

THE GRACE OF LAW
A Study in Puritan Theology

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by

ERNEST F. KEVAN

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This book is gratefully dedicated to

MY WIFE

without whose love and sacrifice the production of
this book would not have been possible, and to the
memory of

MY FATHER

who taught me so much theology.

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TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS USED WITH
PRIMARY SOURCES

Short titles as used in the footnotes are entered only when reference is made to more than two works by the same author and when the short title differs from the first words of the original title.

- AMES, William:**
Epistles of Peter *An Analyticall Exposition Of both the Epistles of the Apostle Peter.*
- BALL, John:**
Covenant of Grace *A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace: . . . clearly discovered.*
Grounds of Christian Religion *A Short Treatise Containing all the Principal Grounds of Christian Religion.*
Of Faith *A Treatise of Faith.*
- BAXTER, Richard:**
Apology *Richard Baxter's Apology . . . and an Admonition of Mr W. Eyre.*
Confession *Rich: Baxter's Confession of his Faith, Especially concerning the Interest of Repentance and sincere Obedience to Christ, in our Justification and Salvation.*
Nonconformists Ministry *An Apology for the Nonconformists Ministry.*
- BOLTON, Robert:**
Afflicted Consciences *Instructions for a Right Comforting Afflicted Consciences.*
Assise Sermons *Two Sermons Preached at Northampton at two severall Assises there.*
Comfortable Walking *Some Generall Directions for a Comfortable Walking with God.*
True Happinesse *A Discourse about the State of True Happinesse.*
- BROOKS, Thomas:**
Glory of Christianity *The Crown and Glory of Christianity.*
- BURGESS, Anthony:**
Justification *The True Doctrine of Justification.*

- BURROUGHS, Jeremiah:
Evil of Evils *A Treatise of the Evil of Evils, or the Exceeding Sinfulness of Sin.*
- BYFIELD, Richard:
Sabbath *The Doctrine of the Sabbath Vindicated.*
- CHARNOCK, Stephen:
Attributes *Discourse on the existence and attributes of God.*
Conviction of Sin *A Discourse of Conviction of Sin.*
Efficient of Regeneration *A Discourse of the Efficient of Regeneration.*
Nature of Regeneration *A Discourse of the Nature of Regeneration.*
- CHAUNCY, Isaac:
Fresh Antidote *Alexipharmacon. A Fresh Antidote against Neonomian Bane and Poyson to the Protestant Religion.*
- DENNE, Henry:
Man of Sin Discovered *Antichrist unmasked in two Treatises. . . . The second, The Man of Sinne discovered in Doctrine.*
- DOWNAME, George:
Duties *An Abstract of the Duties Commanded . . . in the Law of God.*
Justification *A Treatise of Justification.*
- FLAVEL, John:
Mental Errors *Πλανηλογία, A Succinct and Seasonable Discourse of the Occasions . . . and Remedies of Mental Errors.*
Personal Reformation *The Reasonableness of Personal Reformation and the Necessity of Conversion.*
- GOODWIN, Thomas:
Christian's Growth *The Trial of a Christian's Growth.*
Ephesians *Exposition of Ephesians.*
Glory of the Gospel *A Discourse of the Glory of the Gospel.*
Justifying Faith *The Objects and Acts of Justifying Faith.*
Mediator *Of Christ the Mediator.*
Relapsing *The Folly of Relapsing after Peace Spoken.*
- GREENHAM, Richard:
Sabboth *A Treatise of the Sabboth.*

HOPKINS, Ezekiel:

*Conscience**A Discourse of the Nature, Corruption and Renewing of the Conscience.**Galatians**Sermon on Galatians III. 10.**John**Sermon on John VII. 19.**Lord's Prayer**A Practical exposition on the Lord's Prayer.**Ten Commandments**Exposition of the Ten Commandments.*

MANTON, Thomas:

*Ephesians**Sermon on Ephesians II. 10.**James**The Epistle of James.**Lord's Prayer**A Practical Exposition of the Lord's Prayer.**Mark**Sermon on Mark IX. 49.**Psalms**Sermon on Psalm XXXII. 1, 2.**Thessalonians**Sermons on the Second Chapter of the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians.*

OWEN, John:

*Dominion of Sin and Grace**A Treatise of the Dominion of Sin and Grace.**Gospel Vindicated**Vindiciae Evangelicae: or the Mystery of the Gospel vindicated.**Holy Spirit**Πνευματολογία or, a discourse concerning the Holy Spirit.**Indwelling Sin**The Nature, Power, Deceit, and Prevalency of the Remainders of Indwelling Sin in Believers.**Justification**The Doctrine of Justification by Faith, through the imputation of the Righteousness of Christ.*

PERKINS, William:

*Of Conscience**A Discourse of Conscience.**Galatians**A Commentarie, or Exposition upon the Five First Chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians.*

RUTHERFORD, Samuel:

*Triumph of Faith**The Tryal and Triumph of Faith.*

SIBBES, Richard:

*Philippians**Exposition of Philippians III.**Precious Promises**Yea and Amen: Or, Precious Promises*

TAYLOR, Thomas: <i>Christian Practice</i>	<i>A threefold Alphabet of Rules concerning Christian Practice.</i>
TRAILL, Robert: <i>Galatians</i>	<i>Six Sermons on Important Subjects from Galatians II. 21.</i>
<i>Justification Vindicated</i>	<i>A Vindication of the Protestant Doctrine concerning Justification . . . from the unjust charge of Antinomianism.</i>
<i>Throne of Grace</i>	<i>Sermons concerning the Throne of Grace.</i>

FOREWORD

IN this age which seems to be without moral standards, and in which the words "right" and "wrong" have lost their absoluteness, the necessity for a return to a stable conception of Law is indisputable. This is recognized by educationalists, lawyers, politicians, and all who take a morally healthy view of the needs of mankind. The British Prime Minister, speaking at Brighton on the 14 October, 1961, referred to the need to rekindle at all levels of society "the old faith that makes a clear distinction between right and wrong".¹

In common with the majority of contemporary Christian writers, J. Drewett perceives the present moral decay to be caused by the neglect of the Law of God. He begins his opening chapter in *The Ten Commandments in the 20th Century* by asking, "Are the commandments obsolete?" and he gives some of the reasons why many people answer this question in the affirmative. Two of these reasons, he says, come from outside the Church and can be traced to (a) the shift in ethical thought from the negative to the positive, and (b) the breakdown of belief in an objective moral Law. A third reason, and one which he regards as coming from within the Church, is found by him in the assumption of many Christian people that the "teaching of Jesus went so far beyond the Law of Moses that the Law is no longer binding upon Christians".²

It is at this place in the discussion that the teaching of the Puritans on the Law of God shows itself to be so appropriate to the modern situation. The Puritans stemmed the tide of moral indifference in their day by the use of the Ten Commandments, and it may well be that part of the answer to the modern dilemma is to be found by listening again to the voice of the Puritans and receiving the truth to which they bore testimony.³

The object of this work is to explore the Puritan teaching on the place which the Law of God must take in the life of a believer and to examine it for the contribution that it may make towards a true understanding of the Christian doctrine of sanctification.

After a delimitation of the area of inquiry, the Puritan material is analysed and presented under its main divisions. First, the Puritan recognition of the fact of Law is observed, in which it is shown that Law arises from the Creator-creature relation and is of the very essence of man's spiritual experience. This is followed by an exposition

1. Reported in *The Daily Telegraph*, 16 October, 1961.

2. *Op. cit.*, 1941, pp. 9-12.

3. Cf. A. F. Mitchell and J. Struthers, *Minutes*, 1874, Introduction, p. lxvii.

of the relation of Law to sin and of the place which Law holds in the purposes of God's grace. The next chapter contains an examination of the Puritan teaching on the way in which Christ is the "end of the law", and by means of the important distinction between the ideas of "law" and "covenant" shows that there is no abrogation of the Law, either by the sin of man or by the grace of God. Attention is then drawn to the consistency of this truth with the continuance of moral obligation, and the sanction which is thereby given to the Christian practice of Law-keeping. Finally, the Puritans are shown to have defended their views against the charge of legalism by their doctrine of evangelical ability and spiritual freedom. Legalism is abhorrent to God and foreign to the Gospel, nevertheless only by a Divinely-given delight in the Law of God can sanctification be rescued from the realm of the merely subjective and emotional.

Critical discussion of the material presented has been conducted, in the main, by the use of arguments drawn from the Puritans themselves and in accordance with their own presuppositions. This has had the advantage of ensuring that the Puritan views have been seen in the light of their own times and without the distortion caused by the entry of anachronistic critical factors. Accompanying this contemporary discussion, there is a critical appraisal implicit in the analysis of the material itself, an analysis which shows that the Puritan arguments hold together in a coherent and consistent unity. In the conclusion the doctrine is assessed in the light of recent critical thought.

The title of this book may seem to require justification, but it is my hope that this has been sufficiently provided in the substance of the work.

I desire to record my thanks to the Rev. G. F. Nuttall, M.A., D.D., for the strength of his encouragement and for his guidance in the historical aspects of this study. I want also to acknowledge the helpfulness and courtesy received from the authorities of the Library of the British Museum and Dr Williams's Library, and particularly to pay tribute to the value of the fine collection of Puritan works in the Library of New College, London. I have much appreciated the privilege of access to these rare treasures.

To my wife, who typed the complete manuscript twice over in its preliminary stages, and to Miss J. Williamson, who did the final typing so perfectly, I express my very special gratitude.

This work has been approved by the University of London for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

ERNEST F. KEVAN.

Introduction

THE PURITAN SCENE

Synopsis

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Introduction

THE PURITAN SCENE

It contains chiefly some friendly debates of some opinions, which have been maintained against the Law, wherein I have so endeavoured to hold up the Law, as not to intrench upon the liberties of Grace, and so to establish Grace, as not to make void the Law, nor to discharge beleevers of any dutie they owe to God or man.¹

THIS is how Samuel Bolton describes his book, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedome*, and these words aptly express the constructive endeavours of the Puritans in their discussion of the place of the Law in Christian life. It is not entirely accidental that Samuel Bolton uses the words "bounds" in the title of his work, for when Anthony Burgess compares the Law and the Gospel he uses the same word and says, "It's one of the hardest taskes in all divinity, to give them their bounds, and then to cleare how the Apostle doth oppose them, and how not."²

A. THE PURITANS

Who were the Puritans? And what was a Puritan? Puritanism must be understood in two ways: first, as the endeavour to effect thoroughgoing reforms of ecclesiastical practice, and, secondly, as the attempt at a godly way of life.

(i) *An ecclesiastical term*

As an ecclesiastical term, it symbolizes the efforts of those who believed firmly in the maintenance of "one National Church in England", but who at the same time desired that Church "to be reformed after the model of Geneva".³ The termini *a quo* and *ad quem* of this ecclesiastical movement have been the subject of historical discussion, but the period can be described as the century between the Acts of Uniformity, 1559, and 1662. It is better not to project the period either backwards or forwards, but to restrict it to that movement for Church reform whose "first great leader was Thomas Cartwright and whose last was Richard Baxter."⁴ But, even within its

1. Samuel Bolton, *True Bounds*, 1645, The Epistle Dedicatory.

2. *Vindiciae Legis*, 1646, p. 5.

3. H. G. Wood, Article "Puritanism", 1918, *ERE*, X. 507; cf. T. Fuller, *Church History*, 1655, in *Works*, II. 474, 475.

