either causes or conditions of such and such an effect: Light is necessarily required, and drinesse, as qualities in fire, yet it burneth as its hot, not as light or dry. To the integral being of man, are required his head and shoulders, so that the eye could not see, if not seated there, yet a mans shoulders are not the *Causa sine qua non* of his seeing."⁴²

In other words, although sanctification is strictly speaking a gift of grace, nonetheless no one could be considered redeemed without it.

⁴¹ Cf. George Kendall, *Theocratia: Or, The Common Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints* (1653), Liv.142: "For example, I throw a *bowl*, the *motion* of the *bowl* is more from me then the *bowl* and I accordingly am said to have *bowled* well or ill; but the *motion* doth not denominate *me* otherwise, then in the *agent*, not the *subject* and though I be said to *bowl* well, the *Bowl* in this case is only said to *run*, not I. So the chief *author* of my *believing* is God, and he must have the glory of turning, and framing, and upholding, and working all in my heart, as being the *Author*, *Preserver* and *Finisher* of my *faith*, yet I alone am said to *believe*, not God; though my *faith* be more properly Gods *work* then it is mine own." See Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 180.

⁴² Anthony Burgess, *The True Doctrine of Justification Asserted & Vindicated* (1654), ii.230, see Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 299-301.

In his Pinners' Hall lecture, Richard Baxter inveighed against Tobias and Samuel Crisp and published a lengthier diatribe against them in *The Scripture Gospel Defended* on 15 January 1690.⁴³ Baxter reiterated against Crisp, as in his earlier disputes with Thomas Blake and George Kendall in the 1650s, that "faith is no *efficient cause* of Justification, principal or instrumental: We must not ascribe so much to it. Nor is it a final *cause*, nor the *formal cause*. But it is as the Dr. [Twisse] speaketh *Dispositio Subjecti recipientis*; Not a natural, but *Moral disposition*; Yet made such by Gods institution, because the very *nature* of the act containeth a *fitness* to its receptive Office."⁴⁴ Rather, faith was a condition of justification, less than the conditions fulfillment of the "*Law of Innocency*," but still a commandment of the "law of Grace" that must be fulfilled before one can be acquitted, because "no man is *judged* righteous by God, that is not first *made righteous*."⁴⁵ Baxter distinguished between Christ's righteousness, which he obtained by obedience to the law of innocency, and the evangelical righteousness of the believer, which was required as a condition before the righteousness of Christ could be credited to him or her.⁴⁶ Baxter continued to refer to pardon of sin as promise, but he insisted that "all Divines, ancient and modern, reformed and unreformed, that I now of, agreed with us in the conditionality of the said Promise...till *Maccovius* in *Holland*, and Dr. *Crispe* and other Antinomians in *England* began to subvert the Gospel on pretence of magnifying the freeness of Grace."⁴⁷ Baxter was cautious as well about the

⁴³ Tim Cooper, *Fear and Polemic*, 179.

⁴⁴ Baxter, *The Scripture Gospel Defended* (1690), 13, cf. 16-17, 38.

⁴⁵ Baxter, *Scripture-Gospel Defended*, 7, 8, 32-4, 41.

⁴⁶ See, e.g., Baxter's sermon at Pinners Hall quoted in Crisp, *Christ Made Sin*, sig. a4v.

⁴⁷ Baxter, *Scripture-Gospel Defended*, 20.

imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers, because the doctrine had the potential to support antinomianism in his view. For Baxter, imputation, which meant "to reckon," had to be a declaration which comported with reality. Since it was obvious that believers were not morally innocent, that was not what was imputed to them. Believers were not "reputed *perfect innocent obeyers*, because he was such; but...our want of it shall not hinder our Justification or Adoption, Grace or Glory. Christ hath done all his part, but he hath appointed us a necessary part which must be done by our selves, and though without him we can do nothing, yet by him we must believe and be new Creatures, and by him that strengtheneth us we can do something....The purchase then and Donation is by Christ, but the *voluntary acceptance* is by us, by the operation of his Grace."⁴⁸ It was the concurrence of divine operation with the acts of faith and obedience which were conditions to the Covenant of Grace that distinguished Baxter's position from Arminianism, but one can readily see how Isaac Chauncy would read Baxter's position as Neonomian. Interestingly, Baxter referred to Lobb's *Free Grace*, which we discussed above, as "so considerable a confutation of Antinomian errors that I commend it to thy reading," despite the fact that Baxter's own position was implicitly condemned in it.⁴⁹

Baxter claimed only to be defending the Reformed consensus of the English Reformation, adding to it only ideas drawn from the Amyraldians in France, known

⁴⁸ Baxter, *Scripture-Gospel Defended*, 35. Part of Baxter's argument was to deny what the imputavists affirmed, that sinners are declared fulfillers of the "Law of Innocency" virtually, though not really, because they are united to Christ and Christ fulfilled that law. For Baxter, Christ made satisfaction as to the penalty (penalty for sin was the only sense in which the sin of the world could be "imputed" to Christ, unlike Antinomians and High Calvinists) for the breach of the law of Innocency and in so doing made it possible to establish a lesser law for believers. *Ibid.*, 44, 46, 59, 71, especially 83: "Christ perfectly fulfilled the Law as it obliged himself, upon his Sponson. And that Law justified him, but no man else. It is only the New Covenant that justifieth us."

⁴⁹ Baxter, *Scripture-Gospel Defended*, 73.

also as the “New Methodists.” There were, however, more than merely rhetorical issues at stake. James Buchanan, the nineteenth century Scottish theologian, correctly assized the difficulties between the “Neonomian” Baxterians and Calvinists

Independents:

Neonomianism gave rise to a public and protracted controversy between its advocates and opponents, who were agreed on some of the fundamental truths of Christianity, but differed widely from each other in regard to the method and ground of a sinner’s Justification. It has often been said the publication of Dr. Crisp’s writings gave rise to the Neonomian Controversy; and there can be no doubt that some of his statements entered largely into the discussion of it, and served to protract its duration, as well as to increase the vehemence with which it was conducted on both sides. But the real cause of the controversy, was the introduction into England, first of the Arminian, and secondly of the New Methodist, doctrines,—which involved in substance, although not precisely in the same form, the Neonomian theory, on was his own personal obedience,—and that this was accepted, although imperfect, if it were only sincere, instead of that sinless righteousness which the Law of God originally required. These doctrines were equally opposed to that of Justification on the ground of Christ’s imputed righteousness; and those who adhered to it were stigmatized, by a strange misnomer, as Antinomians,—whereas, in rejecting the ‘new law’ of grace, they were really contending for the unchangeable authority of the ‘old law’ of works, as one which could not be modified, but must be fulfilled....The Neonomian doctrine of Justification amounts in substance to this—That Christ, by His death, made full satisfaction to divine justice for the sins of all mankind, so as to remove every obstacle to their pardon and acceptance, and to bring them into a salvable state, or to make their salvation possible;—that having satisfied the claims of the old law on their behalf, He procured for them ‘a new law,’ called the law of grace, to distinguish it from the law of works,—a new law, which proscribes easier terms of salvation, and instead of requiring a perfect righteousness as the ground of a sinner’s justification, is satisfied with sincere, though, imperfect, obedience;—that the work of Christ, by which these easier terms of acceptance were procured for us, may be called our Legal righteousness, since we are entitled to plead it against the demand of the old law for perfect obedience; but that our Evangelical righteousness consists in our personal obedience to the new law, which we are entitled to plead as sufficient to satisfy the only conditions which it prescribes;—and that the immediate ground of our justification is, not the imputed righteousness of Christ, but the inherent, personal righteousness of the believer himself, which begins with

faith, grows with sanctification, and is completed and made sure only by final perseverance.⁵⁰

Despite their own disagreements with Crisp and Davis, the Congregationalists could not accept what they saw as the Arminianizing tendencies of the Baxterians, and they circled the wagons around the doctrines of grace and fenced out the Baxterians.

Baxter died shortly after publishing *The Scripture Gospel Defended*, leaving Daniel Williams, Baxter's successor, to take up the cause against Crisp and other reputed antinomians. Williams's work gathered together both the Dons and the Ducklings into a single Presbyterian party (now committed to toleration rather than comprehension) against the High Calvinists and Antinomians under Baxter's Neonomian presentation of the doctrine of justification.⁵¹ Baxter himself had never fully given himself to Neonomianism, and Tim Cooper points out that his presentation of his views of justification differed from decade to decade, seeming at times quite close to the High Calvinists and at others diverging substantially. But his last publications struck out decisively in favor of Neonomianism, and Williams's immensely influential *Gospel Truth Stated*, published in 1692, seemed to cement Neonomianism as the preferred position of moderate Presbyterians, since both William Bates and Vincent Alsop, among others, subscribed to Williams's treatise.

Williams's treatise, however, while scrupulously avoiding the central dispute over how to conceptualize faith, nevertheless confirmed much of Baxter's position in

⁵⁰ James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification* (Edinburgh, 1867), 177-8.

⁵¹ Although Vincent Alsop later repudiated his association with Williams's Neonomianism, claiming that his signature to *Gospel Truth Stated* only signified his approval of the criticism of the Antinomianism expressed there. Alsop, *A Confutation of Some of the Errors of Daniel Williams* (1698), "To the Reader."

Scripture Gospel Defended. Williams seemingly strove for ecumencism in the treatise, using the 39 Articles, the Westminster Assembly, and John Owen's *Doctrine of Justification* (1677) as his primary sources for the exposition of the doctrine of justification. However, his attempt to show how these sources confirmed his own Neonomianism was resisted with adamantine ferocity not only by Antinomians like Richard Davis and Samuel Crisp, but also by Congregationalists and Baptists such as Stephen Lobb, Isaac Chauncy, Benjamin Keach, Comfort Starr, Nathaniel Mather, and Thomas Cole. On the issue of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, Williams strenuously argued against what he called the "change of person" doctrine, or the idea that in union with Christ one comes to subjectively possess the active and passive righteousness of Christ and Christ takes on the "filthiness" and not merely the punishment for one's sins. Chauncy urged that the punishment of sin could not so easily be separated from the sin itself and hence the sinner,⁵² while other Independents like Lobb agreed with Williams on this point while disagreeing with the conclusion that Williams drew from it.⁵³ Williams urged, again like Baxter, that "it's *Impossible*, being a Contradiction: To be perfectly Holy, and not be perfectly Holy at the same time," in other words that imputation was not forensic but rather was a declaration based on the inherent principle of holiness increaded in the believer by faith and fomented through obedience.⁵⁴ Despite Williams's appeal to Owen to substantiate his opinion on this point, Thomas Cole, among others, pointed

⁵² Chauncy, *Neonomianism Unmask'd* (1692), ii, 25. Chauncy has Antinomian say that "Unless Sin be taken away in a Law sence, Justice is not satisfied, bearing Punishment only doth not satisfie for Sin, the Law will have the Sinner, or the Sin taken away; therefore the Damned must suffer to Eternity because they cannot take away Sin by Suffering, but Christ did more than suffer, he put an end to Sin by the Sacrifice of himself."

⁵³ Lobb, *A Peaceable Enquiry*, 46-7.

⁵⁴ Daniel Williams, *Gospel Truth Stated* (1692), 35-8, quote on 38.

out that Owen was actually against Williams on nearly every point related to the imputation of Christ's righteousness and the evangelical righteousness of the Christian.⁵⁵ Owen believed that Christ's passive and active righteousness were imputed to the believer, and that Christ's righteousness therefore was the believer's personal righteousness. Cole concurred with Owen, arguing that "Certainly the best and only plea for Justification in the sight of God, is this,--that Christ is our perfect Righteousness."⁵⁶

The Independents retorted immediately with a stream of pamphlets and treatises tarring Williams as a Neonomian and asserting that he preached a gospel of works rather than a gospel of promise. Stephen Lobb wrote that he disliked "this Censorious Spirit" of name-calling, but nonetheless he opposed Williams. The law in Gal. 3:11, according to Chauncy, did not refer to the works of the "law of Moses," which would allow that by Christ's merits a new law, the law of grace, has been substituted as the source of our evangelical righteousness. Instead, "those Places and divers others, should be read *a* Law, and not *the* Law, because the Spirit by them excludes all Laws, even your Law: Its *en nomo*, the emphatical Particle is not put in, and therefore there's no ground to say this or that Law only is excluded from Justification, but every Law; and where there's no true Justification taught, there can

⁵⁵ Thomas Cole, *The Incomprehensibility of Imputed Righteousness* (1692), 11-12. Cole cites the same text from which William draws for Owen's authority, *The Doctrine of Justification*, 144: "After they have given the specious name of a Condition, and a *Causa sine qua non* unto Faith, they immediately take all other Graces, and Works of Obedience into the same state with it, and the same use in Justification; and after this seeming Gold hath been cast for a while into the fire of Disputation, there comes out the Calf of a personal inherent Righteousness, whereby men are justified before God, *vertute foederis Evangelici*; for as the Righteousness of Christ to be imputed to us, it is gone into Heaven, and they know not what is become of it."

⁵⁶ Cole, *Incomprehensibility of Imputed Righteousness*, 37.

be no true Practical Obedience.”⁵⁷ Benjamin Keach, the particular Baptist, concurred with Chauncy, arguing that Baxter and Williams misunderstood the nature of law and gospel: “The difference betwixt the Law and the Gospel (as all our true Protestant divines teach) doth not at all consist in this; i.e. that the one requires *perfect Obedience*, and the other *only sincere Obedience*, but in this, that the one requires doing, *Do this and live*; but the other, no doing but believing for Life and Salvation: their Terms differ not only in degree, but in their whole Nature.”⁵⁸ A number of these tracts were also vindications of Tobias Crisp, who many of these divines revered. Isaac Chauncy, for instance, defended Crisp from the charge of eternal justification or justification before faith by distinguishing between the believer’s “Actual Pardon and Adoption” and his or her “Visible Estate”: “[Crisp] saith, a Sinner in respect of his Visible Estate is under the Law-Sentence, and dead in Sin and Unbelief. He will not deny this, but that an Elect Person as such, hath a hidden Relation, Standing and Right, not only in respect of Election, satisfaction and procurement, but a secret passing over of Grace. So that to be a Child of Wrath in regard of the Law-Sentence, and a Child of Mercy, are not *contradicentia*; they may be predicated of the same subject in divers respects.”⁵⁹

The central question ventilated between these two parties, then, concerned the nature of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to the believer in justification. The Independents insisted that there was a declaration that the righteousness belonged to believers independent of any contribution by them. Faith was

⁵⁷ Chauncy, *Neo-Nominianism Unmask’d*, i, 5.

⁵⁸ Benjamin Keach, *The Marrow of True Justification* (1692), 22.

⁵⁹ Chauncy, *Neo-Nonomianism Unmask’d*, ii, 6, 41-4, 53.

essentially only the instrument by which God communicated this righteousness to the conscience of the elect. For the Presbyterians, by contrast, faith was a condition, a lesser law secured for the elect by Christ's righteousness by which they were in effect made evangelically righteous. Both believed that the process was superintended by grace, but the opposing formulations offered very different rhetorical strategies for preaching and polemic.

Richard Davis, Antinomianism, and the fragmentation of the Happy Union

Along with the Antinomian scare involving the Crisps in London, there was, as we have seen, another outbreak of Antinomianism in Rothwell, Northamptonshire, which in the course of controversy came to be associated with the furor over Crisp's teaching, unsurprisingly through Daniel Williams's opposition and linking of them together.⁶⁰ Richard Davis, a schoolmaster who also exercised a nonconformist pastoral ministry, began preaching the doctrines of "free grace" in such a way that local moderate Dissenters viewed as antinomian.⁶¹ They also accused him of ecclesiastical practices that were "1. Irregular. 2. Very scandalous. 3. Injurious to their Christian Profession. 4. As an abuse to God's Mercy, and to the Clemency of our Rulers."⁶² Probably the most offensive of these were the manner of his ordination by the "imposition of hands...by the elders of the church" rather than ministers from surrounding counties as well as his habit of extending "his

⁶⁰ Williams, *Defence of Gospel Truth*, sig. A2v.

⁶¹ On Davis, see Colligan, "The Antinomian Controversy," 392-3; Peter Toon, *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Non-Conformity*, ch. 3, although this work is seriously flawed in its exposition of Davis's theology; Norman Glass, *The Early History of the Independent Church at Rothwell, alias Rowell* (Northampton, 1871), 29-67.

⁶² P.A. Rehakosht, *A Plain and Just Account*, 4.

ministrations through several adjacent counties,” thereby intruding upon the work of other ministers.⁶³ Worst of all, however, was deputation of non-ordained brothers from his church to serve churches he had gathered in other locales, a practice which local moderate Dissenters viewed as undermining the dignity of pastoral ministry. A pamphlet written against Davis mentions one “Bear,” an apothecary, as one such follower of Davis.⁶⁴ Davis did not apologize, however, for using “illiterate and Ignorant Preachers,” bristling against the clericalism of the “perverters of the Gospel, and favourers of the *Neonomian* Party, clucking under Mr. *Williams’* Wings, as their great Patron and Defender; we shall ask their Advice when we think it meet: Advice must be free, given when asked, and not imposed: Imposed Advice is an act of Authority.”⁶⁵ Firmin expressed the disdain of the practice common to all moderate Dissenting ministers: “As for your *Mechanicks*, which you have sent out as your Apostles, I look upon them, as I do upon all these *Lay-Preachers* in *England*, now risen up in this boundless Liberty, to be but the Devil’s Design, first to debase the Ministry, and then to *overthrow it*.”⁶⁶ The Dissenting ministers of Northamptonshire published a tract against him in 1692, in which they accused that Davis’s preaching rejected “the common works of the Spirit,” advocated the belief

⁶³ Glass, *Early History*, 34, 37.

⁶⁴ Glass, *Early History*, 39-40; Rehakosht, *A Plain and Just Account*, 10. Davis clarified that although he cooperated with “Bear” he did not train or exercise authority over him. However, Davis defended his practice of deputizing the laity for preaching by distinguishing various kinds of meetings held in towns outside of Rothwell: “occasional meetings” visiting members of his church; invitations to preach at other churches; gatherings in which Davis and his preachers “carry the Gospel into dark Groves and Places, out of meer Bowels of Pity and Compassion to Poor Souls.” If it was the latter he was accused of, he could not understand why it bothered the London ministers that he was ministering to those who were estranged from Gospel churches. He insisted that there were no Dissenting churches in the areas he and his preachers were ministering. Davis, *Truth and Innocency Vindicated*, K2v-K3r (misnumbered).

⁶⁵ Davis, *Truth and Innocency Vindicated*, 84-5.

⁶⁶ Firmin, *Panergia*, 30.

that “we are *actually justified from Eternity*,” and that “to preach marks of Sanctification is a Doctrine of an Old Covenant strain,” and Davis stirred up his followers against the ministers who opposed him, such that “now their cry is ‘*All that Mr. Davis says is pure Gospel*’ and *they that speak against Mr. Davis, speak against the Gospel.*” The tract averred that the London ministers had evaluated Davis’s teaching and behavior and condemned it by letter. Davis’s story was that he received a letter “inquiring” about his views rather than demanding that he recant them. He replied, but never heard back. On a visit to London the summer before the tract was published, Davis visited London and met with the London ministers there. Davis reported that “In the close of this Conference Mr. *Williams* spake publicly, That he had many things against me in matters of Faith, but he had not his Witnesses ready to prove them.” Davis offered to return to confront the witnesses against him, but Williams declared this impossible. Upon returning home, Davis received a letter from a “Mr. *Godman*,” stating that the London ministers would agree to examine him at Ketterin, but Davis refused, suspicious that the purpose of meeting Davis there rather than in Rothwell was not to “spare my pains” but “rather to expose me to the Country.”⁶⁷ The ministers met at Ketterin in his absence and denounced him the same year with the pamphlet *A Plain and Just Account of a Most Horrid and Dismal Plague*. Davis responded the same year with *Truth and Innocency Vindicated*, which cast aspersions on Daniel Williams and a host of ministers associated with him, and the United Ministers in London immediately published a tract disowning Davis for, *inter alia*, “His sending forth Preachers unfit for the

⁶⁷ Davis, *Truth and Innocency Vindicated*, 38-40, 41

Ministry, and unapproved by the Neighbouring Ministers; His unchurching such Churches as agree not with his Exorbitant Methods, and Licentious Principles; His wickedly railing against most of the Orthodox, laborious Ministers, endeavouring to the utmost to prejudice the People against their Persons and Labours, as Idolatrous, Legal, and Antichristian; Yea, affirming, That all the Churches are gone a whoring from Christ, and that happy is he who is an Instrument in breaking all the Churches, wherein he hath made too great a progress.”⁶⁸

The parish boundary crossing and use of itinerant ministers was understandably upsetting to the rural ministers, and that aspect of their charges against Davis need no further articulation. However, Davis’s association with Antinomianism is a bit more curious. In effect, where one finds some infelicitous phrasing in the works of Tobias and Samuel Crisp that could generate disease among moderate Dissenters, Davis’s work is orthodox in virtually every respect. The only explanation for the condemnation can be that for moderate Presbyterians by the 1690s, the High Calvinist position was essentially beyond the pale. In early 1690, Davis published *The True Spring of Gospel Sight*, two funeral sermons for one “John Bigg,” in which Davis urged that “the Law doth not at all convince of vile Affections in a natural State; for it is evident to the contrary: Yet this I can venture to Affirm, that the Law brings it upon the Conscience in a far more full Extent and Spirituality after Grace comes, than before; so that through Faith the Law is not only established, but appears more spiritual in the Soul,” and that “after Grace comes to

⁶⁸ Anon., *The Sense of the United Nonconforming Ministers* (1692), 6.

the Soul, Convictions of Sin by the Law itself are fuller and greater than afore.”⁶⁹ Before “reigning Grace comes,” the soul is only “dead in Trespasses and Sins” and thus can do nothing. Davis did appear to be denying the “common operations of the Holy Spirit” insofar as he argued that the Law does not result in conviction or compunction until after faith and so after union and justification.⁷⁰

It is difficult to distinguish what Davis was teaching from what any solidian divine would have affirmed. For instance, in *True Spring of Gospel Sight*, Davis argued as follows: “*Object*. 2. But I can shew my Faith by my Works: I reform, hear, pray, meditate, weep, mourn for Sin, and profess: And have not I faith then? *Ans*. Thou mayst do all these, very commendable in themselves, yet not growing on the root of Faith; and as trusted in, they are an abomination to the Lord. There is a vast difference between the Fruits of Holiness flowing from Faith, and good Works set up instead of Christ, the Object of Faith.”⁷¹ Davis was acquainted with John Owen in the 1670s, and before moving to Northampton to become pastor of the church at Rothwell, he was a member of Thomas Cole’s church in London.⁷² Davis was sufficiently theologically sophisticated to advance the distinction between justification *in foro dei* and *in foro conscientiae*, and in his *Truth and Innocency Vindicated*, published in 1692 in response to the pamphlet against him, he argued

⁶⁹ Davis, *The True Spring of Gospel Sight* (1690), 55, 69..

⁷⁰ Davis, *True Spring*, 73.

⁷¹ Davis, *True Spring*, 111-112.

⁷² Davis apparently received “letters testimonial” from Cole’s church attesting to the fact that he was in good standing with the church. Davis, *Truth and Innocency Vindicated*, 25-6; Glass, *Early History*, 32-3.

that *vis a vis* the accusation that he preached that believers were “actually justified from Eternity,”⁷³

It was thus *I* preached or asserted it. If by being justified from Eternity, be meant our being justified in the Decree and Compact, *I* judge that to be Truth, and God’s Decrees, and Covenanting are his Acts. This *I* know, *I* have been chiefly on my Guard in this Matter. And when it was first charged upon me, *I* was in *London*, and heard of it only on my return home. Yet *I* do not deny, but at first *I* spoke of Eternal Justification *in Foro Dei*, as Dr. *Twisse*, Mr. *Pemble*, and many of the transmarine Divines have asserted, (as Mr. *Baxter* himself does acknowledge;) yet always restrained it to the fore-knowledg of God, his Decree, and the eternal Compact. ‘Tis true, finding the Decree of Election nowhere expressed by the name of Justification, *I* waved that last term, and kept rather to that of eternal electing Love and Grace....When *I* seriously weigh’d *Isa.* 50.8, 9 compared with *Rom.* 8.33, 34, and divers other Scriptures, *I* cannot yet but maintain and assert, *A virtual Justification of the whole Elect of God, tho’ not yet called in Christ their common Head ever since his Resurrection*: Especially when *I* was so confirmed therein by the excellent discourse of Dr. *Goodwyn* on that Subject, in his *Triumph of Faith*. And they that take away the Representativenesship of Christ, the Foundation of our Gospel, introduce a new Scheme of Religion, that *I* cannot find in the Bible. I... myself do not see what need there is of all this noise about words, as long as *I* have constantly preach’d and affirm’d, That elect Sinners are dead in Trespasses and Sins, and under the declar’d Condemnation of Law and Gospel, till they believe; and that then, and only then, they are freed from that Condemnation; which *I* take to be actual Justification by Faith.⁷⁴

He reiterated this train of thought in his 1693 tract *Vindication of the Doctrine of Justification*. Along with Samuel Rutherford, William Twisse, and others, Davis affirmed that justification was either active as in the decree of God to justify his people, or passive, as applied in conscience of the elect. There was a difference between God justifying his people and the people being justified. Eternal justification, then, was “the *Eternal good pleasure of his Will* that the Elect should be completely Righteous in the Righteousness of another, *viz.* JESUS, and *this is a*

⁷³ For a list the charges leveled against Davis and his accusers, see *Truth and Innocency Vindicated*, 42-6.

⁷⁴ Richard Davis, *Truth and Innocency Vindicated*, 10.

compleat Judicial Act, Eternal and Immanent, as Mr. Rutherford affirms,” but Davis did not mean that “the actual Payment was made by Christ from Eternity” nor that “the Elect had any Eternal Being, save of Futurity and Representation; nor that God’s Act was applied to them, as Personally Existing from Eternity...nor did it secure them from falling...into a state of Sin or Misery, in reference to the First *Adam*, and that Covenant, and this, in subserviency to the Covenant of Grace.”⁷⁵ Davis was thus clearly not guilty as charged on the accusation of teaching eternal justification as “actual justification” in the sense alleged. Davis insinuated that the accusation of actual justification from eternity emerged from a desire to “overtun the Election of Grace, and substitute a conditional Election in the room thereof,” and so to usher in Arminianism and Socinianism among the Dissenters.

There was plenty else about Davis’s solifidianism as well that got him into trouble with the moderate Presybterians such as Williams and “Mr. King,” who was his bitterest enemy in Northampton and responsible for collecting stories unfavorable to him and getting the London ministers involved in the conflict, but nothing that any other Independent could not affirm. Most prominent from the point of view of his detractors were his insistence that good works could only flow from, not precede faith, and his railing against “Legal Preachers”: “There has been and is too much preaching of such and such legal Qualifications, not only antecedent to, but abstracted from Faith. Nay Faith itself is made no more of by them, than a work of the Law; and as for such, I continue to maintain they are legal Preachers.”⁷⁶ Similarly to Firmin, Davis insisted that the principal duty of sinners was not to be prepared to

⁷⁵ Davis, *A Vindication of the Doctrine of Justification*, 8, 9.

⁷⁶ Davis, *Vindication of the Doctrine of Justification*, 13, 15, see also 48-50.

receive Christ but to receive Christ as he is offered: “Souls that delay their Obedience to the Gospel-Command, of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, under pretence, that they are not humbled enough, and qualified enough for Christ; do slight the Gospel.”⁷⁷ He also insisted that the imputation of Christ’s righteousness did not merely lower the bar such that “sincere obedience” fulfilled the conditions of the covenant of grace, but rather consisted in a declaration that Christ’s active and passive righteousness now belonged to the believer.⁷⁸ Davis explicitly rejected the “Doctrine of Antecedent Conditions of Justification” since it was “contrary to the word of God, so it is contrary to the first Protestant reformers; and also expressly contrary to the Tenth, Eleventh, Twelfth and Thirteenth Articles of the Church of *England*, which most of the Dissenting Ministers in the Kingdom have subscrib’d to.”⁷⁹ Finally, Davis continued to insist that faith was *fiducia*, “a Perswasion of the Pardon of Sin, and Acquittment by the Lord Jesus.”⁸⁰ This did not entail, as was accused, that sanctification was not evidence of justification. Although only the Spirit could convince one that he or she was saved through full persuasion that he or she had closed with Christ, “the Scriptural Marks and Signs, which are the inseparable Effects and Concommitants of Faith, are, one way or other, some Evidence of our Justification.”⁸¹ Like Calvin, however, Davis insisted that the safer means of assurance was to look to Christ as the “Object of Faith”: “Since Marks and

⁷⁷ Davis, *Vindication of the Doctrine of Justification*, 49.

⁷⁸ Davis, *Vindication of the Doctrine of Justification*, 17.

⁷⁹ Davis, *Vindication of the Doctrine of Justification*, 51.

⁸⁰ Davis, *Vindication of the Doctrine of Justification*, 53.

⁸¹ Davis, *Vindication of the Doctrine of Justification*, 55. Divine illumination was of the essence of Saving Faith because “None can believe on what they know not: None can see a need of Christ, nor fly unto him, but they whose Eyes have been opened by the Spirit, to see the Beauty, Excellency and Necessity of Christ Jesus: Therefore Faith is not a blind Consent to the Will only.”

Signs shine only in the Light of Faith; and Faith shineth not, but when it looks directly to its Object, the Grace that is in Christ Jesus; then so to Examine our Faith, when we cease to Act of Faith, is as if One should put out a Candle, to see whether it burneth or not; or to shut close the Doors and Windows, to see whether the Room be light.”⁸² Davis, then, held positions almost identical to the Independents who opposed Baxter, Williams, and Bates such as Thomas Cole, Benjamin Keach, Stephen Lobb, and Isaac Chauncy. He was not an antinomian, even to the degree that Samuel and Tobias Crisp could be considered such (he affirmed that “saving Faith has its saving Effects inseparably attending it”⁸³), nor was he a “hyper-Calvinist” as Peter Toon has styled him.⁸⁴ Rather, he was an energetic Independent orthodox Calvinist akin in his treatment of justification to George Kendall, John Owen, and William Twisse too eager to intervene in counties other than his own and a vocal opponent of the Neonomianism that had become the *de facto* position of some Presbyterians.

The reality is that despite the similarity of his views to Owen or George Griffiths, the

⁸² Davis, *Vindication of the Doctrine of Justification*, 55. To look to the sincerity of one’s faith without “faith in the exercise” was to set up a *reductio ad absurdum*. What was needed was not more information but a different way of seeing the same information about one’s faith, viz. in the light of faith. *Ibid.*, 56-7.

⁸³ Davis, *Vindication of the Doctrine of Justification*, 18. See also *The True Spring of Gospel Sight*, 161-2: “Were the only use of Christ’s righteousness (and indeed that is the great use of it) to secure eternal Glory for us, we should be tempted to have little recourse to it by Faith; for that being once done, and our state secured, corrupt nature would be apt to insinuate to us there would be no great need of such frequent viewing that God-like Righteousness without us, wherein we stand, it being that that is so contrary to Flesh and Blood. But now our Holiness in every step of it depending upon the Righteousness of Christ being apprehended by the Soul in believing; it must, or ought, to necessitate us to have constant recourse, by continued Acts of believing to this glorious Righteousness all the day long. Since it is thus, that every dram of true Gospel-Holiness flows into the Soul only this way: The Apostle affirms it three times, That *now the Just shall live by Faith*; which Life, ‘tis evident, he means to be a Life spiritual, or a Life of Holiness here. And ‘tis necessary that the work of Holiness be carried on continually and constantly; and therefore that we believe in Christ and his Righteousness always. The reason of all is this: The Lord will have the Righteousness which is of Faith, the imputed Righteousness of his Son always viewed, believed in, and admired by us. So that hence you may believe the Doctrine of Free-Grace does not tend to Licentiousness (as Satan in various Instruments clamours against it) but the quite contrary.”

⁸⁴ Toon, *Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism*, 65-6.

orthodox Calvinist position had become overwhelmingly politicized due to its association with the Civil War, and thus without the stature of Owen or Griffiths, to espouse the orthodox Calvinist position was almost to consign oneself to marginality if not obscurity. As I have already noted above, one of Williams's strategies in *Gospel Truth Stated and Vindicated* was to attempt to rescue Owen from the antinomians by citing his giant tome, *The Doctrine of Justification*, against the antinomians, a piece of sophistry which Independents like Thomas Cole despised for its disingenuousness.⁸⁵ The attempt to hive off and coopt respectable Independents from their lesser brethren indicates the degree to which orthodox Calvinism had become repulsive to moderate Dissenters in the 1690s. Robert Traill, for instance, complained that it was "a little provoking, that some are so captious, that no Minister can preach in the hearing of some, (*of the Freedom of God's Grace, of the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness, of sole and single believing on him for Righteousness and Eternal Life, of the Impossibility of a Natural Man's doing any good Work, before he be in Christ; of the impossibility of the mixing of Man's Righteousness and Works, with Christ's Righteousness in the business of Justification, and several other Points,*) but he is immediately called, or suspected to be an Antinomian."⁸⁶ Traill noted that the Independent Christopher Fowler asserted "*That he that will not be Antichristian, must be called an Antinomian*" and that were Rutherford and Burgess alive they would as eagerly write against Williams as they would Crisp.⁸⁷ There were clear exceptions, of course, in which High Calvinists commanded

⁸⁵ Thomas Cole, *A Discourse of the Christian Religion* (1692).

⁸⁶ Traill, *Vindication*, 9.

⁸⁷ Traill, *Vindication*, 10.

respectable ecclesiastical positions, even in the Church of England, where Thomas Tully, Henry Henchman, Robert Sanderson, and John Edwards, *inter alia*, achieved immense influence even in the supposedly “Laudian” Restoration church.⁸⁸ Among the respectable Presbyterian Dissenters like Vincent Alsop, William Bates, John Howe, Daniel Williams, and Richard Baxter, however, moderate revisionist forms of Calvinism prevailed almost completely, and lesser lights such as Davis became *personae non grata*.