4. H. G. Wood, *ibid.* Thomas Cartwright died in 1603, and Richard Baxter in 1691.

ecclesiastical connotation, the term is capable of a narrower and a wider meaning. J. B. Marsden, for example, interprets it narrowly, and contends that "Puritan" must be reserved exclusively for those within the Church,⁵ and that it should not, in this early period at least, be given to the seceding minorities who became dissenters.⁶ He does not carry the Puritans so far back as does H. G. Wood, but traces the beginning of what he calls "the doctrinal puritans" to about 1618, and describes them as the evangelical party in the Church of England who were against Laud's "high church" notions.⁷ He holds that they disappeared in 1642, when the "church" disappeared, and argues that at that time the Puritans passed from the scene "and henceforth the history becomes that of nonconformists, not of the puritans properly so termed".⁸ On this principle of definition, he likewise maintains that "the independents were not strictly puritans".⁹ M. M. Knappen differs considerably from J. B. Marsden, and argues for the wider application of the term. He provides his readers with a diagram which shows a primary division of Puritans into Episcopalian Puritans (later, Low Church), Presbyterian and Independent (Congregational), and he follows this with a secondary division of the Independents into Non-Separatist¹⁰ and Separatist.¹¹ This suffices for a glimpse at what a contemporary writer calls "my Ecclesiastical puritan".¹²

(ii) *A religious term*

When the wider application of the term "Puritan" is accepted, and when the viewpoint of the late seventeenth century is reached, the term needs to be understood as including, not only those ministers who were eventually suspended, deprived, or ejected, but also many others who were theologically near them, both within and without the Anglican fold. At this stage, the idea of Puritanism overleaps the earlier ecclesiastical connotation and becomes religious.¹³

5. "Puritan Anglicans", J. D. Eusden, *Puritans, Lawyers, and Politics*, 1958, p. 13.

6. J. B. Marsden, *Early Puritans*, 1850, p. 54. Edward Dowden justifies the title of his book, *Puritan and Anglican*, 1900, by saying, "The Puritan writers with whom I deal are such as to render the title 'Puritan and Anglican' not inexact, although many of the Puritan party were loyal members of the Anglican Communion." Preface. See his discussion of the question, "Would an Anglican Bunyan have been possible?" op. cit., p. 232.

7. J. B. Marsden, *Early Puritans*, p. 325.

8. Op. cit., p. 385. 9. *Later Puritans*, 1852, p. 294.

10. Cf. J. D. Eusden, op. cit., p. 14.

11. M. M. Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism*, 1939, p. 493; and Preface, p. viii. See an excellent discussion by A. S. P. Woodhouse, in *Puritanism and Liberty*, 1938, Introduction, pp. 35-8; and F. J. Powicke, Article "Puritanism", 1904, *PD*, pp. 558, 559.

12. Anon. *Discourse concerning Puritans*, 1641, p. 11.

13. See J. D. Eusden, op. cit., p. 18, "We must look to theology ... and the attendant pattern of life."

This more general use of the word, says H. G. Wood, "cannot be ignored in any account of the subject",¹⁴ for "after the failure of their ecclesiastical hopes . . . the Puritans did not cease to influence England".¹⁵ Puritanism came to embody the ideal of a holy community, and was characterized by deep reverence for God and profound moral earnestness of life. "Puritanism was something more than a system of doctrine," says A. F. Mitchell, "It was above all . . . a life, a real, earnest, practical life."¹⁶ It was not unassociated with the love of freedom, which was so prominent a feature of the seventeenth century,¹⁷ but even this political and social aspect of Puritan testimony must be seen to spring from religious convictions.

(iii) *Puritan preachers*

Defeated in ecclesiastical politics, the Puritans became the theologians of the Christian life. As they were not allowed to reform the Church from without, they gave themselves to the ministry of reforming it from within. They reasoned that, if the Church was to be pure—if it was to contain within it only those who could show evidence of the life of God within them—then attention had to be given to the things which belonged to vital godliness. This was the stage at which the Puritan preachers emerged. They abandoned the political platform, mounted the pulpit, and undertook the task of creating a new understanding of spiritual things in a nation that had not fully awakened to the full implications of the Scriptural principles of the Reformation. United in this serious purpose of purifying the Church of God from within, they constituted a holy brotherhood, but this "brotherhood of spiritual preachers never . . . entered upon anything like formal corporate organization. It was at no time anything more than an association of ministers of the church united by personal ties and common purpose".¹⁸ The Puritans dedicated their energies to the demands of the pulpit, and spared no pains in their preaching and writing, their writings being mostly the reproduction of their sermons, "or works of edification directly derived from sermons".¹⁹ Puritanism cannot be understood apart from "the Puritan pulpit",²⁰ for its preachers did not give mere studies in doctrine, but laid "stress upon practical exegesis, or the application of the Scriptures to the Christian life", for which reason, "the great majority of their writings are upon themes comprehended by the term *Practical*

14. Op. cit., p. 507.

15. Op. cit., p. 512.

16. *Westminster Assembly*, 1883, pp. 6, 7.

17. Cf. W. Haller, *Rise of Puritanism*, 1938, p. 10.

18. W. Haller, *Rise of Puritanism*, p. 54.

19. W. Haller, op. cit., pp. 25, 36, 37.

20. W. Haller, op. cit., Preface, p. vii.

Divinity".²¹ The Puritan preachers gathered round them congregations of earnest believers who desired to live in a manner well-pleasing to God. These believers—many of them obscure persons—"attempted a greater sobriety of life than was customary in Elizabethan England".²² An anonymous author provides a picture of the godly behaviour of most of the Puritans when he says,

The most ordinary badge of Puritans is their more religious and conscionable conversation, than that which is seene in other mens: and why this should make them odious or suspected of hypocrisie amongst honest and charitable men, I could never yet learne.²³

He put the Puritans to the test, and found them zealous in godliness and without any trace of hypocrisy;²⁴ and, although not himself a Puritan²⁵ he expressed his indignation that "now nothing is so monstrous, which is not branded upon Puritans".²⁶

Godliness always provokes resentment in those who do not desire it or whose lives thereby are condemned, and believers who endeavoured to live the godly life in the seventeenth century were contemptuously dubbed "Puritans". "The world is come to that wretched passe, and height of prophanesne, that even honestie and sanctification, is many times odiously branded by the nick-name of Puritanisme."²⁷ If an ungodly man turns godly and begins to read the Scriptures and pray in his family, "in a word to turne Christian; Oh! then He is an arrant Puritan, a Precisian . . . an hypocrite, and all that naught is. . . Hee was a good fellow, will they say, but hee is now quite gone: a proper man, and of good parts, but his Puritanisme hath mar'd al."²⁸

21. C. A. Briggs, *Study of Theology*, 1916, II. 152.

22. H. G. Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 507. See the delightful six-page pamphlet by John Gere on *The Character of an Old English Puritan*, 1646.

23. *Discourse concerning Puritans*, p. 53.

24. *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

25. *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

26. *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

27. Robert Bolton, *True Happiness*, 1611, p. 132, margin; cf. Richard Baxter's account of the abusive application of the name to his father. *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, 1696, Part I. pp. 2, 3.

28. Robert Bolton, *Afflicted Consciences*, 1631, p. 65. Robert Bolton resents the name, (*True Happiness*, p. 132) but he himself had in his youth shared in the general contemptuous attitude to the name "Puritan"; B. Brook, *Lives*, 1813, II. 390. The term, having an early connection with the fanaticism of the Cathari, eventually came again to have that kind of connection, as is seen, for example, in the fact that by 1684 the word is used to stand for Antinomian perfectionists. (*Truths Victory*, 1684, p. 66) cf. John Ball, *Power of Godliness*, 1657, pp. 74-8; Robert Bolton, *Three-fold Treatise*, "Selfe-enriching Examination", 1634, p. 201; Samuel Rutherford, *Survey*, Part II. 1648, p. 30; Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Part I. pp. 32, 33. On the origin of the name "Puritan", see M. M. Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism*, pp. 488-90.

B. THE LAW OF GOD

(i) *The authority of Scripture*

A fundamental principle of Puritanism was the recognition of the exclusive authority of Scripture for all things, a recognition which, in turn, drew attention to the significance of the Law of God. The ecclesiastical corruptions of the time led the Puritans to affirm that nothing should be tolerated in the Church which was not authorized by Holy Scripture.²⁹ When the Puritans declined to conform to the Elizabethan settlement or to acquiesce in other ecclesiastical compromises, they based their refusal solely on the Law they found in Scripture. This acknowledgment of the authority of the Law of God affected the attitude of the Puritans to the civil law. How far was the Christian obliged to obey the magistrate? What should the Christian do when the law of the land appeared to conflict with the Law of God? The Puritans affirmed that no king or magistrate could command their consciences, but they also concurred that it was normally lawful to obey human laws out of respect for those which are Divine—and for the same reason it was sometimes lawful to disobey them. But, as the masters of practical divinity, the major concern of the Puritans was that of the moral Law in its relation to the saving grace of God and the subsequent life of the believer.

(ii) *The moral Law*

The place occupied by the moral Law of God is observable in every department of theology, and particularly of Puritan theology. Sin is the transgression of Law, the death of Christ is the satisfaction of Law, justification is the verdict of Law,³⁰ and sanctification is the believer's fulfilment of the Law. It is in the realm of the doctrine of sanctification that the Puritan convictions about the Law assumed their special significance, and one of their most keenly debated questions was whether the Law still possessed commanding authority over the believer. The majority of the Puritans answered this question affirmatively, and it may, not unreasonably, be claimed that the

29. W. H. G. Thomas criticizes the Puritans for this, *Principles of Theology*, 1930, p. 284; and H. R. McAdoo charges them with "Bibliolatry", *Caroline Moral Theology*, 1949, p. 6. E. Dowden says, "The cardinal principle of Hooker's Puritan opponents was the sole and exclusive authority of Scripture", *Puritan and Anglican*, p. 81, and, despite the fact that this was essential Protestantism, it was precisely in this that they were "opponents". "For the Puritans", writes J. D. Eusden, "the Bible was the primary law book", *op. cit.*, p. 120.

30. It was the view of the Puritans that the right preaching of the Gospel was dependent upon a true conception of the relation of the Law to the promise; but there was some division among them on the indiscriminate offer of salvation to men without reference to conviction of sin by the Law of God.

authority of Law as the principle of the life of the believer was central to the distinctively Puritan concept of Christian experience. "The true Puritan stood ever in the great Taskmaster's eye. He learned to fear God and found that he had nothing else to fear."³¹

C. ANTINOMIANISM

In the agitated thought-world of the seventeenth century there were many cross-currents of theological opinion; hence, it is not surprising to discover that the Puritan view of the Law of God met considerable challenge. The controversy that ensued gave rise to the use of party-names, and at this late stage it is impossible to conduct any discussion of the controversy without their use. (1) On the extreme right were those who maintained the necessity of Law-keeping to such a degree that they were regarded by some of their contemporaries as forsaking the Gospel altogether and reverting to a doctrine of salvation by good works. These teachers—found entirely outside of Puritanism—were occasionally called "Nomists", from their excessive adherence to Law. (2) On the extreme left were those who maintained that the believer was completely free from all obligation to the Law, and who held that any concession to legal duty was an infringement of free grace. These teachers—found within Puritanism, but associated more particularly with some of the smaller sects—were usually called "Antinomists", or "Antinomians", from their excessive repudiation of Law.³² (3) Those who endeavoured to stand clear of both these extremes were—in a somewhat question-begging manner—occasionally described as the "orthodox", or more usually by the name "Puritans". The fact that the main body of Puritans occupied this central position may perhaps justify the reservation of the title to them in this present study.³³

(i) *Origin of Antinomianism*

Antinomianism was the theological contrary to Puritanism in its

31. H. G. Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 513.

32. Thomas Gataker says they were called "Antinomians or Antinomists" from "their opposition to the mandatory and obligatory power of the Law morall, or the Decalog", *God's Eye*, 1645, p. 2. Cf. Ephraim Pagitt, *Heresiography*, 1645, p. 88; Henry Burton, *Law and Gospel Reconciled*, 1631, The Epistle Dedicatory; and John Graile who, in sweet moderation, speaks of some "whom the Orthodox, not out of malice, but for distinction sake, and for the due desert of some of their Tenents do call Antinomians". *Conditions in the Covenant of Grace*, 1655, p. 25.