Firmin on justification and assurance

As in Firmin’s treatment of polity and effectual calling, Firmin’s approach to justification appreciatively combined emphases from different divines that placed him in the posture of a reconciler. Firmin was uncomfortable in some measure with Baxter’s and Williams’s innovations in defining justification, which were crystallized and cemented in Williams’ idea of justification by free grace in a “Rectoral Distribution of Benefits by a Gospel-Rule.”⁸⁹ However, Firmin strongly endorsed Baxter’s tinkering with the definition of saving faith and with the proto-evangelical insistence burgeoning among divines like Joseph Alleine and Baxter that “it is the duty of all the sons and daughters of Adam, who hear the Gospel preached, and Christ offered to them, to believe in, or receive Christ, be they prepared or not prepared.”⁹⁰ He reiterated the foregrounding of receiving Christ as offered in *Panergia*, granting that “it is the Duty of every person, when the Gospel is Preached,

⁸⁸ See, *inter alia*, Stephen Hampton, *Anti-Arminians*; John Spurr, *Restoration Church*; Wallace, *Shapers of English Calvinism*, ch. 6.

⁸⁹ Williams, *Gospel Truth Stated and Vindicated*, sig. A3r.

⁹⁰ Firmin, *The Real Christian* (1670), 2, cf. 186.

and Christ is offered to him, *immediately* to receive him, be he *prepared* or not *prepared*,” and that this duty of believing was not “a conditional Command....if it did depend upon a condition, and were not to take place, until that condition were performed, then men should not be Condemned for not *Believing*, but for not being *prepared* to believe.”⁹¹ Just like Baxter and Alleine, he insisted that although preparatory works were not strictly speaking necessary to saving faith, yet they most often occurred and that their purpose, *contra* Crisp and Davis, was to keep sinners laboring under the covenant of works, not to “commend *us* to Christ, but to commend *Christ* to us; To make us feel the absolute necessities of him, and see the Glorious Excellencies in him.”⁹²

Panergia made clear, as *The Real Christian* did not, that he did not entirely endorse the Neonomian scheme in justification. In his articulation of the doctrine of justification Firmin followed the orthodox Calvinists. The efficient cause of justification was the triune God, the material cause the “Active and Passive Obedience of Christ *Only*,” the formal cause was “the Fathers free Imputation, of this Active and Passive righteousness of Christ, to that Soul who hath believed in , or received his Son, Jesus Christ the Lord,” the moral instrument or condition (Firmin, like other divines such as Thomas Blake, used them interchangeably), was “Faith, not as it is an inherent Quality, not as it is a *Working*, but a *receiving* hand by Gods appointment,” and the final cause was God’s glory. On the key points in the debate over Antinomianism, the formal and instrumental causes of justification, Firmin sided with the High Calvinists and Antinomians. But for Firmin, who was a hardened

⁹¹ Firmin, *Panergia*, 1.

⁹² Firmin, *Panergia*, 2.

disciplinarian given his presence in New England in the controversy of 1636-8, the danger of Antinomianism was threat enough to make common cause with Neonomians like Williams. Firmin made the linkage of the contemporary furor in Rothwell and his experience in Boston explicit in the preface to his pamphlet.⁹³

While not following Baxter and Williams in the Neonomian scheme of justification, he also thought that the distinction between the orthodox Calvinists and the Neonomians was one without a difference. Both believed that the effect of justification was “Acquittance from the Sentence and Condemnation of the Law, and the Believer *reputed* Righteous before God,” and Firmin argued that “Mr. *Crisp*, I see, because Mr. *Williams* differs somewhat from other Divines in his Interpretation of that *Phil.* 3.9 [“And being found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith”] insults over him very much” and insisted that Crisp and Williams were of the same mind in justification. As we have already seen, Williams actually believed on the central question of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness that Christ secured only his own righteousness and won the right to a lesser standard (“evangelical righteousness”) by which Christians would be judged. Firmin was not concerned about this difference, however, because he minimized the role of justification in the *ordo salutis*. He insisted that “to say, no more is required to our *Salvation*, than to our *Justification*, is false.”⁹⁴ The result of Justification was the increation of “inherent righteousness” by which the Christian cooperated with God in the process of sanctification, such that judgment would occur on the result of that

⁹³ Firmin, *Panergia*, sig. A2r-A3v.

⁹⁴ Firmin, *Panergia*, 20.

sanctification. Good works were for all parties to this debate a necessary feature of salvation, and real dividing line was where one put one's emphasis. The emphasis for Firmin, as with the earlier "strenuous" Puritans like the Rogers, William Perkins, and others, was on the duty of mortification and the production of good works as evidence that one had in fact been justified. Firmin was even willing to allow that the Gospel, taken as a whole inclusive of justification and sanctification, was in fact a law as Baxter and Williams declared it to be:

This Sanctification and Obedience, is necessary unto God's Righteous Judging of the World. How will the Holy one proceed? Will he tell Men, these I did Elect freely to Salvation, and so were actually justified from Eternity, by that Eternal and Immanent act of mine, (as Mr. *Davis* tells us,) therefore I save them? Will he please to say, I imputed my Sons Righteousness to these, and not to others, therefore I save them?...I think according to the Law Men lived under, so will God proceed in Judgment....If he will Judge according to the Gospel, then the *Gospel* is a *Law*: Where there is no *Law*, there is no *Judging*; for the *Judge* is to pass Sentence according to *Law*, and is to be ruled by the *Law*. *Repentance* then, and *Faith*, and *Gospel-Holiness*, will be of some use, say Mr. *Crisp* what he please. God will Judge Men, by what is wrought in Men, and what they have wrought...So his Judgment will be declared to be Righteous, in *Condemning* some, in *saving* others, as he clear himself...even by the Works of Men....Whither Mr. *Crisp*, and Mr. *Davis*, will charge me therefore to be a *Neonomian*, I cannot tell.⁹⁵

Firmin thus saw the debate between High Calvinists interested in holiness and Neonomians to be an illusory one. Both needed to eschew logomachy in the fight against the Antinomians, who were the real enemy in Firmin's view.

Another latent feature of Firmin's anti-Antinomian argument was his implicit disapproval of the focus on justification as the termination of the eternal counsel and decree of God in the conscience, which had drawn the charge of "eternal justification" by the Neonomians. Dewey Wallace noted that it was characteristic

⁹⁵ Firmin, *Panergia*, 20.

among moderate Calvinists to accept the doctrine of predestination but both to repudiate double predestination and to focus analysis on the creaturely process of salvation rather than the decree of God for salvation:

[Baxter, Howe, and Bates], along with others such as Joseph Alleine (and later, Daniel Williams) while accepting the doctrine of predestination, stated it with moderation. Bates affirmed a single and sublapsarian predestination. Howe also had moderate views on predestination and was attacked by Theophilus Gale in 1677 for insufficient orthodoxy on the divine decrees....Like Baxter and Richard Alleine, both Bates and Howe declared their dislike for controversy and their preference for the practical deeds of religion over theological niceties.⁹⁶

Firmin, despite his disagreements with particular aspects of their theology, can easily be classed with these virtue-oriented, somewhat “Latitudinarian” divines, despite semantic disagreements with them on the actual definition of justification. Firmin disliked the appeal among Independents to mystery and paradox and insisted that everything commanded by God was either rational or not inconsistent with rationality. *The Real Christian* included a lengthy preface criticizing Socinianism, which may have been merely a random addition to a treatise otherwise focused on effectual calling, but which may also have been a way of demonstrating his Calvinist *bona fides* even while going against a vaunted pillar of the voluntarist theology of Calvinist theology, the inscrutability of God’s eternal decree to predestination based on divine will alone and not based on anything foreseen in the creature. Firmin insisted that Socinians were not wrong because they insisted too

⁹⁶ Wallace, *Shapers of English Calvinism*, 171. John Spurr likewise indicates that by the mid-seventeenth century “predestinarian Calvinism was being undermined by two related factors. One was the distaste felt by many educated people for a theological system which was highly speculative, peering into the hidden decrees of God...The other factor was pastoral. Sinners were reluctant to respond to a message which seemed to assert their inability to influence their own eternal fate....[Nonconformists] preferred a simple moralising message to the abstruse doctrines of Calvinism.” Spurr, *Restoration Church*, 303-5.

much on right reason but because they did not insist upon it enough: “it implies not contradiction, nor is contrary to any principle of right reason, that the infinite Creatour, and Sovereign Law-giver, in revealing his Mind and Will; should give to his Creature Propositions, or Articles, to be assented to, barely upon his Authority revealing them, though his Creature is not able, by his created reason, to demonstrate how these Propositions can be true.”⁹⁷ In other words, it was a principle of right creaturely reason that a reasonable God could be trusted to reveal trustworthy propositions above creaturely reason. Rather than insist in fideist form on divine voluntarism, he insisted that it was the Socinian insistence that “that which is *Supra Captum Rationis*, what exceeds their reason, that it cannot reach and comprehend, this they will not believe, nor receive for an Article of Faith,” which in fact made them irrational, since they were measuring infinite essence by finite maxims.⁹⁸ For Firmin, it was clear that because God was rational, not only maxims about the divine existence and attributes but also soteriology must be rational. By analogy, since the doctrines of soteriology were rational, the experience of salvation must also be scrutable to reason: “When the heart is set upon an object, upon which it feeds with delight (as we do upon our lusts and the creature) if you would take it off, give me a reason, saith the *will*; and a reason must be given, and such a reason as the *will* accepts. God works rationally upon the rational Creature, suitable to its principles.”⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, C3v, D1v, D2v.

⁹⁸ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, C4v, D2v.

⁹⁹ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 11, 29, 34.

In soteriology, then, while accepting the dogmatic definition of justification given by the High Calvinists, in other words not accepting either Amyraldian, “New Methodist” treatments of the universality of the atonement, or Neonomian treatments of imputation, Firmin nonetheless focused in his treatment of justification on the condition of saving faith, expending his literary energy upon its character and requirements. Saving faith was faith in “Christ clothed with his Offices,” which required “knowledge of the Person and his Offices,” or historical faith, assent to that historical faith or receiving Christ in the understanding, approbation of Christ in his offices as “such a good as exceeds all that good which the soul found in that term from which it was called,” and the will “*consenting, chusing, or embracing of Christ*, as God propounds and offers him, that is Christ, his Person clothed with all his Offices, and compleat work of Redemption.”¹⁰⁰ Thus faith was an act both of intellect and will, and as mentioned earlier, in the will because the reason God gave the will to take it off its former loves and set it on Christ was more rational than the reason the will had for loving what it loved before.¹⁰¹ Quite appropriately, Firmin presaged Jonathan Edwards in his invocation of the language of taste to describe what happens when the soul’s affections are set upon Christ: “When the Spirit makes the elect Vessels wise, then he makes them taste [God and sin] as they *are*. It is a certain truth, never will the Soul turn *from* that term which the Lord doth call it in Conversion, until it seeth it self in that term as it *is*,” and likewise Firmin approvingly quoted John Preston to the effect that

¹⁰⁰ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 154, 155, 163, 169, 171. Firmin’s emphases bear marked resemblances to Herman Witsius’s resolution of the controversy. See D. Patrick Ramsey, “Meet Me in the Middle: Herman Witsius and the English Dissenters,” *Mid-America Theological Journal* 19 (2008): 153-6.

¹⁰¹ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 179.

“Conversion is...wrought not always by making us know new things, which we knew not before (which yet is true in some) but by knowing things otherwise then we did before.”¹⁰² The enriching knowledge of what was already known superficially or improperly was for Firmin a deeply rational reality, as it were carrying one deeper or more intensively into the reality of things. The emphasis upon the rationality of God and God’s revelation made Firmin allergic to some degree on the more mystical pronouncements of divines like John Owen. In *Panergia*, Firmin declared that “I Honour Dr. *Owen*, his great Learning and Gifts, as much as another Man: Yet what the Apostle *James*, saith of *Elijah*...So I may say of Dr. *Owen*: He was a Man *subject to like Passions*; and might let some Sentences fall, which might better kept in.”¹⁰³ In context Firmin was speaking about Owen’s ecclesiology, which he had already criticized in 1658, but the sentiment undoubtedly applied to Owen’s soteriology as well for focusing to readily upon the decree of God rather than the operation of faith and good works in the believer.

Conclusion

The anti-antinomian temper of Presbyterians in the 1680s and 1690s created a massive rift between orthodox Calvinists and those Reformed dissenters in “retreat from Calvinism.” The innovations of the aging Richard Baxter and his disciples, in particular Daniel Williams, generated a great degree of strife in the dissenting community and the generation of parallel ecclesiastical institutions

¹⁰² Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 37-8, 34, quoting Preston, *The New Covenant, or the Saints Portion* (1629), 277.

¹⁰³ Firmin, *The Real Christian*, 25.

among Congregationalists and Presbyterians. In a number of ways, the writings and actions of Tobias Samuel Crisp and Richard Davis became focal points in this struggle. How one responded to the Crisps and Davis became litmus tests for whether one sided with the High Calvinists or the moderate Calvinists and hence whose institutions one would come to inhabit. Giles Firmin characteristically attempted to straddle this divide, following the orthodox Calvinists *de dicto* on the doctrine of justification, but endorsing the ethos and conclusions of the moderate Calvinists. In this controversy as in others, Firmin found the virtuous path to be the path of idiosyncrasy.

Firmin's refusal to come down firmly one side or the other of the controversy between the Independents and the Presbyterians in the 1690s on the question of justification offers a kind of recapitulation of the themes we have examined in this dissertation. Firmin's attempt to rise above the controversy, to offer a perspective that might resolve the difficulties between two opposed parties for the sake of unity for godly, disciplinarian reformation, is key to all of Firmin's writings from the 1650s to the 1690s. By focusing on this central conviction, Firmin also helps us to understand the Puritan tradition as a whole, the main concern of which was never ecclesiastical polity or practical divinity per se, but only how to have a people and churches reformed according to Scripture.

General Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have systematically documented the theological and ecclesiological positions taken by Giles Firmin from the late 1640s to the late 1690s. In the process of so doing, I have contextualized these positions against the polemical backdrop against which they make sense, which has in many ways made this project an episodic history of the theology and ecclesiology of Puritanism in its transition from the Interregnum into the Restoration, where it became Dissent. In this conclusion, I summarize what has been learned about Firmin in light of the contextualization of his writings and argue for his importance in understanding the Puritan tradition in the latter half of the seventeenth century.

Firmin, as an émigré to the New World, imbibed positions there – a “bottom up” perspective on church power, an ambivalence about coercive authority above the congregational level, a strong sense of the importance of the consent of the saints to the church’s political action, a strong preference for explicit church covenants, and a narrowly federalist conception of baptismal privileges – that struck many Presbyterians, including Daniel Cawdrey, Richard Gilpin, Richard Baxter, and Thomas Blake, as Congregationalist. But for many Congregational Independents in Essex, his belief in the laying on of hands for ordination, his ordination by other Presbyters outside of his church, his willingness to work within the parish setting, and his opposition to gathering churches of visible saints out of those parishes all clearly marked him as a Presbyterian. And as Firmin noted wryly, to these Independents, to call someone a Presbyterian was a slur.¹

¹ Giles Firmin, *A Serious Question Stated* (1652), sig. b4v.

Most of the latter positions mentioned above were idiosyncratic from the point of view of the Bay Colony, but they were also positions shared by his father in law Nathaniel Ward, as well as by the pastor of the neighboring community of Newbury, James Noyes. Firmin and Ward, upon their return to England, both thought of themselves not primarily as Congregationalists or Presbyterians but as New Englanders returning home and seeing the failure of godly unity in the fissures between these two parties. Both had come from a context in which each town had one church – functionally a parish system, even though not theorized as such - and in which the church created stability for society and government. In England, by contrast, “heart divisions” among the godly were destroying both. In 1657, John Owen posed the question central to the disputes raging between the Congregational Independents and the Presbyterians:

Suppose a man to be a member of a particular church, and that church to be a true church of Christ, and granted so by this person, and yet upon the account of some defect which is in, or at least he is convinced and persuaded to be in, that church, whose reformation he cannot obtain, he cannot abide in that church, on the other side, cannot be induced to consent to his secession and relinquishment of its ordinary external communion, and that that person is hereby entangled;—what course is to be taken?²

Firmin’s – and Ward’s – response was emphatically to insist that the godly stay put and continue to work to make a separation within the congregation through the exercise of discipline. The only result of separating from established true churches would be unintended consequences far worse than enduring the ongoing sinfulness of the church, both for the established church and for the newly gathered

² John Owen, *Of Schism*, in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William Gould (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1966), xiii.197.

church. The established church would of course suffer from the loss of its godly members, but, as we mentioned in chapter I, Firmin believed that those who had gathered the church would soon realize the truth of the axiom “wherever you go, there you are.” Sinfulness would continue even among those putatively visible saints, and new temptations would arise. At least the parish boundaries had the virtue of preserving vicinity such that godly discipline could be practiced where there was political will in the congregation and its officers to do so.

But let us see what we shall do when Parish bounds are broken down: Vicinity is requisite, this is agreed upon by all, how then shall we agree upon *Vicinity*? What will *this* Church call Vicinity? I doubt if there be a rich person who would joyn, and the Officer with members have a mind to him, they will stretch *vicinity* very largely to fetch him in. Some of our brethren oppose Parochial boundings, because they are so great, I doubt our brethren will not bring their Vicinity into a narrower compass; nay, we see how far they go for members: should we go about to alter Parishes, I think few would be pleased in the manner of doing it, nor will agree upon Vicinity: wherefore I think we had better bear with some inconveniences, then while we seek to mend them create worse.³

Firmin’s sorrow at the obstinacy of the Congregational Independents, as well as his fury at the sects, in particular the Quakers and the Baptists, which were flourishing in the absence of godly unity, were likely the most salient factors that retrenched Firmin more decidedly within the Presbyterian camp in the later 1650s. Firmin always wore his Presbyterianism somewhat loosely, however. His ecclesiastical platform overlapped – in the English context at least – with the Presbyterians, but he retained sufficient sympathy for both Congregationalism, and increasingly in the later 1650s, for reduced episcopacy, that he generally refused that partisan label. Once again, Firmin’s posture seems suspiciously similar to that of his father in law:

³ Firmin, *Of Schisme* (1658), 45.

For my religion I am exactly Orthodox, though I say it my selfe, my right Arme and left Leg were Presbyterians, my left Arme, and right Leg Independent, till I read the London Ministers late Vindication, and now I am 3 quarters Presbyterian, I keep one quarter still Independent, till I see in what quarter of the Heavens the wind will settle: my heart is for the best, and for the Truth.⁴

The 1640s and 1650s were a time of mutual recrimination between Presbyterians and Congregationalists. In Firmin's writings, however, we have an example of a godly Presbyter for whom it was clear "how near the Independents and Presbyterians were come."⁵ Though by no means a canonical figure in these debates (or in the succeeding conflicts to which he was privy), Firmin nonetheless offered a thoughtful, learned, and often conciliatory vantage on these theological and ecclesiological disputes, and a creative – if not always "moderate" – counterpoint to the most extreme partisan positions staked out by the godly in the latter half of the seventeenth century.

The Restoration paired Firmin with interesting bedfellows. Zachary Crofton, one of the "rigid Presbyterians" ministering in London, penned the introduction to Firmin's *The Liturgical Considerator Considered*, a scathing denunciation of John Gauden's defense of impositions and the liturgies and services of the Book of Common Prayer. These *bona fides* placed Firmin firmly in the Presbyterian camp, but in these treatises Firmin also offered a much more conciliatory approach to the questions of set prayers and bishops than Crofton ever mustered in any of his early Restoration treatises. Although Firmin protested the language of baptismal regeneration in the baptismal liturgy, nonetheless he allowed that most of the

⁴ Nathaniel Ward, *Discolliminium, or, A Most Obedient Reply to a Late Book called Bounds & Bonds* (1650), 49.

⁵ Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena, The First and Second Parts* (1646), i.100-1.

prayers in the Book of Common Prayer were legitimate for use for ministers who were not gifted. What he objected to, as did most of the godly, was the idea that gifted ministers should be limited to such set prayers in the liturgy. If the Church of England would but allow the godly to use such prayers when fitting but also to compose their own, Firmin would be willing to accept them.

On the question of bishops, Firmin likewise attempted to extend an olive branch. Firmin communicated with Baxter during the Restoration period, congratulating him on being selected as a chaplain to the King, and letting him know that some approaches to episcopal authority were acceptable to him. Like most Presbyterians, however, Firmin was committed to “primitive” or “reduced” episcopacy, in which the bishop was not an office separate from presbyter, but only a first among equals or a “standing moderator” with greater eminence but not greater power than the other presbyters. For Firmin, this meant that reordination was not an option, not only because such would invalidate his first ordination by presbyters, but also because, so Firmin thought, reordination would “unchurch” the best Reformed churches on the continent and in Scotland, none of which had an episcopal structure parallel to the English church. Moreover, none of the models for reduced episcopacy actually on offer were palatable to Firmin. Firmin’s list of “good bishops” included James Ussher, Edward Reynolds, and Ralph Brownrigg, but Firmin fussed that Ussher’s scheme and the actual practice of Reynolds still had bishops as mere administrators of large diocesan units that could not preserve the vicinity necessary for the exercise of godly discipline. Somewhat perplexing was Firmin’s severe castigation of John Gauden, who one might think would make

Firmin's list of "good" bishops. Gauden practiced his own form of reduced episcopacy, but in Firmin's eyes – as well as Zachary Crofton's – Gauden was a turncoat. Rather than an ally, he was a traitor. As a signatory to the Solemn League and Covenant, he had committed himself and the nation to the extirpation of prelacy, but the Restoration had proved him, in Firmin's eyes, an opportunistic covenant breaker. Firmin agreed with Crofton, even though he had not signed the covenant himself, that the agreement was binding upon the nation, and the fact that Gauden made common cause with the neo-Laudians of the Restoration like Matthew Wren made him *persona non grata* to Presbyterians like Firmin and Crofton. During the Restoration, then, the tone of Firmin's rhetorical posture of openness to an episcopal settlement was at odds with what he was actually willing to concede. Firmin's seeming openness to bishops actually amounted only to what John Humfrey and Stephen Lobb somewhat risibly were willing to concede in 1682: "there should be so many bishops, as the multitude of People requireth, Verily Every parish ought to have its proper Bishop."⁶ He was willing to accept the existence of set prayers provided he did not have to pray them, and he was unwilling to discountenance to authority of the Solemn League and Covenant.

In the process of examining Firmin's ecclesiastical writings in the early Restoration, we have also had the opportunity to evaluate in some detail the writings of some understudied figures of the early Restoration – John Humfrey, Zachary Crofton, and John Gauden. Gauden turns out to be one of the most conciliatory of the Reformed Restoration bishops, allowing that the bishop was not

⁶ John Humfrey and Stephen Lobb, *Reply to the Defence of Dr. Stillingfleet* (1682), sig. b2r.

originally a separate office from presbyter, allowing that bishops were *jure humano*, for the sake of good order in the church rather than part of the apostolic deposit, and performing all of his episcopal acts in concert with local presbyters. That Presbyterians like Crofton and Firmin so despised him demonstrates how little they were willing to concede to the episcopal party and how unlikely comprehension was as an achievable aim. Even very moderate Presbyterians like John Humfrey and Richard Baxter, whose writings we have also had occasion to examine, found that they could not accept comprehension even when only modest requirements were made of them. Although many did ultimately conform for a variety of reasons, Bartholomean ministers like Firmin “found themselves unable in conscience to fulfill all the obligations demanded by the Act of Uniformity.”⁷ In these early Restoration polemics, Firmin’s position combines enough of these godly emphases that contextualizing his work enables a deeper understanding of crucial but underexamined godly responses to the actual terms on which comprehension was offered.

Chapter III flashes forward nearly a decade to a close examination of *The Real Christian*, published in 1670, which served simultaneously as Firmin’s retrospective on the tradition of practical divinity as a whole and his agenda for the cure of souls around the “greatest case of conscience.” Firmin had “gone dark” for the preceding decade as his life was thrown into turmoil by his removal from Shalford to Ridgewell, probably to comply with the terms of the Five Mile Act, and his return to his previous vocation in medicine. Firmin had not ceased to preach and engage in

⁷ David Appleby, *Black Bartholomew’s Day: Preaching, Polemic, and Restoration Nonconformity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 2.

pastoral care, however, as Edmund Calamy tells us that held a regular conventicle in Ridgewell with which the Justice of the Peace colluded because of Firmin's palpable godliness and notable medical skill. During that time, however, Firmin had been quietly composing his thoughts on the cure of souls and practical divinity.

By contrast to the secondary literature that has addressed Firmin's treatise to any substantial degree, I have concluded in this chapter that Firmin reprised much that was central in the tradition of practical divinity since 1590. He insisted upon separation of faith and assurance of faith, seeing the latter as the reflex and syllogistic act of faith resulting in moral certainty rather than infallible; he argued that in most cases preparation was necessary, though not always, as in the case of persons regenerated in infant baptism; he argued for a moderate level of preparation, including separation from sin, prior to allowing the judgment that the act of justifying faith had occurred, although he was critical of divines like Thomas Hooker and Thomas Shepard who required the sinner to be willing to be damned for the glory of God as an act prior to regeneration; he acknowledged meditation as a Christian duty, although he quibbled with Richard Baxter about how strenuous a duty it must be. He made his case characteristically with great creativity and verve, using narratives about his family members John Rogers, Daniel Rogers, Richard Rogers as related to him by his father in law and other Essex clergy to retain their dignity and consequence as divines while distancing himself from their conclusions. Firmin's positive agenda for practical divinity drew from this deep well, yielding some conventional conclusions but also some surprisingly unique ones. While Firmin acknowledged that preparation was normative, yet the foremost duty of the

sinner was to accept Christ as he was offered. Here one can sense echoes, in a more academic register, of Joseph Alleine and Richard Baxter's exhortations to the unconverted, and the dim adumbration of the revivalist evangelicalism of the eighteenth century.⁸ Firmin also concluded, in line with his curtailment of certain persecutory modes of preparation, that self-love was consistent with justifying faith. This conclusion really was quite astonishingly novel for a godly minister and quite a concession to the moral philosophy of his time.⁹ It was grounded not only in his personal narrative, which was filled with "mopish" and "melancholy" concerns for his own salvation, but in his own resolution of cases of conscience for his parishioners and congregants over the preceding two and a half decades.

As I mentioned in this chapter, among the godly concerned for "quaking obsessives"¹⁰ among their ranks like Richard Sibbes, one finds some warrant for deducing the conclusion that Firmin comes to clearly and firmly in this treatise. Sibbes even employed the spousal imagery to describe how the soul at its first closure with Christ might retain some self-love even as it placed its trust in Christ. However, the sermonic passage in which this idea appeared in Sibbes's works is isolated and contradicted by other passages that suggest Sibbes retained the

⁸ E.g. Richard Baxter, *A Call to the Unconverted* (1802), 12; Joseph Alleine, *An Alarm to the Unconverted* (1812), 90-1; Thomas Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 147-9; Mark Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 56-7.

⁹ Although one finds some warrant for a similar position in Baxter's writings, Baxter much more assiduously draws boundaries around how much self-love is congruent with justifying faith than Firmin does. Firmin's approach actually looks somewhat "latitudinarian" in its view that the sinner normatively acts by self-love in closing with Christ by contrast with Baxter. See Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), i.162-4; Paul Lim, *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity, and Liberty: Richard Baxter's Puritan Ecclesiology in Seventeenth-Century Context* (Leiden: EJ Brill, 2004), 36-8.

¹⁰ See John Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 22.

Augustinian requirement that the justified soul love Christ for his own sake rather than for selfish ends. Firmin's work was thus Janus-faced: appreciative of and interactive with Puritan practical divinity, but also carefully recasting certain pointed features of that tradition so as to be more charitable to the "lambs of Christ." Because of the wide-ranging and sprawling nature of Firmin's treatise, contextualizing the arguments Firmin makes in it necessarily requires a reassessment of the broader tradition of practical divinity from the 1590s to the 1660s. As such, the treatise is relevant not only for its own sake but also for the vantage it gives us on the Puritan cure of souls in the seventeenth century.

Firmin's next decade was similarly quiet. We do know from this time period that he took advantage of Charles II's first Declaration of Indulgence and registered his Presbyterian conventicle in Ridgewell. It bears mention that this entry in the *Calendar of State Papers* is the only record we have of Firmin referring to himself as a Presbyterian. Although his platform predominated quite palpably toward Presbyterianism, particularly after 1658, he was always careful in his *oeuvre* to discuss what "classical" and "Congregational" divines thought about a matter without ever locating himself within either one of those parties. This tendency to elide denominational self-definition is indicative, it seems to me, of Firmin's broader concern for the Reformation in England. He was eager to enlist all Presbyterians – to use Hunter Powell's language, whether "clerical" or hierarchical, minimalist "English," or Erastian¹¹ – and to persuade all "Congregationall men" away from

¹¹ Hunter Powell, "The Dissenting Brethren and the Power of the Keys, 1640-1644" (PhD Dissertation, Cambridge University, 2011).

separatism, so that in unity there might be strength for disciplining scandalous members of congregations for the sake of godly Reformation.

In 1680, Edward Stillingfleet's rhetorical about face in *Mischief of Impositions* engaged a number of godly ministers in a vexed and protracted conversation about conscience, comprehension, and toleration. Although the political circumstances were clearly different between 1680 and 1669-70, when Simon Patrick and Samuel Parker penned their rancorous denunciations of Dissenters, the polemics of both conflicts looked nearly identical. For godly Dissenters, impositions were tyrannous, and religious tyranny was equivalent to popery. For Anglican divines, Dissent weakened the Church of England and the "Ancient Constitution," making it vulnerable externally to absorption by popery. Anglican divines like Stillingfleet had lost patience with moderates among the Dissenters, who held out the promise of incorporation but could never pull the trigger. The parallel institutions of the Dissenters made it seem to Stillingfleet that "the *Nonconformists* have advanced more towards *Separation* these last ten years, than they did in a hundred years before."¹²

Among the godly responses to Stillingfleet's sermon were John Humfrey and Stephen Lobb, John Howe, Richard Baxter, John Owen, and Vincent Alsop. Firmin's reply, *The Questions between the Conformist and Nonconformist Stated*, extended not only to Stillingfleet but also to earlier polemics by Patrick, Parker, and William Falkner. Firmin by and large continued to hold the position he held in the earlier Restoration debates. He maintained strenuously his simultaneous defense of the

¹² Stillingfleet, *The Unreasonableness of Separation* (1682), 367.

New England Congregationalists and his minimalist English Presbyterianism while allowing for a form of reduced episcopacy, provided that there were more bishops that could effectively act as superintendents or moderators rather than distant administrators. He allowed the legitimacy of set forms of prayer, but argued that they became illegitimate when imposed on all ministers alike, regardless of gifting. Again, there seems to be a lack of fit between what Firmin said he was willing to accept and the terms on which he was willing to accept it. Both Firmin's ultimate conclusions and his emotional tenor regarding the sanctity of conscience made him appear similar to the "Duckling" party of Presbyterians like Alsop and highlighted the growing similarity between these Presbyterians who had lost confidence in the project of comprehension, and Congregationalists like Owen.

In the process of contextualizing Firmin's response to Stillingfleet, Parker, Patrick, and Falkner, this chapter has also shed light on other godly responses to Stillingfleet more than has been done heretofore in the historiography. Although both Sungho Lee and Martin Sutherland have examined the ecclesiological discussions at the root of the polemics of the debate, for divergent reasons their analyses have been incomplete. Sungho Lee's dissertation only examines John Owen's response in detail, whereas Sutherland's work relies on an inadequate analytical framework, compressing all Dissenting ecclesiologies into an "invisiblist" grid and thereby ignoring the theological richness of their ecclesiologies.¹³ Firmin's

¹³ Sungho Lee, "All Subjects of the Kingdom of Christ: John Owen's Conceptions of Christian Unity and Schism" (PhD Dissertation, Calvin Theological Seminary, 2007), 58-65; Martin Sutherland, *Peace, Toleration, and Decay: The Ecclesiology of Later Stuart Dissent* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 5-7, 81-9; Idem, "Strange Fire: John Howe (1630-1705) and the Alienation and Fragmentation of Later Stuart Dissent" (PhD Dissertation, University of Canterbury, 1995), 184-220.

contribution, providing a comprehensive response to the polemics from 1669-1680, enables a much more robust analysis of the hermeneutical and political space inhabited by Dissenters in the early 1680s.

Firmin's other work in the 1680s trained attention on another class of Independents, the Particular and General Baptists. Firmin's arguments, both here and in his writings against the Anglican apologists, reprised much of what he had already argued in the 1650s. The difference, however, was the political context into which these arguments were deployed. In the 1650s, Firmin's narrowly federalist posture on paedobaptism, insisting that the parents be godly and knowledgeable before he would baptize their children and that the only right of baptism the child had inherited in the godly parent, were still somewhat avant garde. Against divines defensive of a national church structure like Cawdrey, Blake, and to a degree Samuel Hudson, Firmin articulated a far more disciplinarian, martial vision of the faith. In the political context of Dissenting institutions, however, Firmin's arguments fell on the conservative end of the spectrum. The Baptists against whom he was arguing all saw the sign of baptism as recalling only the spiritual reality of the regenerate person's consent to follow Christ. It was not a seal and could not effectively convey grace as Firmin, Richard Blinman, Obediah Wills, Samuel Petto, Joseph Whiston, Richard Baxter, and others imagined it could. Firmin and others were defending an older typological hermeneutic that closely correlated circumcision and baptism and allowed for a limited sort of communal piety over against a more demanding, more individualistic Baptist approach to the faith. Firmin and others found themselves arguing for a coherent center to Puritan interpretation absent strong institutions

that could discipline and preserve that center and keep it from unraveling. For Firmin and others, what was at stake was the slippery slope - if the Baptists let go of infant baptism, there was no telling where they would end up. As Richard Baxter put it: “[Anabaptists] seldom stopped at the denial of Infant-Baptism, but have proceeded further to the vilest opinions; and seldom any came to notorious Heresies but by this dore.”¹⁴

The struggle was also over the legacy of primitivism. Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists all agreed that New Testament Christianity was a unified reality and must be reprinted in the contemporary era in order for England to be Reformed, but the questions remained: what was the content of that New Testament Christianity, and at point did the church in antiquity apostasize and cease to offer a reliable *paradosis* of the ancient doctrines of Christianity? For Henry Danvers, Thomas Grantham, and others, the apostasy could be traced to the moment at which the church began baptizing babies who could not profess and live genuine Christianity: “[They] *separate from Rome as the false Church, and yet own their Baptisme, the Foundation Stone thereof.*”¹⁵ Not only that, but in the 1680s and 1690s, the Baptist argument had pastoral plausibility. For Thomas Grantham in particular, the federalist position was needlessly cruel and irrational, insisting upon the justice of God’s condemnation of infants who never had engaged in actual sin. The moral self-evidence of Grantham’s position that God would only hold individuals accountable at the age of rationality, at least in his own eyes, gave it additional hermeutical purchase as the legitimate reading of New Testament

¹⁴ Richard Baxter, *Plain-Scripture Proof of Infants Baptism* (1656), 143.