33. In the following pages, the exclusive use of the term Puritan to indicate the "orthodox" does not deny the historical right of the Antinomians also to be called Puritans. The distinction in the names, however, may be regarded as endorsed by Samuel Rutherford in such a sentence as "Antinomians shall wish to die Puritans", *Survey*, Part II. p. 30.

doctrine of the Law of God in Christian experience. Apart from its early appearance in New Testament times,³⁴ and in Valentinian Gnosticism, the formal rise of Antinomianism has usually been associated with Johannes Agricola,³⁵ sometimes called Islebius, an active leader in the Lutheran Reformation.³⁶ In his search for some effective principle by which to combat the doctrine of salvation by works, Agricola denied that the believer was in any way obliged to fulfil the moral Law. In the Disputation with Luther at Wittenberg (1537), Agricola is alleged to have said that a man was saved by faith alone, without regard to his moral character.³⁷ These views of Agricola were denounced by Luther³⁸ as a caricature of the Gospel, but in spite of this, the Antinomians made repeated appeal to Luther's writings and claimed his support for their opinions.³⁹ This claim, however, is based merely on certain ambiguities in Luther's expressions, and general misunderstanding of the Reformer's teaching.

So far as England is concerned, the occasion of Antinomianism has been found by most modern writers in the political, social and spiritual ferment of the times;⁴⁰ but Richard Baxter makes the rueful comment that, "Antinomianism rose among us from our obscure Preaching of Evangelical Grace, and insisting too much on tears and terrors."⁴¹

34. *Romans* vi. 1-2.

35. 1492-1566.

36. "The first man that appeared under the name of an Antinomian was Joannes Islebius Agricola a Schoole-master or Reader of divinity in Eisleben". Samuel Rutherford, *Survey*, Part I. p. 68.

37. J. M. Sterrett, Article "Antinomianism," 1908, *ERE*, I. 581, 582.

38. The origin of the name "Antinomian" is attributed to Luther. See S. Cave, *The Christian Way*, 1949, p. 122.

39. Neither Luther nor Melanchthon is entirely unambiguous on this subject. See J. M. Sterrett, *op. cit.*, pp. 581, 582. On the one hand, Samuel Rutherford, in *Survey*, Part I, reproduces "A Treatise against Antinomians written in an Epistolary way, by D. Martin Luther, translated out of the high Dutch original; containing the minde of Luther against Antinomians", and he spends eighty-three pages in the exposition of Luther's denial of Antinomian tenets, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-163; while, on the other hand, J. Fletcher echoes the common allegations about Luther's "antinomian fits", *Fourth Check to Antinomianism*, in *Works*, 1772, II. 135, and attributes the "antinomianism" of the Synod of Dort to "what Luther's solifidian zeal had begun, and what Calvin's predestinarian mistakes had carried on." *An Equal Check to Pharisaism and Antinomianism*, Part I, in *Works*, 1774, II. 351. See, however, J. H. Blunt, Article "Antinomianism", *DDNT*, 1871, p. 31, where he attributes Antinomianism, not to Calvin's doctrine of predestination, but to his doctrine of imputed righteousness. On Luther's doctrine of the Law of God, see below, pp. 38-39.

40. A. F. Mitchell, *Westminster Assembly*, p. 343; S. W. Carruthers, *Everyday Work of the Westminster Assembly*, 1943, pp. 86-9; J. B. Marsden, *Early Puritans*, pp. 52, 53; and A. S. P. Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty*, Introduction.

41. *Nonconformists Ministry*, 1681, p. 226.

(ii) *Antinomian doctrine and practice*

The main object of the moderate Antinomians was to glorify Christ; but, failing to understand the true relation between "law" and "grace", they extolled the latter at the expense of the former. The issue raised by the Antinomians had its origin in the wide separation which they made between the Old and the New Testaments. They were unable to see that the Old Covenant was truly a Covenant of Grace, though differently presented from the New Covenant, and that the position of believers under the Old and New Covenants was the same. In some ways, it appears that the Antinomians brought themselves into difficulty by thinking of "Law" as if it were an entity to be done away, and of "Grace" as an entity taking its place; but this hypostatizing of "Law" and "Grace" was false, for in salvation it is *God* acting in His Law and *God* acting in His grace. Another difficulty to the Antinomians was their inability to make a clear enough distinction between justification and sanctification. This is particularly true of John Eaton throughout almost the whole of *Honey-combe*.⁴² Some of the questions which agitated their minds were whether the Covenant of Sinai was a covenant of works or of grace,⁴³ and whether justification was to be evidenced by sanctification.⁴⁴

Although some writers, such as Thomas Edwards (*Gangraena*), Samuel Rutherford and Richard Baxter, wrote violently against the Antinomians, it is nevertheless only fair to say that most of the extravagances of behaviour, which they so rightly denounced, made their appearance not in England, but in New England. Robert Traill found the Antinomians strict in their church discipline and virtuous in their personal conduct⁴⁵ and, having "both opportunity and inclination to inquire", he says, "For all the noise of Antinomianism, I must declare, that I do not know . . . any one Antinomian minister or Christian in London, who is really such as their reproachers paint them out, or such as Luther and Calvin wrote against."⁴⁶ It cannot be denied, however, that many fanatical persons were found among the

42. See below, p. 26.

43. See below, Chapter III.

44. For a general account of the theological aspects of Antinomianism, see J. M. Sterrett, *op. cit.*; A. H. Newman, Article "Antinomianism and Antinomian Controversies", 1908, *S-H: ERK*, I. 196-201; J. H. Blunt, *op. cit.*, pp. 30, 31.

45. *Justification Vindicated*, 1692, in *Works* I. 254. This is the verdict of Richard Baxter also, *Scripture Gospel Defended*, "Defence of Christ and Free Grace", 1690, p. 55, "far from wicked".

46. *Op. cit.*, p. 281. E. Calamy's accusation of them as "Patrons of free vice under the mask of free grace" is grossly unfair. *Sermon before the Lords, Christmas Day, 1644*; *qu.* by C. E. Whiting, *English Puritanism*, 1931, p. 268, who seems too readily to accept the second-hand criticism of the Antinomians.

Antinomians,⁴⁷ and that Antinomians "Doctrinall" tended to become Antinomians "practicall".⁴⁸

(iii) "*The chiefest Champions*" of Antinomianism

The leaders of the Antinomian party were named in a petition sent to the House of Commons by the Westminster Assembly on 10 August, 1643, when "the books complained of were Crisp's 'Christ Alone Exalted', Eaton's 'Honeycomb', 'The Dangerous Dish', 'The Doctrine and Conversation of John the Baptist', and 'Faith, a Sermon on Rev. iii. 18'. The individuals mentioned were Randall, Batt, Lancaster, Simpson, Haydon, Emerson, Erbury, Towne, and Penn."⁴⁹ Three of these, "Mr Randall, Mr Simpson, Mr Lancaster" are designated "three grand patrons and ring-leaders of this faction, what time they were convented before the worthy Committee of the honourable house of Commons in the Star-chamber".⁵⁰ Samuel Rutherford mentions "Ro Towne, who coldly refuteth Doctor Taylor", "M. Eaton in his Honey comb, and Saltmarsh of late false off conformity to Antinomianisme, and Tob. Crisp, a godly man (as is thought) But Melancholious, who having builded much on qualifications and signes, fell to the other extremity of no signes of sanctification at all", and he adds the names of Henry Denne, William Dell and Paul Hobson.⁵¹ One of the fascinating books of seventeenth century gossip is *Gangraena*, by Thomas Edwards, who declares that "the full Relation of the time-serving and Innovations of Denn, . . . Saltmarsh, . . . *cum multis aliis*, would make a new book".⁵² With his customary contempt, Richard Baxter says, "It was formerly a very rare thing to meet with a man of Learning or considerable Judgement, of that way: What men had Dr Taylor to deal with? Dr Crisp, Eaton, Town, were the chiefest Champions since, whom Mr Burgess, Mr Geree, Mr Bedford have confuted. At last Den, Paul Hobson, Mr Saltmarsh took the Chair: The later strangely cryed up by many ignorant souls, and his weakness laid open by that Excellent, Learned, Reverend Mr Gataker."⁵³ Who were these men and what were they like?

47. Henry Burton sees that theological Antinomianism leads to political Antinomianism; and warns Charles I to take action against "these sonnes of Belial thus undermining the Kings Throne", *Law and Gospel Reconciled*, The Epistle Dedicatory.

48. Cf. John Sedgwick, *Antinomianisme Anatomized*, 1643, pp. 29f. Some of the evidence about the practical Antinomians, often called "Ranters", will be found in William Penn, Preface to George Fox's *Journal*, I. xxv; Samuel Rutherford, *Survey*, Part I. pp. 1-31; J. B. Marsden, *Later Puritans*, pp. 223, 224; and H. W. Schneider, *Puritan Mind*, 1931, p. 65.

49. S. W. Carruthers, *Everyday Work of the Westminster Assembly*, p. 86.

50. Thomas Gataker, *God's Eye*, To the Reader.

51. *Survey*, Part I. p. 193.

52. *Gangraena*, 1646, p. 75 (faulty pagination).

53. *Apology*, "Admonition of Mr William Eyre", 1654, Preface.

John Eaton⁵⁴ is described by Thomas Gataker as "the first founder of this faction among us",⁵⁵ and he speaks, later, of Antinomians as "those, who from one of the first Authours thereof are commonly called Eatonists."⁵⁶ Stephen Gerec refers to him as "their fore-mentioned *Antesignanus* or Standard-bearer".⁵⁷

The first Antinomian among us (that I can hear of) was one Mr John Eaton who had been a Scholler of mine, and afterwards was Curate to Mr Wright, Parson of Catharine Colemā neare Algate, he was for his errors imprisoned in the Gate-house at Westminster. There is a booke set forth in his name, called the *Hony-comb of free Justification by Christ alone*, collected (as hee pretendeth) out of the meere authority of Scriptures, and common and unanimous consent of the faithfull Interpreters of Gods mysteries upon the same: the maine subject of which booke is to prove that God doth not, will not, nor cannot see any sin in any of his justified children.⁵⁸

Clashing with the authorities, he suffered "much hurry" and "divers imprisonments".⁵⁹ He was deprived of his living at Wickham Market, Suffolk, in 1619, as "an incorrigible divulger of errors and false opinions", and his writings were forbidden to be published in his lifetime. In spite of this, one of his biographers can say, "Though he committed some mistakes, in his assertions about the doctrines of grace, he was, upon the whole, 'a pattern of faith, holiness, and cheerfulness in his sufferings, to future generations'."⁶⁰

Tobias Crisp⁶¹ was a moderate man, despite the fact that Antinomianism is sometimes called "Crispianism".⁶² He is said to have begun his ministry "in the legal way", being himself "unblameable in his life and conversation"; but, later, having been brought to a knowledge of the doctrines of grace, he became exceedingly zealous in their propagation. One of his biographers states that his doctrine was "falsely charged with Antinomianism: though the innocency and harmlessness of his life, and his fervency in goodness, . . . was a manifest practical argument to confute the slanders of Satan, against the most holy faith which he preached".⁶³ Tobias Crisp had many detractors and many defenders, and those who defended him from

54. c. 1575-1641.