¹⁵ Henry Danvers, *A Treatise of Baptism* (1673), 258.

Christianity. On this point, the federalists found themselves in a defensive and retrenched posture, leaning heavily on the doctrine of original sin in a context in which original sin made less and less sense to the educated. Firmin's writings against the Baptists in the 1680s and 1690s, intensively focused as they are on responding to the polemics of Henry Danvers and Thomas Grantham, offer a coherent and yet closely circumscribed perspective from which to evaluate the exegetical and theological considerations inherent in the debates between Baptists and federalists in the 1680s and 1690s.

The 1690s also saw Firmin's contribution to the burgeoning dispute over justification between Presbyterians and Independents. By the late 1680s, the Presbyterians and Independents had largely worked out the ecclesiological differences between them for the sake of collaboration sufficiently that they could describe themselves as the "United Ministers formerly Called Presbyterian and Congregational."¹⁶ A common lecture series and a common fund were the fruition of this "Happy Union." The republication of Tobias Crisp's sermons by his son Samuel Crisp, who had secured signatures to these sermons attesting to their authenticity only – not approving their content – unearthed previously papered over theological differences on justification and reopened the "heart divisions" between the parties, however. Richard Baxter and Daniel Williams, among others, advocated what came to be known as "Neonomianism"¹⁷ over against the solifidianism of the Congregationalists and Particular Baptists. The solifidian position, though by far the

¹⁶ John Howe, *Heads of Agreement Assented to by the United Ministers formerly Called Presbyterian and Congregational* (1691),

¹⁷ Isaac Chauncy, *Neonomianism Unmask'd* (1692).

dominant note in Puritan history, was coupled with antinomianism and in particular the erratic behaviors of the Independent minister Richard Davis by these Presbyterians. Into this rancorous dispute Firmin once again refused to accept a partisan label but proposed a solution preponderating toward the Presbyterians. While insisting that justifying faith was the gift of free grace, he reminded Independents that both justifying and sanctifying grace were necessary to salvation, and in the realm of sanctification, the “*Gospel is a Law*,” that is a rule by which one measures godly conversation.¹⁸ Firmin thus attempted to straddle both sides while nonetheless giving greater support to the moralistic emphases of Baxter and Williams, especially in his censure of Richard Davis’s behavior and his correlation of it with the 1630s antinomian controversy in New England. Firmin’s tract has the virtue of encompassing all of the angles of the dispute – it canvasses not only the dispute over justification, but also the particular example of Richard Davis, and it offers his own unique vantage as a godly clergyman who had spent time both in Old and New England.

Firmin’s creative parsing and adjudication of this last dispute in the 1690s is of a piece with the rest of his writings. While taking a backseat to more eminent godly divines and with awareness of his lowly status as a “country divine,” Firmin nonetheless made a substantial contribution to each of the polemic battles to which he addressed himself. His transatlantic perspective gave him some distance from the partisan disputes and allowed him to “argue for peace” among the godly, recognizing the virtues inherent in their divergent perspectives. Because of his

¹⁸ Giles Firmin, *Panergia* (1693), 20.

capaciousness of perspective and the breadth of his career in the latter half of the seventeenth century, Firmin also gives us significant purchase in evaluating the manifold ways in which Puritanism itself altered in the transition to a new moral and political landscape in later Stuart England.

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_____. *Eikon basilike the pourtraicture of His sacred Majestie in his solitudes and sufferings. London, 1649.*

_____. *The Godly man's legacy to the saints upon earth exhibited in the life of that great and able divine, and painful labourer in the word, Mr. Stephen Marshal ... : written by way of a letter to a friend. London, 1680.*

_____. *Jus divinum regiminis ecclesiastici: or, The divine right of church-government, asserted and evidenced by the holy Scriptures: according to the light whereof (besides many particulars mentioned after the preface) 1. The nature of a divine right is delineated. 2. The church-government which is of divine right is described. 3. This description in the several branches of it is explicated and confirmed. 4. The divine right of ecclesiastical censures, officers, and ruling assemblies is manifested. In all which it is apparent, that the Presbyteriall government, by preaching and ruling presbyters, in congregational, classicall and synodall assemblies, may lay the truest claim to a divine right, according to the Scriptures. / By sundry ministers of Christ within the city of London. London, 1646.*

_____. *The Quakers dream: or the Devil's pilgrimage in England: being an infallible relation of their several meetings, shreekings, shakings, quakings, roarings, yellings, howlings, tremblings in the bodies, and risings in the bellies: with a narrative of their several arguments, tenets, principles, and strange doctrine [sic]: the strange and wonderful satanical apparitions, and the appearing of the Devil unto them in the likeness of a black boar, a dog with flaming eye, and a black man without a head, causing the dogs to bark, the swine to cry, and the cattel to run, to the great admiration of all that shall read the same. London, 1655.*

_____. *The Sense of the united nonconforming ministers in and about London concerning some of the erroneous doctrines and irregular practices of Mr. Richard Davis of Rothwell in Northamptonshire. London, 1692.*

_____. *Some Brief Directions for Improvement of Infant Baptism. London, 1678.*

_____. *A testimony of the ministers in the province of Essex, to the truth of Iesus Christ, and to the solemn league and covenant; as also against the errors, heresies, and*

blasphemies of these times, and the toleration of them. Sent up to the ministers within the province of London, subscribers of the first testimony. London, 1648.

_____. *A vindication of the presbyteriall-government, and ministry: together, with an exhortation, to all the ministers, elders, and people, within the bounds of the province of London, whether joyning with us, or separating from us. Published, by the ministers, and elders, met together in a provinciall assembly, Novemb. 2d. 1649. Wherein, amongst other things, these ensuing particulars are contained; 1. That there is a Church-government, by divine right. 2. That the magistrate, is not the fountain of Church-government. 3. That the presbyterial-government, is by divine right. 4. The inconveniencies of the congregationall-way. 5. That the ruling-elder is by divine right. 6. That it is the will of Jesus Christ, that all sorts of persons should give an account of their faith, to the minister, and elders, before admission to the Lords Supper; ... 7. Directions to the elders, for the right managing of their office. 8. Directions to such as are admitted to the Lords Supper, ... 9. Rules to preserve people, from the errours of these times. 10. That separation from our churches, is justly charged with schisme. 11. That ministers formerly ordained by bishops, need no new ordination. 12. The necessity and usefulness of catechizing. Licensed, entred, and printed according to order. London, 1649.*

Baillie, Robert. *A dissuasive from the errours of the time vvherein the tenets of the principall sects, especially of the independents, are drawn together in one map, for the most part in the words of their own authours, and their maine principles are examined by the touch-stone of the Holy Scriptures. London, 1646.*

Baxter, Richard. *Aphorismes of justification with their explication annexed : wherein also is opened the nature of the covenants, satisfaction, righteousness, faith, works, &c. : published especially for the use of the church of Kederminster in Worcestershire / by their unworthy teacher, Ri. Baxter. London, 1649.*

_____. *A Call to the Unconverted, to Turn and Live, and Accept of Mercy While Mercy May Still be Had (North-Allerton, 1802).*

_____. *Church-history of the government of bishops and their councils abbreviated including the chief part of the government of Christian princes and popes, and a true account of the most troubling controversies and heresies till the Reformation ... / by Richard Baxter. London, 1680.*

_____. *The cure of church-divisions, or, Directions for weak Christians to keep them from being dividers or troublers of the church with some directions to the pastors how to deal with such Christians / by Richard Baxter. London, 1670.*

_____. *The duty of heavenly meditation reviewed by Richard Baxter at the invitation of Mr. Giles Firmin's exceptions in his book entituled, The real Christian. London, 1671.*

_____. *Five disputations of church-government, and worship.* By Richard Baxter. London, 1659.

_____. *The grand debate between the most reverend bishops and the Presbyterian divines appointed by His Sacred Majesty as commissioners for the review and alteration of the Book of common prayer, &c. : being an exact account of their whole proceedings : the most perfect copy.* London, 1661.

_____. *More proofs of infants church-membership and consequently their right to baptism, or, A second defence of our infant rights and mercies in three parts ... / by Richard Baxter.* London, 1675.

_____. *The nonconformists plea for peace, or, An account of their judgment in certain things in which they are misunderstood written to reconcile and pacifie such as by mistaking them hinder love and concord / by Richard Baxter.* London, 1679.

_____. *Plain Scripture proof of infants church-membership and baptism: being the arguments prepared for (and partly managed in) the publick dispute with Mr. Tombes at Bewdley on the first day of Jan. 1649. With a ful reply to what he then answered, and what is contained in his sermon since preached, in his printed books, his M.S. on 1 Cor. 7.14. which I saw, against Mr. Marshall, against these arguments. With a reply to his valedictory oration at Bewdley; and a corrective for his antidote. By Richard Baxter, a minister of Christ for his church at Kederminster. Constrained unavoidably hereto by Mr. Tombes his importunity: by frequent letters, messengers, in his pulpit, and at last in print, calling out for my arguments, and charging the deniall upon my conscience; with an appendix of animadversions on Mr. Bedfords tractate, and part of Dr. Wards, which seem to give too much to baptism.* London, 1656.

_____. *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter,* Edited by William Orme. 4 Vols. London, 1838.

_____. *Reliquiae Baxterianae, or, Mr. Richard Baxters narrative of the most memorable passages of his life and times faithfully publish'd from his own original manuscript by Matthew Sylvester.* London, 1696.

_____. *Rich. Baxter's admonition to Mr. William Eyre of Salisbury; concerning his miscarriages in a book lately written for the justification of infidels, against M. Benj. Woodbridge, M. James Cranford and the author.* London, 1654.

_____. *Rich. Baxters Apology against the modest exceptions of Mr T. Blake. And the digression of Mr G. Kendall. Whereunto is added animadversions on a late dissertation of Ludiomaeus Colvinus, aliàs, Ludovicus Molinaeus, M. Dr Oxon. And an admonition of Mr W. Eyre of Salisbury. With Mr Crandon's anatomy for satisfaction of Mr Caryl.* London, 1654.

_____. *Rich. Baxter's review of the state of Christian's infants whether they should be entered in covenant with God by baptism ... or whether Christ, the Saviour of the world, hath shut all mankind out of his visible kingdom ... 'till they come of age? : occasioned by the importunity of Mr. E. Hutchinson (and of Mr. Danvers and Mr. Tombes) who called him to this review in order to his retractation [sic].* London, 1676.

_____. *Richard Baxters answer to Dr. Edward Stillingfleet's charge of separation containing, I. Some queries necessary for the understanding of his accusation. II. A reply to his letter which denyeth a solution. III. An answer to his printed sermon. Humbly tendred, I. To himself; II. To the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor and the court of aldermen, III. To the readers of his accusation: the forum where we are accused.* London, 1680.

_____. *The right method for a settled peace of conscience, and spiritual comfort in 32 directions : written for the use of a troubled friend / and now published by Richard Baxter.* London, 1653.

_____. *Sacrilegious desertion of the holy ministry rebuked, and tolerated preaching of the gospel vindicated, against the reasonings of a confident questionist, in a book called Toleration not abused; with counsil to the nonconformists, and petition to the pious conformists / by one that is consecrated to the sacred ministry, and is resolved not to be a deserter of it.* London, 1672.

_____. *The saints everlasting rest, or, A treatise of the blessed state of the saints in their enjoyment of God in glory wherein is shewed its excellency and certainty ... / by Richard Baxter.* 10th ed., London, 1669.

_____. *The Scripture Gospel defended, and Christ, grace, and free justification vindicated against the libertines ... in two books : the first, a breviare of fifty controversies about justification ... : the second upon the sudden reviving of antinomianism ... and the re-printing of Dr. Crisp's sermons with additions.* London, 1690.

Birch, Thomas. *The Life of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury. Compiled Chiefly from His Original Papers and Letters.* 2nd ed. London, 1753.

Blake, Thomas. *The covenant sealed. Or, A treatise of the sacraments of both covenants, polemical and practical. Especially of the sacraments of the covenant of grace. In which, the nature of them is laid open, the adaequate subject is largely inquired into, respective to right and proper interest. to fitnessse for admission to actual participation. Their necessity is made known. Their whole use and efficacy is set forth. Their number in Old and New Testament-times is determined. With several necessary and useful corollaries. Together with a brief answer to Reverend Mr.*

Baxter's apology, in defence of the treatise of the covenant. / By Thomas Blake, M.A. pastor of Tamworth, in the counties of Stafford and Warwick. London, 1655.

_____. *Vindiciae foederis; or, A treatise of the covenant of God entered with man-kinde, in the severall kindes and degrees of it in which the agreement and respective differences of the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace, of the old and new covenant are discust. The conditions of the covenant of grace on mans part, are assigned and asserted. The just latitude and extent held forth, and against all opposites defended. Several corollaries containing many heads of divinity, now controverted; and practical points singularly usefull inferred. In particular the necessity of a constant settled ministry (to bring men into covenant, and to bring them up to the termes of it,) and of schooles, and nurseries of learning, and an orderly call in tendency to it. Three scripture-texts by Mr. John Tombes in the first part of his Antipaedobaptisme solely handled, and totally perverted, are fully vindicated. Infant-baptisme in that latitude, as now in use in reformed churches, maintained. By Thomas Blake, minister of the Gospel. London, 1653.*

Blinman, Richard [Eramnaethes]. *An essay tending to issue the controversie about infant baptism from the parity, at least, of Scripture-light concerning infant-baptim [sic] with that of women's being admitted to the Lord's Supper, shewing that there is as good grounds out of Scripture for the one as for the other : occasioned by a tender made by H.D. in his late book against infant-baptism who is willing to put the whole controversie concerning it, upon this issue : together with an answer to the most material things in that book. London, 1674.*

_____. *[A] rejoinder to Mr. Henry Danvers his brief friendly reply to my answer about infant-baptism / by Richard Blinman. London, 1675.*

Bolde, Thomas. *Rhetorick restrained, or, Dr. John Gauden Lord Bishop elect of Exeter, his Considerations of the liturgy of the Church of England considered and clouded. By Thomas Bolde, Exon. Attested by Zech. Crofton Presbyter. London, 1660.*

Brooks, Thomas. *The Complete Works of Thomas Brooks.* Edited by Alexander Grosart. Edinburgh, 1866.

Buchanan, Colin, ed. *The Savoy Conference Revisited: The Proceedings Taken from the Grand Debate of 1661 and the Works of Richard Baxter.* Cambridge: Grove Books Unlimited, 2002.

Bunyan, John. *A confession of my faith and a reason of my practice, or, With who, and who not, I can hold church-fellowship, or the communion of saints. London, 1672.*

_____. *A defence of the doctrine of iustification by faith in Jesus Christ shewing true gospel-holiness flows from thence, or, Mr. Fowler's pretended design of Christianity proved to be nothing more then to trample under foot the blood of the Son of God, and the idolizing of man's own righteousness : as also how while he pretends to*

be a minister of the Church of England he overthroweth the ... doctrine contain'd in the 10th, 11th, and 13th of the Thirty Nine Articles of the same, and that he falleth in with the Quaker and Romanist against them / by John Bunyan. London, 1672.

_____. *Differences in judgment about vwater-baptism, no bar to communion, or, To communicate with saints, as saints, proved lawful in answer to a book written by the Baptists, and published by Mr. T.P. and Mr. W.K. entituled, Some serious reflections on that part of Mr. Bunyan's confession of faith, touching church-communion with unbaptized believers : wherein, their objections and arguments are answered, and the doctrine of communion still asserted and vindicated : here is also Mr. Henry's Jesse's judgment in the case, fully declaring the doctrine I have asserted / by John Bunyan. London, 1673.*

_____. *The Works of that Eminent Servant of Christ, John Bunyan, Minister of the Gospel, and Formerly Pastor of a Congregation at Bedford. 3 Vols. New Haven, 1830.*

Burgess, Anthony. *The true doctrine of justification asserted & vindicated from the errors of many, and more especially papists and Socinians. Or A treatise of the natural righteousness of God, and imputed righteousness of Christ. By Anthony Burgesse pastor of the church at Sutton-Coldfield in Warwickshire. London, 1654.*

Burges, Cornelius. *No sacrilege nor sin to alienate or purchase cathedral lands, as such: or, A vindication of, not onely the late purchasers; but, of the antient nobility and gentry; yea, of the Crown it self, all deeply wounded by the false charge of sacrilege upon new purchasers. By C. Burges, D.D. London, 1660.*

Burroughs, Edward. *Truth defended. Or, Certain accusations answered, cast upon us who are called Quakers; by the teachers of the world, and the people of this generation. With a cleare discovery, who are the false prophets, and when they came in. And who they are that deny Christ, and that preach another gospel. And who deny the scriptures, churches, ministers, and magistrates, whereby the magistrates and people of this nation may see they justifie that which the scripture condemns, and condemne that which the holy men of God justified. / By a servant of the Lord, whose name in the flesh is, Edward Burrough. London, 1654.*

Burroughs, Jeremiah. *Irenicum, to the lovers of truth and peace. Heart-divisions opened in the causes and evils of them: with cautions that we may not be hurt by them, and endeavours to heal them. London, 1645.*

_____. *A sermon preached before the Right Honourable the House of Peeres, in the Abbey at Westminster, the 26. of Novemb. 1645. Being the day appointed for solemne and publique humiliation. / By Jer: Burroughes. Published by order of the said House. London, 1645.*

Burton, Henry. *Jesu-vvorship confuted, or, Certain arguments against bowing at the name Jesus proving it to be idolatrous and superstitious and so utterly unlawful : with objections to the contrary fully answered / by H.B.* London, 1660.