55. *God's Eye*, To the Reader.

56. *God's Eye*, p. 2.

57. *Plaine Confutation*, 1644, p. 5. Cf. A. Wood, *Athenae Oxon*, 1691, III, col. 21.

58. Ephraim Pagitt, *Heresiography*, p. 89.

59. John Eaton, *Honey-combe*, 1642, To the Reader.

60. B. Brook, *Lives*, II. 466.

61. 1600-1643.

62. E.g. the title of the anonymous book, *Crispianism Unmask'd*, 1693. J. Fletcher speaks of "Crispianity", *Fourth Check in Works*, II. 29.

63. J. Gill, "Memoirs of Tobias Crisp", in Tobias Crisp, *Works* (ed. Gill), 1832, I. vi.

the charge of Antinomianism pointed to his sermons on *Free-Grace the Teacher of Good Works*, and *The Use of the Law*.⁶⁴ Tobias Crisp's opinions so commended themselves to John Gill, two centuries later, that he edited them in 1832, adding footnotes and clearing Tobias Crisp from the accusations brought against him.⁶⁵ He was "altogether unblameable in his Conversation", and his "life was so innocent . . . that it seems to be set forth as a manifest practical argument" against the slander of those who would insinuate that his doctrine tended to licentiousness.⁶⁶ Despite all that can be said in favour of the orthodoxy of Tobias Crisp, his name has come down in history as "one of the champions of Antinomianism"⁶⁷ and it appears that Benjamin Brook is correct when he writes,

Persons who have embraced sentiments which afterwards appear to them erroneous, often think they can never remove too far from them; and the more remote they go from their former opinions, the nearer they come to the truth. This was unhappily the case with Dr Crisp. His ideas of the grace of Christ had been exceedingly low, and he had imbibed sentiments which produced in him a legal and self-righteous spirit. Shocked at the recollection of his former views and conduct, he seems to have imagined that he could never go far enough from them.⁶⁸

Robert Towne⁶⁹ is described by Oliver Heywood as "the famous Antinomian, who writ some books; he was the best scholar and soberest man of that judgment in the country, but something unsound in principles".⁷⁰ Like John Eaton and Tobias Crisp, he appears to have been a man of good character. He frequently repudiated the charge of being an Antinomian, and said in reply to Thomas Taylor, "If the Doctor himself had not been foulely guiltie of wresting and perverting our words and meaning . . . he had never numbred us amongst Antinomists, Abrogaters of the Law, Libertines", and he affirms, "We also do condemne and disclaim all that opinion and Sect."⁷¹ Despite Oliver Heywood's praise of his scholarship, Robert

64. These are Sermon 3 (four sermons in one) and Sermon 9, which were added by Samuel Crisp to *Christ Alone Exalted* (1643) in 1690. Cf. Tobias Crisp, *Works*, IV. 25-74, 89-95.

65. B. Brook quotes Daniel Williams as saying that what is exceptionable in his writings "arises chiefly from unqualified expressions, rather than from the author's main design." *Lives*, II. 474.

66. Robert Lancaster, Preface to Tobias Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, in *Works*, I.

67. *DNB*: cf. Isaac Ambrose, *Prima, Media, & Ultima*, "The Middle Things", 1650, p. 14, "Dr. Crisp our open adversary".

68. *Lives*, II. 473.

69. c. 1593-1663.

70. *Diaries*, 1630-1702, IV. 7.

71. *Assertion of Grace*, 1644, pp. 152, 153.

Towne showed himself to be confused in some of his statements, and unable to see the full implication of his own arguments.

John Saltmarsh,⁷² from being a zealous advocate of episcopacy and conformity, became an eccentric champion of complete religious liberty; although "his controversial manner is gentle and dignified", being a spiritual writer rather than an eminent theologian.⁷³ Samuel Rutherford denounced him as a Familist who taught that "A Christian is not bound to the Law as a rule of his Christian walking", and "To act by vertue of, or in obedience to a command is a Law-Worke."⁷⁴ Benjamin Brook says more calmly that, "It appears from Mr Saltmarsh's writings, that he was strongly tinged with the principles of antinomianism."⁷⁵

D. THE DEFENDERS OF PURITAN ORTHODOXY

The men who came forward as defenders of Puritan orthodoxy were as colourful personalities as those who opposed them. The list includes such outstanding persons as Thomas Gataker, Samuel Rutherford, and Richard Baxter,⁷⁶ together with others such as John Preston, Thomas Taylor, John Ball, John Sedgwick, Anthony Burgess, Edward Elton, and the anonymous author of *The Marrow*.

Thomas Gataker⁷⁷ stands out as a giant in the controversies of his time. His academic career was brilliant but short, and it is said that he refused to proceed to a D.D., one reason being that "like Cato the censor, he would rather have people ask why he had no statue than why he had one." His scholarship was vast, and he possessed an astonishing memory. He was a distinguished Hebrew and Greek scholar, "one of the first in Britain to write in defence of the opinion . . . that the Greek of the New Testament was of a different character from that of the classical authors."⁷⁸ He exercised a powerful ministry in Rotherhithe for forty-three years, and in 1643 was appointed to the Westminster Assembly, being elected in 1645 to the committee of seven, charged with the preparation of the first draft of the *Confession of Faith*. Thomas Gataker's views on justification, being different from those of many of the Puritans, had something in common with those of Richard Baxter; but, out of respect for the Westminster Assembly, he ordered that his work, *An Antidote*

72. Died 1647.

73. *DNB*, in loc.

74. Samuel Rutherford, *Survey*, Part I. pp. 172, 174.

75. B. Brook, *Lives*, III. 74 and D. Neal, *History of the Puritan*

76. Cf. C. A. Briggs, *Study of Theology*, II. 151-4.

77. 1574-1654.

78. A. F. Mitchell, *Westminster Assembly*, pp. 121, 122.

against *Error Concerning Justification*, should not be published during his life-time.⁷⁹

Not less interesting than Thomas Gataker was Samuel Rutherford,⁸⁰ the staunch Presbyterian of Anwoth and St Andrews, Scotland, of which latter university he was made Principal in 1647. He was "a little fair man", but what he lacked in stature he made up in vigour. He had a brilliant intellect and was a powerful writer, and, "naturally of a hot and fiery temper", he was one of the most perfervid of Scotsmen. In controversy he was "bitter and scurrilous", and by his narrowness "he helped to destroy the presbyterianism which he loved so well." Violently opposed to episcopacy, he was equally antagonistic to independency. His work, *A Free Disputation against Pretended Liberty of Conscience*, has been described as "perhaps the most elaborate defence of persecution which has ever appeared in a protestant country."⁸¹ His most notable contribution to the Antinomian controversy was entitled, *A Survey of the Spiritual Antichrist*. It was described by Richard Baxter as "one of the fullest . . . against the Errors of this Sect, and very usefull to the godly in these seducing times."⁸² For his political activities he was cited before Parliament on a charge of treason, but death intervened.⁸³

Richard Baxter⁸⁴ was a man by himself. He took a full share in the political and ecclesiastical controversies of his time, and he sided with Parliament against the King. His work has been variously estimated, according to the viewpoint from which the judgment is made, but the high quality of his ministry as a pastor of the flock cannot be gainsaid. By his immense labours in Kidderminster (1641-60), his name has become almost a symbol of pastoral faithfulness. Although not academically trained, Richard Baxter read voraciously and wrote voluminously, his works having all the marks of a trained mind. His individualism undoubtedly revealed itself in the theological position he adopted—an individualism which earned for his views the name "Baxterianism".⁸⁵ He held a Grotian⁸⁶ view of the work of Christ, and accepted many characteristically Arminian⁸⁷ ideas,

79. *DNB* and B. Brook, *Lives*, in loc.

80. 1600-61.

81. *DNB*, in loc.

82. *Apology*, "Admonition of Mr William Eyre", Postscript.

83. *DNB*, in loc.

84. 1615-91. "He formed no party but kept a position of his own." G. F. Nuttall, *Holy Spirit*, 1946, p. 169.

85. Cf. the title of the book by Thomas Edwards bearing that name, 1699.

86. *Scripture Gospel Defended*, "Breviate of Justification", 1690, The Preface. Cf. Richard Baxter, *Justification*, 1658, p. 264.

87. *Universal Redemption*, 1694, pp. 110 ff. 186 ff. K. R. Hagenbach says, "His theological system has been termed Baxterian, intermediate between Calvinism and Arminianism", *Christian Doctrines*, 1880, II. 464. Cf. J. I. Packer, "The Thought of Richard Baxter", 1954, pp. 256-70.

although it is probably better to describe him as Amyraldian.⁸⁸ One of his opponents, John Crandon, had no hesitation in thinking the worst, and spoke of the "Papists and Arminians, to whom Mr Br not without some fellowes, hath lately Apostatized."⁸⁹

It is with Richard Baxter's views on the Law of God that the present study is particularly concerned, and his arguments are summarized in *Aphorismes*. So strong was his dislike of Antinomianism⁹⁰ that he fell into the opposite extreme of Neonomianism,⁹¹ and thus exposed himself to the attacks of many of his orthodox friends. The Neonomianism of Richard Baxter is discussed below,⁹² but it must be noticed here that it was this which distinctly separated him from the main stream of Puritan thought. For his own part, Richard Baxter professed to be completely unaware of any departure from the established doctrines. He said that his *Confession* was perused by James Ussher, who "altered not a word in it", and he added, "I got him and Mr Gataker to read it (and it was the last Work that Mr Gataker did in the World, as his Epistle and his Sons shew)."⁹³ Some of his arguments against Antinomianism were used by him for the support of his own peculiar ideas, but, abstracted from the misdirection he gave them, they are valuable in proof of the continuing use of the Law in the life of the believer.⁹⁴

The anonymous author of *The Marrow* calls for the historian's notice, if only because of the controversy named after his book.⁹⁵ The book seems not at first to have attracted much attention, but only gradually to have emerged into public notice by almost fortuitous

88. In *Aphorismes*, 1649, Appendix, p. 164, Richard Baxter says, "The last week I have received Amiralduus ... who hath opened my very heart, almost in my owne words." He became Amyraldian in so far as he denied the "double decree" and asserted universal redemption. J. I. Packer rebuts "the charge that Baxter is vague and inconsistent", and he identifies his distinctive theology "as an improved amyraldism". Op. cit., abstract, p. (g), and pp. 459-62.

89. *Aphorismes Exorized*, 1654, The Epistle Dedicatory; cf. Part I. pp. 272-76. John Crandon obviously goes to excess in his dislike of Richard Baxter. The accusation of being a "Papist" is not to be understood in the literal sense of supposing Richard Baxter to have become a secret member of the Church of Rome (as Richard Baxter himself seems to think John Crandon means, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Part I. p. 110), but indicates the milieu of his thinking. Cf. John Owen, *Justification*, 1677, in *Works*, V. 137, 138.

90. D. M. McIntyre, "First Strictures", in *Evangelical Quarterly*, X. 1, January 1938, p. 68, calls him "the hammer of the Antinomians".