Calamy, Edmund. *An abridgment of Mr. Baxter's History of his life and times. With an account of many others of those Worthy Ministers who were Ejected, after the Restauration of King Charles II.* 2 Vols. London, 1702.

Calamy, Edmund. *The art of divine meditation, or, A discourse of the nature, necessity, and excellency thereof with motives to, and rules for the better performance of that most important Christian duty : in several sermons on Gen. 24:63 / by Edmund Calamy.* London, 1680.

_____. *Jus divinum ministerii evangelici. Or The divine right of the Gospel--ministry: divided into two parts. The first part containing a justification of the Gospel--ministry in general. The necessity of ordination thereunto by imposition of hands. The unlawfulness of private mens assuming to themselves either the office or work of the ministry without a lawfull call and ordination. The second part containing a justification of the present ministers of England, both such as were ordained during the prevalency of episcopacy from the foul aspersion of anti-christianism: and those who have been ordained since its abolition, from the unjust imputation of novelty: proving that a bishop and presbyter are all one in Scripture; and that ordination by presbyters is most agreeable to the Scripture-patern. Together with an appendix, wherein the judgement and practice of antiquity about the whole matter of episcopacy, and especially about the ordination of ministers, is briefly discussed. Published by the Provincial Assembly of London.* London, 1654.

Camm, John, and Francis Howgill, *This was the word of the Lord which Iohn Camm, and Francis Howgill was moved to declare and write to Oliver Cromwell, who is named Lord-Protector: shewing the cause why they came to speak to him: and shewing that they came not to petition him for any thing, but for the welfare of Sion, and for the righteous seeds sake; and that those laws which were given forth by the will of man, may be taken away; that the law may go forth of Sion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; and so the kingdoms of the world may become the kingdom of Christ.* London, 1654.

Cawdrey, Daniel. *Bowing towards the altar upon religious reasons impleaded as grossely superstitious being an answer to Dr. Duncons determination, lately reprinted / by D. Cawdrey.* London, 1661.

_____. *The inconsistencie of the independent way, with Scripture and it self. Manifested in a threefold discourse, I. Vindicia vindiciarum, with M. Cotton. II. A review of M. Hookers Survey of church-discipline. The first part. III. A diatribe with the same M. Hooker concerning baptism of infants of non-confederate parents, cap. 2. Of his third part. / By Daniel Cawdrey.* London, 1651.

_____. *Independencie a great schism proved against Dr. Owen, his apology in his tract of schism : as also an appendix to the former discourse, shewing the inconstancy of the Dr. and the inconsistency of his former and present opinions / by D. Cawdrey . London, 1657.*

_____. *A sober ansvver, to a serious question. Propounded by Mr. G. Firmin minister of the church in Shalford in Essex. viz. Whether the ministers of England are bound, by the Word of God, to baptise the children of all such parents, which say, they believe in Jesus Christ: but are grosly ignorant, scandalous in their conversation, scoffers at godliness, and refuse to submit to church-discipline, the negative is not sufficiently defended. Which may serve also as an appendix to the diatribe with Mr. Hooker, lately published, concerning the baptisme of infants, of parents not confoederate. By Daniel Cavvdrey pastour of the church at Great Billing in Northampton-shire. Licensed, printed, and entred, according to order. London, 1652.*

_____. *Vindiciae clavium, or, A vindication of the keyes of the kingdome of heaven into the hands of the right owners being some animadversions upon a tract of Mr. I.C. called, The keyes of the kingdome of heaven : as also upon another tract of his called, The way of the churches of Nevv-England ... / by an earnest well-wisher to the truth. London, 1645.*

Chauncy, Isaac. *Neonomianism unmask'd, or, The ancient gospel pleaded against the other, called a new law or gospel in a theological debate, occasioned by a book lately wrote by Mr. Dan. Williams, entituled, Gospel-truth stated and vindicated ... / by Isaac Chauncy. London, 1692.*

Church of England. *Articles to be enquired of in the Diocesse of Norwich in the first visitation of the Right Reverend Father in God, Edward, Lord Bishop of Norwich. London, 1662.*

_____. *Articles of visitation and enquiry concerning matters ecclesiasticall according to the laws and canons of the Church of England, exhibited to the ministers, church-wardens, and side-men of every parish within the diocese of Worcester / by the right Reverend Father in God, John, Lord Bishop of Worcester. London, 1662.*

Clagett, William. *A reply to a pamphlet called The mischief of impositions which pretends to answer the Dean of St. Paul's sermon concerning The mischief of separation. London, 1681.*

Cole, Thomas. *A discourse of Christian religion, in sundry points preached at the merchants lecture in Broadstreet / by Thomas Cole. London, 1692.*

_____. *The incomprehensibleness of imputed righteousness, for justification, by humane reason, till enlightned by the spirit of God preached in two sermons at the Merchants-Lecture in Broadstreet / by Thomas Cole. London, 1692.*

Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society. Fourth Series. Volume 4. Boston, 1865.

Collinges, John. *The improvableness of water-baptism, or, A discourse concerning the gravity and seriousness of the action and the usefulness of the sacred institution of baptism instructing all parents how great a thing they do when they bring their children to that holy ordinance, and all persons, whether young or old, what obligations their baptism hath brought them under, what wrath it hath exposed wicked and impenitent persons to, and what use they may make of their baptism for confirmation of their faith, and quickening them to repentance and an holy life : discoursed from Rom. 6:3,4, by way of sermon / by John Collinges.* London, 1681.

_____. *A reasonable account why some pious, nonconforming ministers in England judge it sinful for them to perform their ministerial acts, in publick, solemn prayer by the prescribed forms of others wherein several of their arguments are modestly propounded, opened and justified against pretended answers given to them, either by Ireneus Freeman, or Mr. Falconer, in his book entituled Liberitas ecclesiastica, or others : the strength also of the several arguments brought by them, for the lawfulness of forms to be used universally by ministers, in their publick ministrations, is fairly tried.* London, 1679.

Cotton, John. *The Doctrine of the Church (1642) The doctrine of the church, to which is committed the keyes of the kingdome of Heaven. Wherein is demonstrated by way of question and answer, what a visible church is, according to the order of the Gospel: and what officers, members, worship and government, Christ hath ordayned in the New Testament. / by ... John Cotton.* London, 1642.

_____. *The grounds and ends of the baptisme of the children of the faithfull. Opened in a familiar discourse by way of a dialogue, or brotherly conference. / By the learned and faithfull minister of Christ, John Cotton, teacher of the Church of Boston in New-England.* London, 1646.

_____. *The new covenant, or, A treatise unfolding the order and manner of the giving and receiving of the covenant of grace to the elect as also, shewing the difference between the legallist and the true Christian : being the substance of sundry sermons / preached by Mr. Cotton.* London, 1654.

_____. *The result of a synod at Cambridge in New-England, anno 1646 concerning the [brace] power of magistrates in matters of the first table, nature & power of synods, and other matters thereunto belonging.* London, 1654.

_____. *The true constitution of a particular visible church, proved by Scripture. Wherein is briefly demonstrated by questions and answers what officers, worship, and government Christ hath ordained in his church. / By that reverend and learned divine, Mr. Iohn Cotton, B.D. and pastor of Boston in New England.* London, 1642.

_____. *The vway of the churches of Christ in New-England, or, The vway of churches walking in brotherly equalitie, or co-ordination, without subjection of one church to another measured and examined by the golden reed of the sanctuary, containing a full declaration of the church-way in all particulars / by Mr. J. Cotton.* London, 1645.

_____. *The way of Congregational churches cleared in two treatises : in the former, from the historical aspersions of Mr. Robert Baylie, in his book called, A disswasive from the errors of the time, in the latter, from some contradictions of Vindicae Clavium, and from some mis-constructions of learned Mr. Rutherford, in his book intituled, The due right of presbyteries / by Mr. John Cotton.* London, 1648.

Crisp, Samuel. *Christ made sin II Cor. V, xxi evinc't from Scripture, upon occasion of an exception taken at Pinnars-Hall, 28 January, 1689, at re-printing the sermons of Dr. Tobias Crisp ... : together with an epistle to the auditory of the exception, and Dr. Crisp's own answer to an exception against his assertion of Christ being the first gift to a believer, before the acting of grace in him.* London, 1691.

Crisp, Tobias. *Christ alone exalted being the compleat works of Tobias Crisp, D.D., containing XLII sermons ... which were formerly printed in three small volumes ... to which is now added ten sermons, whereof eight were never before printed faithfully transcribed from his own notes, which is all that will ever be printed of the said Doctor's.* London, 1690.

Crofton, Zachary. *Altar-worship, or Bowing to the communion table considered as to the novelty vanity iniquity malignity charged upon it. In an antithesis to the determination of Dr. Eleazar Duncon, lately translated, and sent into the world in a Romish dress, with a cross in the front and fine. By Z. Crofton Presbyter, but proved enemy to all fanaticks.* London, 1661.

_____. *Analepsis anelephthe, the fastning of St. Peters fetters, by seven links, or propositions. Or, The efficacy and extent of the solemn league and covenant asserted and vindicated, against the doubts and scruples of Dr. John Gauden's Anonymous questionist. St. Peters bonds not only loosed, but annihilated by Mr. John Russel, attested by John Gauden, D.D. The league illegal, falsly fathered on Dr. Daniel Featley: and the reasons of the University of Oxford for not taking (now pleaded to discharge the obligation of) the solemn league and covenant. By Zech. Crofton, minister of the gospel at S. Botolphs Algate, London.* London, 1660.

_____. *Analepsis, or Saint Peters bonds abide: for rhetorick worketh no release, is evidenced in a serious and sober consideration of Dr. John Gauden's sence and solution of the Solemn League and Covenant, so far as it relates to the government of the church by episcopacy. By Zech. Crofton.* London, 1660.

_____. *Berith Anti-Baal, or Zach. Croftons appearance before the prelate-justice of peace, vainly pretending to binde the covenant and covenaners to their good behaviour. By way of rejoynder to, and animadversion on Doctor John Gauden's reply or vindication of his analysis, from the (by him reputed) pitiful cavils and objections; but really proved powerful and convincing exceptions of Mr. Zach. Croftons Analepsis. / By the author of the Analepsis, and (not by the Dr observed) Analepsis anelephthe, to the continuing of St. Peter's bonds, and fastning his fetters against papal and prelatical power.* London, 1661.

_____. *A serious review of presbyters re-ordination by bishops: in a letter written unto a minister in Warwickshire, resolving this case of conscience, whether a minister ordained by presbyters, may with a good conscience be reordained by a bishop, presbyter, and deacon, so that they will declare their ordination to meerly-accumulative, and the man shall not renounce his ordination by it.* London, 1661.

_____. *The vertue and value of baptism in which the dignity and duty of [baptism], the due right of infants to [baptism], and their right above that of grown persons by [baptism], the degrading and destructive principles and practices of [baptism] are / catechetically propounded, plainly preached, and now published as an antidote against all baptism-despising dictates by Zach. Crofton.* London, 1663.

Danson, Thomas. *A friendly debate between Satan and Sherlock containing a discovery of the unsoundness of Mr. William Sherlocks principles in a late book entituled A discourse concerning the knowledge of Jesus Christ &c., by this only medium, that they afford the Devil the same grounds for his hope of salvation that they do mankind, and so subvert the Gospel and transform Christianity into Mahumetanism / by an hearty enemy of Mahumetanism.* London, 1676.

Danvers, Henry. *Innocency and truth vindicated, or, A sober reply to Mr. Will's answer to a late treatise of baptisme wherein the authorities and antiquities for believers and against infants baptism are defended ... : with a brief answer to Mr. Blinmans essay / by Henry Danvers.* London, 1675.

_____. *The mysterie of magistracy unvailed, or, God's ordinance of magistracy asserted, cleared, and vindicated, from heathenish domination, tyranous and antichristian usurpation, despisers of dignities, and contemners of authorities by an unworthy servant and subject of Jesus Christ.* London, 1663.

_____. *A rejoynder to Mr. Wills, his Vindiciae wherein the antiquity for believers and novelty of infant baptism is further confirmed : as also his groundless appeal distinctly answer'd, and the forgeries and mistakes boasted of, still found to be his own : with an appeal to his conscience about the same / by H. Danvers.* London, 1675.

_____. *A second reply in defence of the Treatise of baptism (wherein M. Baxters More-proofs are found no proofs) : in two parts, the first defending the*

antiquities against his charge of forgery, the second justifying the charge of slander, contradiction and popery against his writings : as also an admonition to M.B., and some reflections by Mr. Tombs upon Mr. B's More proofs : with a rejoinder to Mr Will's his Vindiciae, and an answer to his appeal / by H. Danvers. London, 1675.

_____. *A third reply, or, A short return to Mr. Baxters brief answer to my second reply, in his postscript to a late treatise of justification wherein his contradictory and slanderous way of writing is further detected / by H. D'Anvers. London, 1676.*

_____. *A treatise of baptism wherein, that of believers, and that of infants, is examined by the Scriptures : with the history of both out of antiquity : making it appear, that infants-baptism was not practised for near three hundred years, nor enjoyed as necessary, till four hundred years after Christ : with the fabulous traditions, and erroneous grounds upon which it was, by the Pope's Cannons (with gossips, chrysm, exorcism, baptizing of churches and bells, and other popish rites) founded : and that the famous Waldensian and old British churches, Lollards and Wickliffians, an other christians witnessed against it : with The history of Christianity amongst the ancient Britains and Waldensians / by Hen. D'Anvers. London, 1674.*

_____. *A treatise of baptism wherein that of believers and that of infants is examined by the Scriptures, with the history of both out of antiquity : making it appear that infants baptism was not practised for near 300 years after Christ ... and that the famous Waldensian and old British churches and Christians witnessed against it : with the examination of the stories about Thomas Munzer, and John a Leyden : as also, the history of Christianity amongst the ancient Britains and Waldenses : and, a brief answer to Mr. Bunyan about communion with persons unbaptized / by H.D. London, 1673.*

_____. *A treatise of baptism wherein that of believers and that of infants is examined by the Scriptures, with the history of both out of antiquity : making it appear that infants baptism was not practised for near 300 years after Christ &c. : with a reply to Mr. Wills in defence of the said treatise and a second reply to Mr. Baxter in defence of the same : as also a rejoinder to Mr. Wills his Vindiciae, with an answer to his appeal / by H. D'Anvers. The Baptists answer to Mr. Will's his appeal : with H.D.'s postscript. London, 1675.*

Davenant, John. *Exposition of the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians*, trans. Josiah Allport, 2 vols. London, 1831.

_____. *A Treatise on Justification or the Disputatio de Justitia Habituali et Actuali, of The Right Rev. John Davenant, D.D., Bishop of Salisbury, and Lady Margaret's Professor, Cambridge; Delivered to the Divinity Students in that University; Published First in the Year 1631, and Now Translated from the Original Latin, Together with Translations of the "Determinations" of the Same Prelate. Translated by Josiah Allport. 2 Vols. London, 1846.*

Davis, Richard. *The true spring of gospel, sight and sense of sin, Jesus Christ and Him crucified evidenced by his spirit in his Word : with two funeral sermons on the death of Mr. John Bigg, and a narrative of his conversion.* London, 1689.

_____. *Truth and innocency vindicated against falshood & malice exprest in a late virulent pamphlet intituled, (A true account of a most horrid and dismal plague began at Rothwell, &c.) without printer's licenser's or author's name thereunto) : together with an account of the Kettering visitation / by R. Davis ... ; to which is added, Mr. Rob. Betson's answer to so much as concerns him in the said libel.* London, 1692.

_____. *A vindication of the doctrine of justification and union before faith wherein the great truth of the grace of Our Lord Jesus in his representing the person of his elect on the cross, of his suffering for them as their representative is asserted and cleared, and the eternal justification and union of the Lord's chosen people is plainly stated and proved : also the assurance of faith is evidently confirmed : with a clear demonstraction how these precious Gospel truths do promote holiness and sanctification in the hearts and conversations of true believers / by R. Davis.* London, 1698.

De Laune, Thomas. *Truth defended. or, A triple answer to the late triumvirates opposition in their three pamphlets viz. Mr. Baxter's review, Mr. Wills his censure, Mr. Whiston's postscript to his essay, &c. With Mr. Hutchinson's letter to Mr. Baxter a little before his death. And a postscript in answer to Mr. William Walker's modest plea for infants baptism.* By Tho. DeLaune. London, 1677.

Duncon, Eleazar. *De adoratione Dei versus altare: or That pious and devout ceremony of bowing towards the atlar [sic] vindicated as lawfull, pious and laudable. Being the substance of a divinity lecture made some years since at Cambridge in Latin.* By Eleazar Duncon D.D. and chaplain to his late most excellent Majesty. Dedicated to the Right Reverend Father in God John Lord Bishop of Exeter. London, 1661.

Edwards, Thomas. *The first and second part of Gangraena, or, A catalogue and discovery of many of the errors, heresies, blasphemies and pernicious practices of the sectaries of this time, vented and acted in England in these four last years also a particular narration of divers stories, remarkable passages, letters : an extract of many letters, all concerning the present sects : together with some observations upon and corollaries from all the fore-named premisses / by Thomas Edwards.* London, 1646.

Falkner, William. *Libertas ecclesiastica, or, A discourse, vindicating the lawfulness of those things, which are chiefly excepted against in the Church of England especially in its liturgie and worship : and manifesting their agreeableness with the doctrine and practice both of ancient and modern churches / by William Falkner.* London, 1677.

Featley, Daniel. *The gentle lash, or The vindication of Dr Featley, a knowne champion of the Protestant religion. Also seven articles exhibited against him. With his answer thereunto. Together with the said Doctor his manifesto and challenge.* London, 1644.

_____. *The league illegal. Wherein the late Solemn League and Covenant is seriously examined, scholastically and solidly confuted: for the right informing of weak and tender consciences, and the undeceiving of the erroneous. Written long since in prison, by Daniel Featley D.D. and never until now made known to the world. Published by John Faireclough, vulgò Featley, chaplain to the Kings most Excellent Majesty.* London, 1660.

_____. *Sacra nemesis, the Levites scourge, or, Mercurius [brace] Britan. Civicus [brace] disciplin'd. Also diverse remarkable disputes and resolves in the Assembly of Divines related, episcopacy asserted, truth righted, innocency vindicated against detraction.* London, 1644.

Finch, Martin. *An answer to Mr. Thomas Grantham's book, called, A dialogue between the Baptist and the Presbyterian by Martin Finch.* London, 1691.

Firmin, Giles. *The answer of Giles Firmin, to the vain and unprofitable question put to him, and charged upon him by Mr. Grantham, in his book, entituled, The infants advocate : viz. whether the greatest part of dying infants shall be damned? : Which advocate, while he shuts all infants out of the visible church, and denies them baptism, opens heaven to all dying infants, justifying those of his party, who admit them all as he doth, into Heaven without regeneration.* London, 1689.

_____. *The liturgical considerator considered, or, A brief view of Dr. Gauden's considerations touching the liturgy of the Church of England wherein the reasons by him produced for imposing the said liturgy upon all, are found to be so weak, his defence of things offensive in it so slight, the arguments against the liturgy by himselfe afforded, are so strong, that some, who upon His Majesties declaration did incline to the liturgy, are now further from it, by reading his wordy discourse about it : also some reasons humbly rendered, why many ministers, as yet cannot conform to that liturgy, but not out of disloyalty, pride, ingratitude, peevishness, nor schismatical petulancy, as the sarcastical pen of this uncharitable doctor hath published ... / by G.F.* London, 1661.

_____. *Meditations upon Mr. Baxter's review of his treatise of the duty of heavenly meditation in answer to the exceptions of Giles Firmin, against some things in that treatise concerning meditation : published for the satisfaction of many sincere Christians troubled at their inability to perform that duty as the said author (and some others with him) have described it and charged it / by Giles Firmin.* London, 1672.

_____. *Panergia a brief review of Mr. Davis's vindication, giving no satisfaction : being for the greatest part of it, no direct answer to what is charged upon him, but meer evasions, to deceive his reader : things that tends to practise, are chiefly*

insisted upon, other things but lightly touched : to which is added remarks upon some passages of Mr. Crisp in his book entituled Christ alone exalted : the reason of the authors engaging in this controversy, is given in the preface to the reader / by Giles Firmin. London, 1693.

_____. *The plea of the children of believing-parents for their interest in Abraham's covenant, their right to church-member-ship with their parents, and consequently their title to baptism. The cause of publishing this discourse after so many learned men have laboured in this province, is declared in the preface to the reader. By Giles Firmin. London, 1683.*

_____. *Presbyterial ordination vindicated. In a brief and sober discourse concerning episcopacy, as claiming greater power, and more eminent offices by divine right, then presbyterie. The arguments of the Reverend Bishop Dr Davenant in his determination for such episcopacy are modestly examined. And arguments for the validity of presbyterial ordination added. With a brief discourse concerning imposed forms of prayer, and ceremonies. Written by G.F. minister of the gospel in defence of his own ordination, being questioned, because it was performed by Presbyters. London, 1660.*

_____. *The questions between the conformist and nonconformist, truly stated, and briefly discussed Dr. Falkner, The friendly debate &c., examined and answered : together with a discourse about separation, and some animadversions upon Dr. Stillingfleet's book entituled, The unreasonableness of separation : observations upon Dr. Templers sermon preached at a visitation in Cambridge : a brief vindication of Mr. Stephen Marshal. London, 1681.*

_____. *The real Christian, or, A treatise of effectual calling wherein the work of God is drawing the soul to Christ ... : to which is added, in the epistle to the reader, a few words concerning Socinianisme ... / by Giles Firmin. London, 1670.*

_____. *Of schism. Parochial congregations in England, and ordination by imposition of hands. Wherein Dr. Owen's discovery of the true nature of schism is briefly and friendly examined, together with Mr. Noyes of New England his arguments against imposition of hands in ordination. / By Giles Firmin, sometime of new England. London, 1658.*

_____. *Scripture-warrant sufficient proof for infant-baptism: being a reply to Mr. Grantham's Presumption no proof Wherein his pretended answer to two questions propounded to the Anabaptists by G.F. is examined, and found to be no answer. With a brief discourse upon infant-regeneration, denied by Anabaptists. Baptism without dipping valid. By Giles Firmin. London, 1688.*

_____. *Separation examined: or, a treatise vvherein the grounds for separation from the ministry and churches of England are weighed, and found too light. The practise proved to be not onely unwarrantable, but likewise so hurtful to the churches,*

that church-reformation cannot with any comfort go forward, so long as such separation is tolerated. Also an humble request presented to the congregational divines, that since the differences between them and the classical-divines are very small they would please to strike in with the classical-divines in carrying on the worke of reformation, before the inundation of these corrupt opinions, have destroyed both ordinances and religion. / By Gi. Firmin minister to the church in Shalford in essex. London, 1652.

_____. *A serious question stated whether the ministers of England are bound by the word of God to baptize the children of all such parents which say they beleeve in Jesus Christ, but are grosly ignorant, scandalous in their conversations, scoffers at godliness, and refuse to submit to church-discipline? the negative (with submission to better judgements) is modestly defended, some things that concerne our congregationall churhes are, in the Epistle to the reader briefly touched : as also a little addition made to the contriversie against the Anabaptists, in the following discourse / by G. Firmin. London, 1651.*

_____. *A sober reply to the sober answer of Reverend Mr. Cawdrey, to A serious question propounded viz. whether the ministers of England are bound by the word of God to baptise the children of all such parents, which say they believe in Jesus Christ, but are grosly ignorant, scandalous in their conversations, scoffers at godliness, and refuse to submit to church dicipline ... : also, the question of Reverend Mr. Hooker concerning the baptisme of infants : with a post-script to Reverend Mr. Blake / by G.I. Firmin. London, 1653.*

_____. *Some remarks upon the Anabaptist answer (sold by John Harris) to the Athenian mercuries: and some upon his answer, who styles himself Philalethes Pasiphilus. London, 1692.*

_____. *Stablisning against shaking: or, A discovery of the Prince of Darknesse (scarcely) transformed into an angel of light, powerfully now working in the deluded people called, Quakers: with a sober answer to their railings against ministers for receiving maintenance from their people. Being the substance of one sermon preached Feb. 17. 1655. at Shalford in Essex. / By Giles Firmin (pastour of the church there) upon occasion of the Quakers troubling those parts. London, 1656.*

_____. *Tythes vindicated from anti-christianisme and oppression. Or A brief discourse concerning ministers maintenance and tythes. Wherein is proved, that, paying and receiving of tythes doe not deny Christ to be come in the flesh, as the Kentish petitioners to the Parliament, Anno 1651. and with them now the Quakers doe clamorously affirm: choosing rather to lye in prison then pay tythes, as being a testimony that Christ is come in the flesh. With a short caveat to the weaker sort of people to beware of these deluded and deluding Quakers. By G. Firmin pastor of the church in Shalford in Essex. London, 1659.*

_____. *Weighty questions discussed I. Whether imposition of hands in separating a person to the work of the ministry be necessary?, II. Whether it be essential to the right constitution of a particular church, that the teaching elders and the members meet alwayes in one place? : whereunto is added a prediction of Mr. Daniel Rogers, minister in Essex, long before the beheading King Charles I and Arch-Bishop Laud, foretelling that they should not dye a natural death / by Giles Firmin. London, 1692.*

Fisher, Edward. *The marrovv of modern divinity touching both the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace : with their use and end, both in the time of the Old Testament, and in the time of the New. Wherein every one may clearly see how far forth he bringeth the law into the case of justification, and so deserveth the name of legalist; and how far forth he rejecteth the law in the case of sanctification, and so deserveth the name of antinomist. With the middle path betwixt them both, which by Jesus Christ leadeth to eternall life. In a dialogue betwixt Evangelista, a minister of the Gospel. Nomista, a legalist. Antinomista, an antinomian. And Neophytus, a young Christian. / By E.F. London, 1645.*

Flavel, John. *The Whole Works of the Reverend John Flavel, Minister at Dartmouth in Devon. 2 Vols. London, 1701.*

Fox, George. *Concerning the True Baptism and the False by G. Fox. London, 1676.*

Gataker, Thomas. *A discours apologetical; wherein Lilies lewd and lowd lies in his Merlin or Pasqil for the yeer 1654. are cleerly laid open; his shameful desertion of his own cause is further discovered; his shameless slanders fullie refuted; and his malicious and murtherous mind, inciting to a general massacre of Gods ministers, from his own pen, evidentlie evinced. Together with an advertisement concerning two allegations produced in the close of his postscript. And a postscript concerning an epistle dedicatorie of one J. Gadburie. By Tho. Gataker B.D. autor [sic] of the annotations on Jer. 10.2 and of the vindication of them. London, 1654.*

Gauden, John. *Analysis the loosing of Saint Peter's bands : setting forth the true sense and solution of the covenant in point of conscience, so far as it relates to the government of the church by episcopacy / by John Gauden. London, 1660.*

_____. *Anti Baal-Berith or The binding of the covenant and all covenanters to their good behaviours. By a just vindication of Dr. Gaudens Analysis (that is, his resolving of the Covenant to law and justice, to duty and conscience, to reason and religion: or his dissolving it) against the cacotomy of a nameless and shameless libeller the worthy hyperaspites of Dr. Burges. Also against the pittiful cavils and objections of Mr. Zach. Grafton [sic], a rigid presbyter. With an answer to that monstrous paradox, of no sacriledge no sin, to alienate Church lands, without and against all laws of God and man. / Written by the author of the Analysis. London, 1661.*

_____. *Certain scruples and doubts of conscience about taking the Solemne League and Covenant; first printed in the yeare 1643. Wherein is briefly intimated the invalidity thereof, inconsistency with, and contradiction to it self, and all former oathes, and the very protestation so lately before imposed upon the people of this nation, by the same authority that did force upon us the said League and Covenant. Being now reprinted and in all love tendered to the consideration of Sir Lawrence Bromfeild and Mr. Zach. Grofton [sic]; with all others who are conscientious as well as zealous. Together with a letter directed to the author of the said Scruples and doubts, by John Gauden D.D. and chaplain to his Majesty in Ordinary.* London, 1660.

_____. *Considerations touching the liturgy of the Church of England. In reference to His Majesties late gracious declaration, and in order to an happy union in Church and state. By John Gauden, D.D. Bishop elect of Exceter.* London, 1660.

_____. *Cromwell's bloody slaughter-house or, his damnable designes laid and practised by him and his negro's, in contriving the murther of His sacred Majesty King Charles I. discovered. By a person of honor.* London, 1650.

_____. *Hiera dakrya, Ecclesiae anglicanae suspiria, The tears, sighs, complaints, and prayers of the Church of England setting forth her former constitution, compared with her present condition : also the visible causes and probable cures of her distempers : in IV books / by John Gauden.* London, 1659.

_____. *Hieraspistes, Hieraspistes a defence by way of apology for the ministry and ministers of the Church of England : humbly presented to the consciences of all those that excell in virtue. / By John Gauden, D. D. and minister of that Church at Bocking in Essex.* London, 1653.

_____. "The Life and Death of Mr. Hooker," in *The works of Mr. Richard Hooker ... vindicating the Church of England, as truly christian, and duly reformed in eight books of ecclesiastical polity : now compleated, as with the sixth and eighth, so with the seventh, touching episcopacy, as the primitive, catholick and apostolick government of the church, out of his own manuscripts, never before published : with an account of his holy life, and happy death / written by Dr. John Gauden ... ; the entire edition dedicated to the Kings Most Excellent Majestie, Charls [sic] the II.* London, 1662.

Gilpin, Richard. *The agreement of the associated ministers & churches of the counties of Cumberland, and VWestmerland: with something for explication and exhortation annexed.* London, 1658.

Goodwin, Thomas. *The great interest of states & kingdomes. A sermon preached before the Honorable House of Commons, at their late solemne fast, Feb. 25. 1645. By Tho: Goodwin, B.D. one of the Assembly of Divines.* London, 1645.

_____. *The Works of Thomas Goodwin, D.D. 12 Vols.* Edinburgh, 1864.

Gouge, William. *The workes of William Gouge In tvvo volumes: The first, Domesticall duties. The second, The whole armour of God. Reuised and enlarged by the authour.* London, 1627.

Grantham, Thomas. *The Baptist against the papist, or, The Scripture and Rome in contention about the supream seat of judgment, in controversies of religion together with ten arguments or reasons, discovering the present papal church of Rome to be no true church of Christ : wherein it is also evinced that the present assemblies of baptized believers, are the true church of Jesus Christ / by Tho. Grantham.* London, 1663.

_____. *The controversie about infants church-membership and baptism, epitomized in two treatises the first, shewing the certainty of the salvation of all dying infants, against the doctrine of the Paedo-baptists, who deny salvation to all infants that die unbaptized, either directly, or by the natural consequence of their arguments : the second, being a plain confutation of Mr. J.B. his second book of more than 60 queries, about infants church-membership and baptism, by a proportionable number of antiqueries : being an essay towards a more Christian accomodation between the Paedo-baptists, and the baptized believers, published for that happy end / by Thomas Grantham.* London, 1680.

_____. *Christianismus primitivus, or, The ancient Christian religion, in its nature, certainty, excellency, and beauty, (internal and external) particularly considered, asserted, and vindicated from the many abuses which have invaded that sacred profession, by humane innovation, or pretended revelation comprehending likewise the general duties of mankind, in their respective relations : and particularly the obedience of all Christians to magistrates, and the necessity of Christian-moderation about things dispensible in matters of religion : with divers cases of conscience discussed and resolved / by Thomas Grantham.* London, 1678.

_____. *The infants advocate against the cruel doctrine of those Presbyterians who hold, that the greatest part of dying infants shall be damned : in answer to a book of Mr. Giles Firmin's entituled, Scripture warrant, &c. / by Tho. Grantham.* London, 1688.

_____. *The Paedo-baptists apology for the baptized churches shewing the invalidity of the strongest grounds for infant baptism out of the works of the learned assertors of that tenent, and that the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins is a duty incumbent upon all sinners who come orderly to the profession of Christianity : also the promise of the Spirit [b]eing the substance of a sermon on I Cor. 12, I, to which is added a post-script out of the works of Dr. Jer. Taylor in defence of imposition of hands as a never failing ministry / by Tho. Grantham.* London, 1671.

_____. *The quaeries examined, or, Fifty anti-queries seriously propounded to the people called Presbyterians Occasioned by the publication of Fifty queries, gathered out of the works of Mr. Rich. Baxter. By J. B. Wherein the principal allegations*

usually brought to support infant-baptism are discovered to be insufficient. By T. G. London, 1676.

_____. *A religious contest, or A brief account of a disputation holden at Blyton in the county of Lincoln between Mr. William Fort minister of the perochial congregation at Blyton on the one part, and Thomas Grantham, servant to the baptised churches on the other part : whereunto is added Brief animadversions upon Dr. Stilling-fleet his digressions about infant baptism in his book intituled, A rational account of the Protestant religion, &c., in both which are shewed that the generality of the nations now professing Christianity are as yet unbaptised into Christ : 1. Because their sprinkling and crossing the fore-head is not the right way of baptising, 2. Because infants ought not to be baptised. London, 1674.*

Green, M.A.E., F.H.B. Daniell, and F. Bickley, eds. *Calendar of State Papers Domestic Charles II*, 28 volumes. London, 1860-1947.