91. J. I. Packer says, "Antinomianism was the midwife which finally brought Baxter's system to birth", op. cit., p. 227. This is undoubtedly true, and Richard Baxter tells how he "narrowly escaped" Antinomianism. (*Aphorismes*, Appendix, p. 163).

92. See below pp. 204 ff.

93. *Scripture Gospel Defended*, "Defence of Christ and Free Grace", To the Reader.

94. *DNB*, and many other works.

95. See the comparatively recent discussion by D. M. McIntyre, op. cit.

circumstances. "I found it lying in my friends houses", says John Crandon.⁹⁶ Thomas Boston, who championed the book in Scotland, being troubled about the legalism of his preaching, says,

As I was sitting one day in a house of Simprin, I espied above the window-head two little old books, which when I had taken down, I found entitled, the one *The Marrow of modern divinity*, the other *Christ's blood flowing freely to sinners*. . . . Finding them to point to the subject I was in particular concern about, I brought them both away. The latter, a book of Saltmarsh's, I relished not; and I think I returned it without reading it quite through. The other, being the first part only of the *Marrow*, I relished greatly; and having purchased it at length from the owner, kept it from that time to this day; and it is still to be found among my books.⁹⁷

There can be no doubt about the influence of this work, but few Puritan writings were more misunderstood in later years than this one.⁹⁸

E. CONTROVERSY

(i) *Difficulties and prejudices*

There was considerable misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the Antinomians by those who opposed them. This was caused partly by the "hearsay" reports of Antinomian teaching, which lost nothing in the telling,⁹⁹ although it is possible that some of the Antinomian preachers were less restrained in the pulpit than in their writings. The misunderstandings may also have been partly due to the uncertainties of meaning that were inherent in the discussion itself.¹⁰⁰

96. *Aphorisms Exorized*, Part II. p. 154.

97. *A General Account of my Life*, 1730, pp. 150-52.

98. Richard Baxter ought to have recognized a friend in this book, but he opposed it and spoke of "*The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, which on pretence of Moderation is Antinomian or Libertine, and very injudicious and unsound". *Scripture Gospel Defended*, "Breviate of Justification", The Preface; cf. *Aphorismes*, p. 330, and Appendix, pp. 99-106.

99. For examples of this second-hand reporting, see Thomas Gataker, *God's Eye, To the Reader*, where such generalizations occur as, "one of them in the Pulpit", "averted by not a few, that then heard him", "delivered by him in private, and defended in publike". Robert Towne complains, "They are pleased to mistake the controverted points, and so to quarrel for what we never asserted. . . . We decry duties, say they; are against Repentance; teach that the Law is of no use; would cast it out of the Church. But where do they read or finde these?" *Re-assertion*, 1654, Preface, and p. 47.

100. Isaac Chauncy, "But you call that Evangelical, which we call Legal." *Neonomianism Unmask'd*, 1692, Part I. p. 5; Richard Baxter, *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, 1691, pp. 17 f., and *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Part I. p. 134, "separating the real from the verbal".

The exceptionable Antinomian statements about the perfection of believers were often little more than the indiscreet overflow of thought from their impassioned defence of free grace. As regards ill-considered expressions, J. B. Marsden makes an apt remark when he says of Tobias Crisp's works, "A person skilled in theology will perceive that many of his statements are capable of a sound interpretation. But they misled the ignorant and occasioned grievous errors."¹⁰¹ This fair statement is true of many of the other Antinomian writers, although it cannot be denied that they did occasionally run to excess.

A further factor in discussions of this kind is that until a heresy arises the indefiniteness of expression of an earlier speaker or writer does not necessarily implicate him in that heresy, and the making of any such charge is an anachronism.¹⁰² Many of Luther's words, for example, need to be construed in the light of Robert Traill's opinion that if men could foresee future controversies they would alter their speech.¹⁰³ A recollection of this difficulty may perhaps exonerate the Antinomians from the charge, which Thomas Gataker brings against them, of deliberately abusing the authority of Luther and Calvin.¹⁰⁴

In accordance with the pattern of seventeenth century intolerance, measures were taken by the authorities to suppress Antinomianism. Thomas Gataker, in a speech in the Westminster Assembly, pressed for Parliamentary action against the Antinomians, and asked, "Is it not high time to require them to be suppressed?"¹⁰⁵ "Gangraena" Edwards declares for no toleration,¹⁰⁶ because it is too long since an example was made.¹⁰⁷ Demanding that magistrates should burn the books of the Antinomians, he exclaims, "O what a burnt-offering, a sweet smelling sacrifice would this be to God."¹⁰⁸ The Westminster Assembly concerned itself with Antinomianism as one of their first duties, and they presented a petition to the Commons who, in turn, and on the same day, appointed a committee to investigate this

101. *Later Puritans*, p. 227. J. Gill's edition of the *Works* of Tobias Crisp, was specially produced to indicate the possibilities of a "sound" interpretation of Tobias Crisp's language.

102. Isaac Chauncy, *Rejoynder*, 1693, p. 45.

103. *Justification Vindicated*, in *Works*, I. 262. Cf. Robert Towne, *Re-assertion*, p. 18, 19.

104. *God's Eye*, Preface. Against John Eaton: "He abuseth divers places of Luther, Calvin and other worthy Divines, who in all likelihood never once dreamed of this his fancy."

105. S. W. Carruthers, *Everyday Work of the Westminster Assembly*, p. 90.

106. *Gangraena*, p. 119.

107. *Op. cit.*, p. 147.

108. *Op. cit.*, p. 171. The demands of Thomas Edwards were adopted by the authorities, and some of the Antinomians were imprisoned and their books burned.

danger.¹⁰⁹ Keen debates were conducted in the Assembly at numerous sessions in January and February, 1645, on the Law of God and on Christian liberty.¹¹⁰

In addition to the public action that was taken against the Antinomians, there were many irresponsible accusations of heresy, joined with colourful language.¹¹¹ There was much point-scoring which did not materially advance the discussion.¹¹² Sometimes these pamphlets were marked by the lavish employment of abusive epithets, but as the majority of pamphleteers employed the same sort of weapons nobody seemed to be greatly disturbed.¹¹³ It scarcely needs to be said that by those on the right the Puritans were called "Libertines", and by those on the left they were called "Legalists". Some of those who were embroiled in the controversies pleaded for a dropping of all such names, but nevertheless fell into the use of them. Their opponents retorted that this desire to be relieved of the name was due to a deceitful intention to avoid the implications of their views.¹¹⁴ In the various heresiographies¹¹⁵ of the time, the Antinomians were made to figure prominently.¹¹⁶ Samuel Rutherford was the most vitriolic of all the opponents of Antinomianism and, unhappily, had no scruples about ignoring the distinction between moderate Antinomians and the fanatical extremists whom he denounced.¹¹⁷ He put them all together with the Katharoi (called Puritans), who taught that regenerate men could not sin. On the title page of *A Survey of the Spiritual Antichrist*,

109. *Journal of the House of Commons*, 10 August, 1643, p. 201; cf. S. W. Carruthers, *op. cit.*, p. 86.
110. A. F. Mitchell and J. Struthers, *Minutes*, pp. 177-211.
111. There is some humour in John Crandon who, having referred to Richard Baxter's way of deprecating the intelligence of his opponents, says, "Who can abstain from laughter, to see so great a Nimrod as Mr Baxter, hunting, with no lesse weapon then Hercules his Club, a nest of wrens to death?" *Aphorisms Exorized*, Part I, p. 263. Richard Baxter's description of John Crandon's work is equally interesting. He calls it a "dish adorned with the flowers of Billingsgate Rhetorick", *Apology*, "Admonition of Mr William Eyre", Postscript.
112. Robert Towne says to Anthony Burgess, "You are better skilled in tying knots, then in unloosing any", *Re-assertion*, p. 124.
113. Not all the writers were violent, and A. F. Mitchell points out that Thomas Gataker was notable for the "gentle spirit" of his share in the Antinomian controversy. *Westminster Assembly*, p. 122.
114. Thomas Gataker, *Antinomianism*, 1652, p. 34. Richard Baxter might have been inspired by this escape-motive when he said—albeit quite truly—that the "greatest enemy ... is mens studying onely names and words, instead of things". *Aphorismes*, To the Reader.
115. "The famous drag-nets of heresy", R. M. Jones, *Spiritual Reformers*, 1928, p. 254.
116. Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena*, p. 36, charges the Antinomians with one hundred and seventy-six errors, ranging from a denial of the Trinity to eating blackpuddings; Ephraim Pagitt, *Heresiography*; Thomas Welde, *Rise, reigne, and ruine*, 1644; Samuel Rutherford, *Survey*, Part I; Richard Baxter, *Scripture Gospel Defended*, "Defence of Christ and Free Grace", Chapter 2, entitled, "An Hundred of their Errours described".
117. "Not a very safe witness," says R. M. Jones, *Spiritual Reformers*, p. 87.

he associates the Antinomians with Familists, Libertines, Schwenckfeldians and Enthusiasts,¹¹⁸ and in a subsequent chapter he provides the genealogy: "Libertines sprang from the Gnosticks, Familists from Libertines, Antinomians from both."¹¹⁹

(ii) *The writings*

It would be a mistake to dismiss this controversy as merely horse-play or an exhibition of bad feeling. The majority of the preachers and writers involved were men possessed by a deep moral earnestness and—rightly or wrongly—they saw important spiritual issues in jeopardy. Of the profound learning of the Puritans much has been said, and does not need to be told again, but this reminder of their immense erudition serves to check any false assumptions that the controversy about the Law of God was due to ignorant prejudice. Their work was marked by industrious¹²⁰ research into the writings of classical authors, and full use of the learning of the past. The pages of their writings were liberally interspersed with quotations in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, and contained grammatical discussions that turned on an intimate knowledge of these languages. The writers made frequent display of the syllogism, as they caught one another with its rules, and employed it for defence or attack. The systematic works of the Puritans were monumental. Their authors surveyed the evidence and marshalled the arguments with a precision that was minute and an order that was massive, leaving an impression on the modern reader of something majestic.¹²¹

Although the works of the Puritans were weighty with learning, they were not intended to be merely academic.¹²² The Puritans were the custodians of a practical divinity;¹²³ they were the doctors of the Christian life. Their conviction of the continuing obligation of the moral Law of God meant that there were duties to fulfil, and also

118. A general term, used in the seventeenth century to denote fanatics, particularly those who claimed to be independent of the help of the Scriptures.

119. *Survey*, Part I. p. 163. The book is full of extravagant accusations which were applicable only to the extremists.

120. On their industry, see P. Miller, *New England Mind*, 1939, p. 21.

121. There is a valuable article on Puritan preaching and philosophical principles written by J. M'Cosh as an Introduction to the *Works* of Stephen Charnock, I. vii-xlviii.

122. B. B. Warfield says, "Puritan thought was almost entirely occupied with loving study of the work of the Holy Spirit, and found its highest expression in dogmatico-practical expositions of the several aspects of it." Introductory Note to A. Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, 1900, p. xxviii (1946 edition) cf. G. F. Nuttall, *Holy Spirit*, p. 7, who says that the Puritan interest is "experimental" and a "theologia pectoris".

123. The first sentence of William Ames in the *Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, 1641, reads, "Divinity is the doctrine of living to God", p. 1, and adds, "It is of it selfe manifest, that Divinity is practicall, and not a speculative discipline", p. 3. cf. Richard Baxter, *Confession*, 1655, p. 115.

that there were comforting evidences of godliness for which the child of God was entitled to look. The Puritans were not abstract theologians; they were preachers in a pastoral setting, and in their sermons these practical implications were made plain by the custom of indicating the many "Uses" of the doctrines they had established.¹²⁴

The preaching of the Puritans was closely heeded by their congregations. Not everybody possessed the exegetical skill of the preachers, but the people were able to understand the arguments and to keep pace with the debate. Crowds came to hear the sermons and to discuss the issues raised. The flood of printed sermons bore witness to the controversies being followed, not merely by the intellectuals, but by the ordinary people. Occasionally, discussions were printed in dialogue form, and in nearly every instance at least one of the participants was described as an earnest enquirer, or by some title of similar meaning. This form of writing, although a literary device, was a witness to the fact that there were many such seeking minds among the people.¹²⁵

The course of the controversy was partly reflected in the books that were written to answer the arguments of an opponent. Sometimes the work of the author under examination was taken to pieces almost sentence by sentence, being either quoted or misquoted, and then subjected to keen criticism. A broadside was fired by one writer, which received answering salvos from another, and this occasionally continued through several rounds of reply and counter-reply. It would be tedious to set out all the inter-relations of the books involved, but the following are of particular interest. In answer to Thomas Taylor, *Regula Vitae* (1631), and to John Sedgwick, *Antinomianisme Anatomized* (1643), Robert Towne wrote *Assertion of Grace* (1644), which, being attacked by Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis* (1646), was defended by *A Re-Assertion* (1654). John Saltmarsh in *Free-Grace* (1645) allowed some remarks implicating Thomas Gataker in his Antinomian views, to which Thomas Gataker replied in, *A Mistake, or Misconstruction removed (whereby little difference is pretended to have been acknowledged between Antinomians and us)* (1646). This was answered by John Saltmarsh in *Reasons* (1646), which, in turn, was refuted by Thomas Gataker in *Shadows without Substance* (1646), and received a reply from John Saltmarsh in *Sparkles of Glory* (1647). Henry Denne's *Man of Sin Discovered* (1645) was answered by Thomas Bedford in *An Examination* (1646), and Richard Baxter's *Aphorismes* (1649) received a sharp retort from John Crandon in

124. "They do most excel in handling the Doctrines of the Gospel, who make it their work to joyn the Practical, and the Speculative together." Thomas Temple, *To the Reader*, in Simon Ford, *Spirit of Bondage and Adoption*, 1655.

125. This is borne out also by the enormous number of catechisms that appeared at this time. See A. F. Mitchell, *Catechisms*, 1886, Introduction, p. ix.

Aphorisms Exorized (1653)¹²⁶ and from William Eyre in *Free Justification* (1654). The latter was answered by John Graile in *Conditions in the Covenant of Grace* (1655) and by Benjamin Woodbridge's *Method of Grace* (1656).

The sermons of Tobias Crisp set in motion the longest chain of books carrying on their title page some such words as "Reply" or "Rejoynder to the Reply". His fourteen sermons *Christ Alone Exalted* made their appearance in 1643, and received an immediate answer from Stephen Geree in *A Plaine Confutation* (1643), and the reprinting of these sermons, at the end of the century, gave the signal for the renewal of the conflict. Richard Baxter started the attack by writing *Scripture Gospel Defended* (1690) and was supported by the author of *Crispianism Unmask'd* (1693), both of whom received a reply from Thomas Edwards, the former being answered in *Baxterianism Barefac'd* (1699), and the latter, by *A Short Review of Crispianism Unmask'd* (1693). At the same time Daniel Williams entered the conflict with *Gospel-Truth* (1692), and was answered by Robert Traill in *Justification Vindicated* (1692) and by Isaac Chauncy in *Neonomianism Unmask'd* (1692). Daniel Williams replied with *Defence of Gospel Truth* (1693), to which Isaac Chauncy gave his *Rejoynder* (1693) and *Fresh Antidote* (1700).

F. PERIOD UNDER REVIEW

It is not easy to decide the limits of discussion of a subject with, so to speak, premonitory rumblings and continuing echoes. There were events, however, which helped to mark out the period and which confined it very nearly to the precise boundaries of the seventeenth century. The opening year of that century saw the publication of the works of Richard Greenham, 1601, being followed two years later by the works of Richard Rogers, 1603. These two men are described by William Haller as "the first of the spiritual preachers to achieve full expression in writing",¹²⁷ and so may well be used to mark the beginning of the period for study. In 1691 Richard Baxter, one year before his death, published¹²⁸—either with amazing optimism or

126. "Exorized" comes possibly from ἐξορίζω, meaning to banish or send over the frontier; "authorized" comes possibly from ἀντι-ὀρίζω which underlies the English word "Anuthorism", meaning a counter-definition, or a definition differing from that given by an opponent. The title might, therefore, be rendered, "expelled and contradicted".

127. *Rise of Puritanism*, p. 54 cf. p. 36, where he describes Richard Roger's *Seven Treatises*, 1603, as "the first important exposition of the code of behavior which expressed ... the Puritan conception of the spiritual and moral life. As such it inaugurated a literature the extent and influence of which in all departments of life can hardly be exaggerated." At this time also there appeared the great work of William Perkins, 1558-1602.

128. It was written some twenty years earlier.

with appalling egotism—*An End of Doctrinal Controversies*;¹²⁹ and this may be taken approximately as the event at which to terminate the survey.¹³⁰

The writings which belonged to the second outbreak of the Antinomian controversy at the end of the century do not directly add much of theological value to the discussion, but are largely taken up with alternating attacks upon and vindications of Tobias Crisp and Richard Baxter, the two dominant figures of the controversy.¹³¹ There is no doubt that the external history of the second outbreak of the controversy was precipitated by Samuel Crisp's republication of his father's sermons, and the addition of some new ones, in the winter of 1689–90. It thus came to have more of a "Crispian" character than the former Antinomian controversy.¹³² After the death of Richard Baxter, Daniel Williams took up the quarrel with the Antinomians, and was answered by Isaac Chauncy, but many of the ministers of the time expressed interest in Isaac Chauncy's type of "Antinomianism" in preference to the "Baxterian half-way house to Arminianism", for, as Bishop Burnet told Edmund Calamy, "such as declared for the middle way, must at last, when pressed, fall into the Arminian scheme".¹³³ It is clear that at this stage the debate moved out to wider spheres than the place of the Law of God in the life of the believer and so went beyond the scope of the present study. From being Antinomian, or Neonomian, or "Baxterian", the controversy ultimately showed itself to be Arminian.¹³⁴

The writings, therefore, which are taken as the authoritative sources for the present study of the Puritan doctrine of the Law of God in the life of the believer are those which emanated from the seventeenth-century preachers, and are bounded approximately by the authors mentioned above. In so far as the doctrine was a preached doctrine, and was one of immediate practical significance, only those

129. In 1664 Richard Baxter's self-confidence allowed him to write, "I must here record my Thanks to God for the Success of my Controversial Writings against the Antinomians." *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Part I. p. 111.

130. Another way of describing this period is to regard it as extending from the beginning of the Puritan ascent to the Pulpit until the second outbreak of the Antinomian controversy.

131. The outbreak of controversy at the end of the seventeenth century deserves as much to be called Neonomian, or "Baxterian", as Antinomian. Robert Traill refers to the storm that broke at that time and says, "Some think, that the reprinting of Dr Crisp's book gave the first rise to it. But we must look farther back for its true spring" (*Justification Vindicated*, in *Works*, I. 252); and by this he means the "Arminianism" of Richard Baxter. Cf. Isaac Chauncy, *Neonomianism Unmask'd*, Part I. pp. 3, 10.

132. The Crispian controversy was touched off by the doubts whether these hitherto unpublished sermons were authentic. G. R. Cragg, *Puritanism in Persecution*, 1957, pp. 253, 254.

133. E. Calamy, *Historical Account*, 1731, I. 471.

134. See title page of Isaac Chauncy, *Neonomianism Unmask'd*.

writings which appeared in English, and for the guidance of the ordinary believer, are included. The name "Puritan" is taken to include those who, standing not merely for ecclesiastical reform, but also for a new spiritual earnestness of life, were either deprived of their benefices before 1662 or ejected from the ministry after that year, together with those whose sympathies were with the Puritans but who, for various worthy reasons, either did not take the step of separation or were not affected by the contemporary repressive legislation.¹³⁵ Writers who were not strictly within the boundaries described, but who nevertheless belonged to the Puritans by affinity of spirit, are indicated in footnotes.¹³⁶

G. THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

(i) *Indebtedness to the Reformers*

The Puritans freely and constantly acknowledged their indebtedness to Luther and Calvin, and claimed no originality for their doctrines,¹³⁷ but this does not mean that Puritan theology was no more than a re-issue of continental thought.¹³⁸ It is nevertheless true that the teaching of the Reformers provided both the background and the material of their thinking, and all the writers of the period, Antinomian and Puritan alike, made it plain that to be able to enlist the support of Luther or Calvin gave them great satisfaction.¹³⁹

So far as the doctrine of the Law of God in the life of the believer is concerned, the views of Luther and Calvin largely coincided.¹⁴⁰ It has been traditional in post-Reformation theology to speak of the three uses of the Law—*usus politicus*, to restrain sin; *usus pedagogus*, to lead to Christ, and *usus normativus*, to determine the believer's conduct. Lutherans and Calvinists concur in these three, but differ slightly in the stress they lay on the *usus normativus*. The Lutherans give but a very small place in their system to the *tertius usus legis*, and some doubt lingers as to whether Luther accepted it at all. H. H. Kramm, in a fairly recent study has no hesitation in saying that Luther did acknowledge it and writes, "I think it is clearly implied

135. This also refers to men like James Ussher, Edward Reynolds and others of the earlier decades, for whom the issue of nonconformity, or, ultimately, of separation did not exist.

136. Secondary sources for the present study do not abound, as most recent works on the Puritans are more concerned with polity, and only indirectly with doctrine.

137. Their writings show, however, that they themselves drank from the same fountain of inspiration—Augustine—as did the Reformers. See Perry Miller, *New England Mind*, pp. 4, 5.

138. See below, p. 42.

139. Perry Miller shows no hesitation in arguing for the fundamentally Calvinistic nature of Puritan doctrine. "Puritan Divinity", 1935, *Publications*, XXXII, pp. 247-54.

140. Cf. E. Brunner, *Divine Imperative*, 1937, pp. 99-101, 594.

in his writings and teaching that the Law has still some value for the believer. . . . I would say: it is like a compass, indicating the general direction of a journey, not like a detailed map prescribing certain roads."¹⁴¹ There is at the same time, no question that Luther thought little of the strict requirements of the Law. H. H. Kramm points this out in Luther's opinions about divorce,¹⁴² and explains Luther's famous *pecca fortiter* in the light of a non-rigid observance of the Law.¹⁴³ From a positive point of view, Luther acknowledged the third use when he taught that the Holy Spirit "makes heart, soul, body, works and manner of life new and writes God's commandments . . . on hearts of flesh according to 2 Corinthians iii."¹⁴⁴

Calvin put much stress on the *usus normativus*. He described it as "the principal one, and which is more nearly connected with the proper end of it,"¹⁴⁵ and he made it the foundation of his doctrine of sanctification. He held that it was the office of the Law to remind believers of their duty, and thereby to excite them to the pursuit of holiness and integrity.¹⁴⁶ He considered that the principal use of the Law was to instruct believers in the way of spiritual life,¹⁴⁷ and emphasizes continually that respect must be paid by the believer to the sovereign authority of God.¹⁴⁸

In making a comparison of the views of Luther and Calvin on this subject, J. S. Whale gives his judgment that "Whereas Luther distinguishes Law and Gospel and ever gives the pre-eminence to the latter, Calvin unites them; sometimes he comes near to transforming the Gospel into a new Law."¹⁴⁹

There was a corresponding general agreement between Luther and Calvin on the saving significance of the Covenant of Grace, so closely related to the doctrine of the Law of God. The covenant idea lay at the foundation of their teaching about the application to sinners of the merits of the work of Christ; but W. Adams Brown shows that, in contradistinction to the theologians of the next century, Luther and Calvin did not bring God's dealings with Adam in Paradise under the covenant idea, nor did they know of any covenant between God and man, save the Covenant of Grace.¹⁵⁰

141. *Theology of Martin Luther*, p. 61.