Grove, Robert. *A vindication of the conforming clergy from the unjust aspersions of heresie, &c. in answer to some part of Mr. Jenkyn's funeral sermon upon Dr. Seaman : with short reflexions on some passages in a sermon preached by Mr. J.S. upon 2 Cor. 5:20 : in a letter to a friend. London, 1676.*

Gunton, Simon. *Orthodatreia or, a brief discourse concerning bodily worship: proving it to be Gods due; to be given unto him with acceptation on his part, and not to be denied him without sin, on ours. A thing worthy to be taken into consideration in these dayes, wherein prophaness and irreverence toward the sacred Majesty of God hath so much corrupted our religious assemblies, that men are regardless of their being before God, or of Gods being amongst them in his own house. / By Simon Gunton, one of the Prebendaries of the Cathedral Church of Peterburgh. London, 1661.*

Hall, Thomas. *A practical and polemical commentary, or, exposition upon the third and fourth chapters of the latter epistle of Saint Paul to Timothy wherein the text is explained, some controversies discussed, sundry cases of conscience are cleared, many common places are succinctly handled, and divers usefull and seasonable observations raised / by Thomas Hall. London, 1658.*

Hardy, Nathaniel. *The hierarchy exalted and its enemies humbled a sermon preached on the first Sunday in Advent, being the 2d day of Decemb. 1660 : after the consecration of the Right Reverend Fathers in God, John, Lord Bishop of Durham, William, Lord Bishop of St. Davids, Benjamin, Lord Bishop of Peterborough, Hugh, Lord Bishop of Landaff, Richard, Lord Bishop of Carlisle, Brian, Lord Bishop of Chester, and John, Lord Bishop of Exceter in the Abby Church of St. Peters Westminster / by Nathanael Hardy. London, 1661.*

Heylin, Peter. *Ecclesia restaurata, or, The history of the reformation of the Church of England containing the beginning, progress, and successes of it, the counsels by which it was conducted, the rules of piety and prudence upon which it was founded, the*

several steps by which it was promoted or retarded in the change of times, from the first preparations to it by King Henry the Eight untill the legal settling and establishment of it under Queen Elizabeth : together with the intermixture of such civil actions and affairs of state, as either were co-incident with it or related to it / by Peter Heylyn. London, 1660-1661.

Hickman, Henry. *Laudensium apostasia: or A dialogue in which is shewen, that some divines risen up in our church since the greatness of the late archbishop, are in sundry points of great moment, quite fallen off from the doctrine received in the Church of England. By Henry Hickman fellow of Magd. Colledg Oxon. London, 1660.*

_____. *Plus ultra, or, Englands reformation, needing to be reformed being an examination of Doctor Heylins History of the reformation of the Church of England, wherein by laying together all that is there said ... / written by way of letter to Dr. Heylin by H.N. London, 1661.*

Hooke, Richard [R.H.]. *The bishop's appeale, or, An addresse to the brethren of the presbyteriall judgement in twenty considerations, wherein among other things is manifested, that the reformed churches, both Lutheran and Calvinist, yea, Calvin, Bona, and the Church of Scotland it self, have given their suffrages for episcopacy. London, 1661.*

Hooker, Thomas. *A survey of the summe of church-discipline. Wherein the vway of the churches of New-England is warranted out of the vword, and all exceptions of weight, which are made against it, answered : whereby also it will appear to the judicious reader, that something more must be said, then yet hath been, before their principles can be shaken, or they should be unsettled in their practice. / By Tho. Hooker, late pastor of the church at Hartford upon Connecticott in N.E. London, 1648.*

Howe, John. *An ansvver to Dr. Stillingfleet's Mischief of separation being a letter written out of the cuntry to a person of quality in the city. Who took offence at the late sermon of Dr. Stillingfleet, Dean of S. Pauls; before the lord mayor. London, 1680.*

_____. *The Case of the Protestant dissenters represented and argued. London, 1689.*

_____. *Heads of agreement assented to by the united ministers in and about London, formerly called Presbyterian and Congregational. London, 1691.*

_____. *The living temple, or, A designed improvement of that notion that a good man is the temple of God by John Howe. London, 1675.*

_____. *The Living Temple, Part II: Containing Animadversions on Spinoza, and a French Writer Pretending to Confute Him. With a Recapitulation of the Former Part, and an Account of the Destitution and Restitution of Gods Temple among Men. London, 1702.*

_____. *The Whole Works of the Rev. John Howe, M.A.*, Edited by John Hunt. 8 vols. Edinburgh, 1822.

_____. *The Works of the Rev. John Howe*. 3 vols. London, 1724.

Howgill, Francis. *An answer to a paper; called, A petition of one Thomas Ellyson, late shepherd of Easington in the county of Durham, to his Highness the Lord Protector of England, Scotland and Ireland, and to all emperors, kings and princes through the world*. London, 1654.

_____. *The mouth of the pit stopped and the smoke that hath arisen out of it scattered by the breath of truth in answer to a lying story called Hell broken loose, or, The history of the Quakers, published by Thomas Underhill, a seller of the whores merchandize otherwise called a book-seller : his lyes returned upon him, his accusations answered and his envie declaired and truth cleared from all his reproaches / by one that waits to see death and hell cast into the lake of fire, with the beast and false-prophet, Francis Howgil*. London, 1659.

Hudson, Samuel. *An addition or postscript to The vindication of the essence and unity of the Church-Catholick visible, and the priority thereof in regard of particular churches. In answer to the objections made against it, both by Mr. Stone, and some others. / By Samuel Hudson*. London, 1658.

_____. *The essence and unitie of the Church Catholike visible, and the prioritie thereof in regard of particular churches discussed by Samuel Hudson*. London, 1645.

_____. *A vindication of The essence and unity of the Church-catholick visible, and the priority thereof in regard of particular churches. In answer to the objections made against it, by Mr John Ellis junior, and by that reverend and worthy divine Mr Hooker, in his Survey of Church-discipline. By Samuel Hudson, minister of the Gospel at Capell in Suff*. London, 1658.

Humfrey, John. *An answer to Dr. Stillingfleet's book of The unreasonableness of separation so far as it concerns The peaceable designe : with some animadversions upon the debate between him and Mr. Baxter concerning the national church and the head of it*. London, 1682.

_____. *The healing paper, or, A Catholick receipt for union between the moderate bishop & sober non-conformist, maugre all the aversation of the unpeaceable by a follower of peace, and lover of sincerity*. London, 1678.

_____. *A modest and peaceable inquiry into the design and nature of some of those historical mistakes that are found in Dr. Stillingfleet's preface to his Unreasonableness of separation wherein the innocency of Protestant dissenters is*

cleared up and vindicated from the indecent censures of the doctor / by N. B. London, 1681.

_____. *A peaceable resolution of conscience touching our present impositions. Wherein loyalty & obedience are proposed, and settled upon their true foundation in Scripture, reason, and the constitution of this kingdom, against all resistance of the present powers: and for compliance with the laws, so far as may be in order to union. With a draught, or specimen of a bill for accomodation. London, 1680.*

_____. *The question of re-ordination, whether, and how a minister ordained by the Presbytery, may take ordination also by the Bishop? by John Humfrey. London, 1661.*

_____. *A second discourse about re-ordination being an answer to two or three books come out against this subject, in behalf of the many concern'd at this season, who for the sake of their ministry, and upon necessity, do yield to it, in defence of their submission / by John Humfrey, min. ; together, with his testimony, which from the good hand of the Lord, is laid upon himself, to bear, in this generation, against the evil, and to prevent, or repress (as much as by him may be possible) the danger, of the imposition. London, 1662.*

Humfrey, John and Stephen Lobb. *An answer to Dr. Stillingfleet's sermon, by some nonconformists, being the peaceable design renewed wherein the imputation of schism wherewith the doctor hath charged the nonconformists meetings, is removed, their nonconformity justified, and materials for union drawn up together, which will heal both parties. London, 1680.*

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I.R. *A peaceable enquiry into that novel controversie about reordination With certain close, but candid animadversions upon an ingenious tract for the lawfulness of reordination; written by the learned and Reverend Mr. J. Humphrey. By R.I. London, 1661.*

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Kendall, George. *Theokratia, or, A vindication of the doctrine commonly received in the reformed churches concerning Gods intentions of special grace and favour to his elect in the death of Christ as also his prerogative, power, prescience, providence, the immutability of his nature and counsels &c. from the attempts lately made against it, by Master John Goodwin in his book entituled Redemption redeemed together with some digressions concerning the impossibility of new immanent acts of God ... / by George Kendall.* London, 1653.

Latimer, Hugh. *The preaching bishop reproving unpreaching prelates Being a brief, but faithful collection of observeable passages, in several sermons preached by the reverend father in God, Mr Hugh Latimer, Bish. of Worcester, (one of our first reformers, and a glorious martyr of Jesus Christ) before K. Edw. the sixth; before the convocation of the clergy, and before the citizens of London, at Pauls. Wherein, many things, relating to the honour and happiness of the king (our most gracious sovereign) the honourable lords, the reverend judges, the citizens of London, and commons of all sorts, but especially, the bishops and clergy are most plainly, piously and pithily represented.* London, 1661.

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Lobb, Stephen. *The glory of free grace display'd: or, The transcendant excellency of the love of God in Christ, unto believing, repenting sinners, in some measure describ'd* *Wherein, 1. The doctrine about election, and the covenant of reconciliation is explained. 2. The error of the antinomians, who assert, that the filth of sin was laid on Christ, and that the holiness as well as the righteousness of Christ is made the elects while in the womb, &c. With their abuse of free-grace particularly detected and confuted. 3. In what sense our sins were laid on Christ, and Christ's righteousness made the believers, according to the sacred scriptures, evinced. 4. The glory of irresistible-grace, as exerted in the conversion of a sinner in opposition to the Arminian, cleared. 5. A modest defence of the sober dominican, about physical predetermination.* London, 1680.

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Noyes, James. *The temple measured: or, A brief survey of the temple mystical, which is the instituted church of Christ. Wherein are solidly and modestly discussed, most of the material questions touching the constitution and government of the visible church militant here on earth. Together with the solution of all sorts of objections which are usually framed against the model and platform of ecclesiastical polity, which is here asserted and maintained. In particular here are debated, the points of so much controversie, touching the unity of the church, the members of the church, the form of the church, and church covenant, the power of the church, the officers of the church, and their power in church-government, the power of magistrates about the church, and some church acts, as admission of members, and other things set down in the table before the book. / By James Noyes teacher of the church at Newbery in New England.* London, 1646.

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Poole, Matthew. *Evangelical worship is spiritual vvorship as it was discussed in a sermon preached before the Right Honourable the Lord Maior, at Pauls Church, Aug. 26. 1660. By Matthew Poole minister of the Gospel at Michael Quern in London.* London, 1660.

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Prynne, William. *A brief, pithy discourse upon I Corinthians 14. 40. Let all things be done decently and in order. Tending to search out the truth in question: Whether it be lawfull for church-governours to command and impose indifferent decent things (not absolutely necessary) in the administration of Gods worship? Written some years past by a judicious divine, and seasonable for our present times.* London, 1661.

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bishops, and not to bishops only, as bishops, who by divine institution are evidenced to be one and the same with presbyters, and many over one city, church, not one over many cities or churches : wherein all objections, pretences to the contrary are fully answered : and the pretended superiority of bishops over other ministers and presbyters and their sole right of ordination jure divino, now much contended for, are utterly subverted in a most perspicuous manner / by William Prynne. London, 1660.

Rehakosht, P. A plain and just account of a most horrid and dismal plague, begun at Rowel, alias Rothwell, in Northampton-shire which hath infected many places round about, or, A faithful narrative of the execrable and noisom errors and the abominable and damnable heresies vented by Richard Davis, pretended pastour to a people at Rowel, and by his emissaries, the shoemakers, joyners, dyers, taylers, weavers, formers, &c. together with a brief account 1. Of his and his parties practices, 2. Visions and revelations, 3. Great boasts, 4. Admission of members into their society, 5. His peoples self-condemnedness, 6. The number and quality of his hearers admired fits, 7. Some queries to the countrey people as matter for further search, 8. An expostulation and advice to the people of Rowel / by Mr. P. Rehakosht. London, 1692.

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Rogers, Daniel. Naaman the Syrian, his disease and cure discovering lively to the reader the spirituall leprosie of sinne and self-love, together with the remedies ... : besides sundry other remarkable points of great use as you may finde them after the epistle to the reader: with an alphabeticall table, very necessary for the readers understanding to finde each severall thing contained in this booke / by Daniel Rogers. London, 1650.

Rogers, John. The doctrine of faith wherein are practically handled ten principall points, which explain the nature and vse of it / by Iohn Rogers. London, 1627.

Rogers, Richard. Seuen treatises containing such direction as is gathered out of the Holie Scriptures, leading and guiding to true happines, both in this life, and in the life to come: and may be called the practise of Christianitie. Profitable for all such as heartily desire the same: in the which, more particularly true Christians may learne how to leade a godly and comfortable life euery day. Penned by Richard Rogers, preacher of the word of God at Wethersfield in Essex. London, 1603.

Rowland, John. A reply to the answer of Anonymus to Doctor Gauden's Analysis of the sense of the covenant: and under that, to a later tract of one Mr Zach. Crofton of the same fraternity with him. By John Rowland Oxoniensis, CCC. Rector of Footscray in Kent. London, 1660.

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oathes, that may be releast, either tacitly, or, expresly, by the same, or an higher power, then that, which first impos'd the same. Written for the satisfaction of those mens consciences, who desire to live peaceably. Attested by John Gauden, D.D. London, 1660.

Saltmarsh, John. *The fountaine of free grace opened by questions and answers: proving the foundation of faith to consist only in Gods free love in giving Christ to dye for the sins of all, and objections to the contrary answered by the Congregation of Christ in London, constituted by baptisme upon the profession of faith, falsly called Anabaptists. Wherein they vindicate themselves from the scandalous aspersions of holding free-will, and denying a free election by grace.* London, 1645.

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Sherlock, William. *A discourse about church-unity being a defence of Dr. Stillingfleet's unreasonableness of separation, in answer to several late pamphlets, but principally to Dr. Owen and Mr. Baxter / by a presbyter of the Church of England.* London, 1681.

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Smectymnuus. *Smectymnuus redivivus being an answer to a book, entituled An humble remonstrance, in which, the original of [bracket] liturgy, episcopacy [bracket]*

is discussed, and quaeries propounded concerning both, the parity of bishops and presbyters in scripture demonstrated. The occasion of the imparity in antiquity discovered. The disparity of the ancient and our modern bishops manifested. The antiquity of ruling elders in the church vindicated. The prelatical church bounded. / Composed by five learned and orthodox divines. London, 1660.

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Timorcus, Theophilus. *The Covenanters plea against absolvers. Or, A modest discourse, shewing why those who in England & Scotland took the Solemn League and Covenant, cannot judge their consciences discharged from the obligation of it, by any thing heretofore said by the Oxford men; or lately by Dr Featly, Dr. Gauden, or any others. In which also several cases relating to promisory oathes, and to the said Covenant in special, are spoken to, and determined by Scripture, reason, and the joynt suffrages of casuists. Contrary to the indigested notions of some late writers; yet much to the sense of the Reverend Dr. Sanderson. Written by Theophilus Timorcus a well-wisher to students in casuistical divinity. London, 1660.*

Tombes, John. *Anti-paedobaptism, or, The third part being a full review of the dispute concerning infant baptism : in which the arguments for infant baptism from the*

covenant and initial seal, infants visible church membership, antiquity of infant baptism are refelled [sic] : and the writings of Mr. Stephen Marshal, Mr. Richard Baxter ... and others are examined, and many points about the covenants, and seals and other truths of weight are handled / by John Tombes. London, 1657.

Traill, Robert. *A vindication of the Protestant doctrine concerning justification, and of its preachers and professors, from the unjust charge of Antinomianism in a letter from a minister in the city, to a minister in the countrey. London, 1692.*

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Underhill, Thomas. *Hell broke loose, or, An history of the Quakers both old and new setting forth many of their opinions and practices : published to antidote Christians against formality in religion and apostasie / by Thomas Underhill. London, 1660.*

University of Oxford. *Reasons of the present judgement of the University of Oxford concerning the Solemne League and Covenant, the negative oath, the ordinances concerning discipline and worship : approved by generall consent in a full convocation, 1 June, 1647, and presented to consideration. London, 1660.*

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Westfield, Thomas. *The white robe or, the surplice vindicated, as a most ancient & decent ornament of the ministry. Together with a discourse of Psal. 45. 7. Wherein is proved, that kings, and no other, can properly be said to be the Lords anoynted. Being several sermons preached by the late Right Reverend Father in God Dr. Thomas Westfield, Bishop of Bristol, and sometimes preacher at Saint Bartholomew the Great.* London, 1660.

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Widdowes, Giles. *The lawlesse kneelesse schismaticall Puritan. Or A confutation of the author of an appendix, concerning bowing at the name of Iesus. Written by Giles Widdowes rector of St Martins Church in Oxford, and late fellow of Oriell Colledge Oxford,* 1630.

Williams, Daniel. *A defence of Gospel-truth being a reply to Mr. Chancey's first part, and as an explication of the points in debate may serve for a reply to all other answers / by Daniel Williams.* London, 1693.

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Williams, Griffith. *The great antichrist revealed, never yet discovered, and proved to be neither pope, nor Turk, nor any single person, nor any one monarch or tyrant in any polity but a collected pack, or multitude of hypocritical, heretical, blasphemous, and most scandalous wicked men that have fulfilled all the prophecies of the Scriptures ... and especially have united ... together by a solemn league and covenant to slay the two witnesses of God viz. [brace] the supreme magistrate of the Commonwealth, and the chief pastors and governors of the Church of Christ, and the Christian world is requested to judge whether [brace] the Assembly of Presbyterians, together with the independents, Anabaptists, and lay- preachers be not the false prophet ... and whether the prevalent faction of the long Parliament ... that killed the two witnesses of Jesus Christ, 1. Charles the First ... 2. William Laud ... be not the visible body of the same antichrist / by Gr. Williams. London, 1661.*

Wills, Obadiah. *Infant-baptism asserted & vindicated by Scripture and antiquity in answer to a treatise of baptism lately published by Mr. Henry Danvers : together with a full detection of his misrepresentations of divers councils and authors both ancient and modern : with a just censur of his essay to palliate the horrid actings of the anabaptists in Germany : as also a perswasive to unity among all Christians, though of different judgments about baptism / by Obed Wills. London, 1674.*

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