142. *Op. cit.*, pp. 62, 63.

143. *Op. cit.*, pp. 65, 66.

144. *Works of Martin Luther*, "On the Councils and the Churches", V. 267 f., quoted in H. T. Kerr, *A Compend of Luther's Theology*, 1943, p. 113.

145. *Inst.* 1559, II. vii. 12.

146. *Inst.* III. xix. 2. Cf. Louis Berkhof, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1941, pp. 614, 615.

147. *Inst.* II. vii. 12.

148. "The law has sustained no diminution of its authority, but ought always to receive from us the same veneration and obedience." *Inst.* II. vii. 15.

149. *Protestant Tradition*, 1955, p. 164.

150. Article "Covenant Theology", 1911, *ERE*, IV. 216-24. The first specific treatise on the covenant appears to have been that of Bullinger, in 1534, who, likewise, perceived "only one covenant, the covenant of grace."

(iii) *Anglican affinities*

The doctrinal affinities of Puritanism with Anglicanism are plain. There was what P. Miller and T. H. Johnson call "the vast substratum of agreement which actually underlay the disagreement between Puritans and Anglicans."

Even while fighting bitterly against each other, the Puritans and Anglicans stood shoulder to shoulder against what they called "enthusiasm". The leaders of the Puritan movement were trained at the universities, they were men of learning and scholars; no less than the Anglicans did they demand that religion be interpreted by study and logical exposition; they were both resolute against all pretences to immediate revelation, against all ignorant men who claimed to receive personal instructions from God.¹⁶³

There was "a mutual consent in doctrine" on the part of the Bishops and of the Puritans, and "much of what afterwards came to be named puritanic was then accepted and valued by almost all who favoured the principles of the Reformation."¹⁶⁴ A comparison of the *Articles of Religion* of the Church of England¹⁶⁵ with the *Confession of Faith* of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster¹⁶⁶ demonstrates this fundamental unity of outlook. There was an approximation of belief on such articles as the Doctrine of Scripture, the Trinity, Creation and Providence, the Person of Christ, the Fall of Man, Sin, Election and Predestination, Justification, and Sanctification.

This close doctrinal relation between Puritanism and Anglicanism persisted until the end of the reign of Elizabeth I,¹⁶⁷ but a gradual change became perceptible as Anglicanism, under Richard Hooker, drifted more to philosophy and history, Puritanism of the left moved away from dogma towards humanitarianism, and orthodox Puritanism became more Biblical and theological.¹⁶⁸

Practical divinity—"the universal interest of the seventeenth century"¹⁶⁹—which was the chief concern of the Puritans, received treatment also from the Carolines, but in a different manner. The moral theology of the Carolines differed from that of the Puritans, in that the Carolines were concerned to destroy the "legalism" of the Roman Catholic morality,¹⁷⁰ basing their arguments on an appeal to

163. P. Miller and T. H. Johnson: *The Puritans*, 1938, p. 10.

164. A. F. Mitchell, *Westminster Assembly*, p. 326. 165. 1562.

166. 1647. 167. J. B. Marsden, *Early Puritans*, p. 205.

168. A. S. P. Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty*, Introduction, p. 39; cf. J. I. Packer, *op. cit.*, pp. 99, 100.

169. H. R. McAdoo, *Caroline Moral Theology*, Preface, p. xi.

170. H. R. McAdoo, *op. cit.*, p. 10, quotes the Roman Catholic writer T. Slater, *Cases of Conscience*, I. 36, that the object of moral theology "is to teach the priest how to distinguish what is sinful from what is lawful ... it is not intended for edification nor for the building up of character."

the patristic period, whereas the Puritans were occupied with the authority and sufficiency of Scripture for all moral conduct.

(iv) *British origin*

The theology of Puritanism was essentially British, as also was the genius of its practical outworking in the believer's life. In *Minutes* A. F. Mitchell and J. Struthers demonstrate this by showing how closely the *Confession of Faith* follows the *Irish Articles* of 1615.¹⁷¹ In his opening pages of *Westminster Assembly*, A. F. Mitchell insists that the Puritanism of that Assembly "was no mere excrescence on the fair form of the Church of England", but "was in the English movement for the Reformation of the Mediaeval Church from its very origin".¹⁷² In a later chapter he adds,

It was long the received opinion that the Assembly's Confession was derived in a great measure from foreign sources, either Swiss or Dutch. The fact was overlooked that in Reynolds, Perkins, Whitaker, Carleton, Downame, the Abbots, Davenant, Overall, Prideaux, Ussher, Hall, Twisse, Ames, Ball, Featley, and Gataker, England for half a century had had a school of native theologians developing an Augustinian or moderately Calvinistic type of doctrine, without slavish dependence on the divines of any Continental school—a system perhaps quite as largely drawn from Augustine and other early western doctors, as from any of the Reformers.¹⁷³

It is difficult to define Puritan doctrine in a single formula,¹⁷⁴ beyond saying that it was governed by a deep reverence for the glory of God and complete submission to the exclusive authority of Scripture. The Puritans regarded the Scripture as providing "a model or pattern for all life, social and national life as well as ecclesiastical, down to the smallest details of the individual's personal behaviour",¹⁷⁵ and it was because of this that even when the program of Church government was overthrown, Puritanism itself "continued uninterrupted to strengthen and extend its hold upon the English imagination."¹⁷⁶

171. *Op. cit.*, Introduction, pp. xlvi–xlix, lxx. Cf. A. F. Mitchell *Westminster Confession*, 1867, pp. 33–42, where he exhibits in detail the correspondence between these *Irish Articles* and the *Confession of Faith*.

172. *Op. cit.*, pp. 1, 2.

173. *Op. cit.*, p. 371; cf. pp. 377, 423.

174. A. S. P. Woodhouse, *op. cit.*, Introduction, p. 37. Cf. R. B. Perry, *Puritanism and Democracy*, pp. 82–116, on "What did the Puritans believe?"

175. G. F. Nuttall, "Law and Liberty in Puritanism", in *Congregational Quarterly*, XXIX, 1, January, 1951, p. 21.

176. W. Haller, *Rise of Puritanism*, p. 18.

(v) *Delimitations*

The limits imposed by the particular aspects of the present study involve the omission of much closely-related material.

The first delimitation belongs to the Mosaic Law itself, commonly divided by the Puritans into the moral, the judicial and the ceremonial law respectively.¹⁷⁷ The judicial law, being the civil law of Israel, was regarded by most of the Puritans as no longer directly relevant to Christian life;¹⁷⁸ and the ceremonial law, concerned with the Levitical institutions of priesthood and sacrifice, was held to have been ended by the saving work of Christ. Attention is, accordingly, given not to the judicial and ceremonial aspects of the Law, but only to that which was commonly called the moral Law. The moral Law was understood by the Puritans to be stated fully in the Decalogue, and many voluminous expositions of the Ten Commandments came from their pens. The value of these works to the present inquiry is not so much in the substance of the expositions themselves, but in the underlying pre-supposition that the commandments are still obligatory.¹⁷⁹

A second delimitation of the subject must exclude the political aspects of the Law, together with the problem of religious freedom. These impinge upon the consideration of the Law of God in the life of the Christian, but they occupy a sphere of their own.

A third delimitation relates to Antinomianism as a movement. Doctrinal Antinomianism rejected the necessity for repentance, repudiated "duty-faith", denied that there were any Gospel "conditions", offered the Gospel to "non-sensible" sinners, and taught the doctrine of eternal justification; all of which subjects are outside the scope of the present study.¹⁸⁰ Likewise, no attention can be given to the excesses of practical Antinomianism, as it appeared in the Ranters, as Familism and Libertinism, and in the excesses associated with its propagation in New England.

A fourth delimitation belongs to systematic theology generally; for the doctrine of the Law of God touches nearly every branch of it.

177. Anthony Burgess, *Spiritual Refining*, "Of Grace and Assurance", 1652, p. 559.

178. George Gillespie considers that some of the judicial laws of Moses are still to be implemented by magistrates in so far as they appoint the punishments of sins against the moral law. *Severity*, 1645, p. 6.

179. The Puritan works on the Sabbath are based on the assumption that all the commandments—and so the Fourth—are of moral obligation. Richard Greenham, *Sabbath*, 1599, in *Works*, pp. 158–201, and William Twisse, *Morality of the Fourth Commandment*, 1641.

180. The "Marrow" controversy in Scotland belongs to the discussion of Antinomianism as a movement, especially in so far as it enters a much wider area than the discussion of the Law and opens up many of the fundamental issues of the Calvinistic-Arminian conflict.

It is impossible, in the present study, to deal with subjects such as sin, judgment, atonement, forgiveness, reconciliation, and justification, for these, though closely impinging on the proposed inquiry, are properly outside of it.

H. PATTERN OF THE INQUIRY

The inquiry proceeds along the following lines.

(1) First, the Law of God as the expression of the Divine majesty is examined, together with the way in which God has put this Law within man as the medium of man's blessedness. This brings to light the Puritan view of the effects of the Fall on man's knowledge of the Law and his power to keep it.

(2) Inquiry is next made into the relation of Law and sin and the meaning of this for both the believer and the unbeliever.

(3) The Puritan contention that after the Fall God never entered into relation with sinful man solely on the basis of a Covenant of Works is next studied, together with the corollary that the Mosaic Covenant, though possessing its own distinctive place, was only a part of the Covenant of Grace.

(4) The significance of Christ as "the end of the Law" receives attention, especially showing the consistency between that fact and the truth that there is no abrogation of the Law. The Puritan arguments for the essential unity of the covenants are produced, together with their contention that the New Testament gives evidence of the use of the Law, not as a means of justification—for this it never was—but as the rule of Christian walking.

(5) The Puritan reasons for believing in the continuance of the moral Law, not merely in its matter, but in its mandatory form, are investigated, together with the Antinomian opinion that it is legalism to do good or to abstain from wrong merely because commanded.

(6) The Puritan conviction that evidence of justification must be sought in sanctification is demonstrated, together with the contention that the believer's sanctification is expressed in a life of evangelical obedience.

(7) It is shown that Puritanism stands for a view of Christian liberty which is consistent with the continued right of God to command the believer.

The work is concluded by an assessment of the Puritan doctrine in the light of recent critical studies.

Quotations from Puritan writers have been liberally and extensively made for three main reasons.

(i) Their books are not easily to be found, except in the large libraries, and most of them have long since gone out of publication.

(ii) This liberality of quotation is designed to prove that the views under discussion were not merely those of one or two well-known authors, but belonged to Puritanism generally.

(iii) In this way the Puritans are allowed to speak for themselves.

Chapter I

THE LAW OF GOD FOR MAN

Synopsis

- A. GOD'S RIGHT TO COMMAND
 - (i) *The majesty of His Person*
 - (ii) *The absoluteness of His will*

- B. THE LAW OF GOD IN THE HEART OF MAN
 - (i) *Its relation to man's reason*
 - (ii) *Its relation to man's conscience*
 - (iii) *Its relation to man's well-being*

- C. THE PERFECTION OF THE LAW
 - (i) *A transcript of the holiness of God*
 - (ii) *Spiritual in its demands*
 - (iii) *An eternal Law*

- D. THE LAW OF GOD AND THE FALL
 - (i) *An obscured knowledge of the Law*
 - (ii) *Moral perception not completely extinguished*
 - (iii) *Divine reasons for preserving some knowledge of the moral Law*
 - (iv) *Knowledge of the Law by the common grace of the Spirit*
 - (v) *The continuing testimony of conscience*
 - (vi) *Inability of man to keep the Law*

Chapter I

THE LAW OF GOD FOR MAN

IT was the common belief of the Puritans that when the Creator formed man He gave him

a Law of Universal Obedience written in his heart, which by his Fall was much obliterated and defaced: Yet all Mankind have some Fragments of it remaining in their hearts; such as make the very Gentiles, who have not the written Law, inexcusable for their Transgressions.¹

These words, written by Thomas Gouge, may well be regarded as an anticipation of what is to be discussed in this opening chapter.

The Puritans began their thinking on this subject, not with an abstract concept of "law", but with the experimental awareness of the exalted Lawgiver: behind the *lex* stood the Legislator. This thoroughly Biblical² approach was characteristic of the whole of their preaching and writing. To them, the Law must always be the Law of God, and all their doctrinal formulations were dominated by the recognition of God's overwhelming greatness. The study of the Puritan doctrine of the Law of God must begin, therefore, by an examination of the relation of God to the Law.

A. GOD'S RIGHT TO COMMAND

The Puritans could never insist too much on the fact that God was the Sovereign of all He had made, with the right to govern all things according to His will. This right to command resided in the majesty of His Person and was expressed in the absoluteness of His will.

(i) *The majesty of His Person*

The authority of God lies in His glorious Godhead and Creatorhood. God's personal majesty and His relation to His creatures give a quality of permanence to His Law which is inseparable from His personal glory.³ This reveals a wide difference between human laws and Divine, for

A man may breake the Princes Law, and not violate his Person;

1. Thomas Gouge, *Principles of Christian Religion*, 1645, pp. 190, 191.

2. "In the beginning God."

3. Stephen Charnock, *Attributes*, 1682, in *Works*, I. 192, 199.

that the advocates of the supernaturalistic theory have underestimated the truth enshrined in the Trinitarian Creed and thereby disrupted the sequence of the Divine acts. Their thinking is dominated by a theological misdirection of the concept of the Lordship of Christ which issues in a dislocation of doctrine. Gustaf Wingren points out that this is due to the fundamental Barthian error of making human knowledge⁷⁶ of the Divine acts the organizing principle for the sequence of the acts themselves. Thus, because man's experience of God begins with Christ, God's earlier acts are of less significance, and the truths of Creation and Law are relegated to the background. This is a serious flaw in modern Barthian theology, and, when it is recognized, the supernaturalistic attack upon the Puritan doctrine of the Law of God is found to be much less damaging than at first appears. In contradistinction to the one-sidedness of the Barthian exposition, the Puritan doctrine is firmly set on a fully Biblical foundation, that is to say, on "the Bible in its wholeness."⁷⁷

In their findings on natural Law, A. R. Vidler and W. A. Whitehouse come to a conclusion which is almost a re-statement of the Puritan doctrine,⁷⁸ but they indicate, nevertheless, that when the best attempt has been made to expound the Biblical concept of natural Law "important theological tensions still remain."⁷⁹ There can be no doubt that some of these tensions are due to the ambiguity which now attaches to the word "natural", and it might be better to speak of "primary" Law, rather than "natural". This would certainly be agreeable to the thought of the Puritans who, when they spoke of natural Law meant not a Law produced by nature (as the modern connotation seems to suggest), but a Law determinative of it. But perhaps it is too late in the day to suggest a new vocabulary.⁸⁰

(ii) *Its relation to man's conscience*

It has been shown that man is such a being that not only does he stand in relation to the Law of Nature, but he has a moral awareness that he so stands. The Puritans, however, considered that there was more in this than the bare fact that man was created a self-conscious being. They held that, in addition to the possession of a rational nature, man was, from the very first, the recipient of a special revelation of the moral relation in which he stood to God. The demands of the moral Law were made known to him by an act of God over and

76. For all its appearances to the contrary, the Barthian position is fundamentally anthropocentric; see G. Wingren, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

77. See G. Wingren, *op. cit.*, p. 17. His contention is that the foundation of the doctrine must be the whole Bible and not uni-testamental.

78. *Natural Law*, p. 23; cf. Joseph Dalby, *Law of Nature*, 1943, p. 49.

79. *Op. cit.*, p. 26.

80. Richard Baxter uses the word "primary" in *End of Doctrinal Controversies* p. 114.

Chapter II
THE LAW AND SIN

Synopsis

A. SIN AS LAW-BREAKING

- (i) *Restraint of Law*
- (ii) *Provocation of Law*
- (iii) *Condemnation of Law*

B. THE CONVICTING POWER OF THE LAW

- (i) *The Law as a mirror*
- (ii) *The Law to be preached*
- (iii) *“The Spirit of bondage”*
- (iv) *No Gospel without the Law*

C. SIN IN THE BELIEVER

- (i) *Indwelling corruption*
- (ii) *Justification and sanctification*
- (iii) *Knowing sin and seeing sin*

D. MAKING CONSCIENCE OF SIN

- (i) *Sin still sin*
- (ii) *Sin more than disease*
- (iii) *Confession of sin*

mean that the believer will not still see his sin, for God has power not to see, what he leaves the believer still able to see.¹⁷¹

The discussion of this subject is conducted best by the Puritans themselves, and Thomas Taylor replies to John Eaton that to "see" means to know (1) simply, and (2) respectively, that is with a purpose to act. In this way God does not see the sins of believers, but this does not mean they are not present. The fact that God records the sins of the elect, many years after they are pardoned, refutes the idea that God does not see in the simple sense of seeing.¹⁷² Thomas Gataker maintains

The common interpretation of Num. xxiii. 21 is impossible. (1) Because God plagued and chastened his people for their sins. (2) The aim of Balaam was to bring the people into disfavour with God.¹⁷³

Anthony Burgess considers that the passage in Jeremiah refers to a judicial inquiry, and that it is only in that sense that it may be said that God does not find sin in His people. Forgiveness removes the guilt of sin, but the nature of sin still remains.¹⁷⁴ He further maintains that the covering of sin relates only to condemnation, and that it was in this way that David's sin was covered, while it was still open to God's fatherly chastisements. Further, covering relates only to sins that are past and confessed, not to new sins until they be confessed.¹⁷⁵ God does see sin and is offended by it in believers. God is not made to "peep" under the covering again. Cover is a metaphor and signifies not that God cannot see them at all but that he will not notice them in judgment.¹⁷⁶

D. MAKING CONSCIENCE OF SIN

One of the assumptions underlying the Antinomian denial of sin in the believer is that the believer so passes out of the orbit of Law that whatever imperfections still cleave to him are no longer strictly to be called sins. The Puritans rejected this opinion outright, and held that not only is the indwelling corruption truly of the nature of sin, but that it manifests itself in actions which are themselves nothing

171. *Op. cit.*, p. 61.

172. *Regula Vitae*, p. 88 f.; cf. Richard Allen, *Antidote against Heresy*, 1648, p. 83; William Woodward, *Lord our Righteousness*, pp. 45-51.

173. *God's Eye*, p. 17. He makes the suggestion that Numbers xxiii. 21 means that God cannot endure seeing any evil done against his people.

174. *Justification*, Part I. pp. 22, 44-52.

175. *Op. cit.*, Part I. p. 241.

176. *Op. cit.*, Part I. pp. 51, 53. Cf. James Ussher, *Body of Divinitie*, p. 159; Francis Roberts, *God's Covenants*, p. 1475; John Crandon, *Aphorisms Exorized Part I*, p. 243.

believer are not only against light and knowledge, they are also sins “against mercy”.¹⁸⁸

(ii) *Sin more than disease*

The Antinomians liked to speak of their shortcomings as a disease or infirmity.¹⁸⁹ Although there is some truth in calling sin a “disease” this is a completely insufficient account of it, for if sin is construed in terms of mere disease there is a deficiency in the concept, which contradicts the heinousness of it in the sight of God. So far are the failures of believers from being mere infirmities, that the author of *The Marrow* insists that the breaking of the Law by a Christian is even worse than the same action by an unbeliever,¹⁹⁰ and Thomas Cole declares,

I look upon it as a great Error, to hold that all sins committed in a state of Grace are sins of Infirmity. . . . An Infirmity in the true Notion of it, is the deficiency of a good Action, . . . but when we do that which is materially Evil in its own nature, and forbidden by God, this is more than an Infirmity: . . . ’tis not a weak action, but a wicked one.¹⁹¹

(iii) *Confession of sin*

What is to be the believer’s attitude to the sin that he finds within himself? If his imperfections are not properly sins, and God takes no notice of them, he will not need to be concerned about them; but if they are displeasing to God, then he will grieve over them and confess them.

Among the Antinomians there was the fairly general opinion that believers should not give themselves any care at all about their shortcomings. John Eaton was emphatic that the justified believer has no need to grieve over his imperfections; but when confronted by Christ’s teaching about prayer for forgiveness, he defended his position by saying that the believer continues daily to ask forgiveness from God for three reasons: first, because the more grace a man has the more he feels the imperfections of his sanctification; secondly, because by

188. Op. cit., p. 188; cf. John Owen, *Justification*, in *Works*, V. 145; *Mortification*, in *Works*, VI. 51; and his entire treatise on *Indwelling Sin*, in *Works*, VI.

189. Robert Towne, for example, says, “Thus whilst God useth as a tender father the rod or physick, the cause hath not properly with him the nature of sinne, which is an offence to divine justice; but it is now considered as a disease troubling his childe.” *Assertion of Grace*, p. 113. It is a little surprising to find in Thomas Manton that “Great sins may be infirmities, as Lot’s incest; David’s adultery; when they are not done with full consent of soul”, *Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm*, I. 27.

190. Op. cit., p. 154; cf. John Preston, *Law out lawed*, p. 7.

191. *Repentance*, pp. 119, 120. Cf. Isaac Chauncy, *Neonomianism Unmask’d*, Part II. p. 63.

The Puritans took a serious view of sin, and this was derived from its relation to Law. Sin, to the Puritan, was not a psychological maladjustment to life; it was wilful rebellion against the commandments of God; it was not merely man's faulty behaviour, but deep-seated corruption of the man himself. Sin is no less sin because it is committed by a believer; and the Christian experience that begins with the cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner",²¹⁷ must be continued by the prayer, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults."²¹⁸

217. Luke xviii. 13.

218. Psalm xix. 12.

Chapter III

THE PLACE OF LAW IN THE PURPOSE OF GOD

Synopsis

- A. USE OF THE WORD "LAW" IN SCRIPTURE
- B. THE LAW OF MAN'S CREATION
- C. LAW AND THE COVENANTS OF GOD
 - (i) *Nature of the Mosaic Covenant*
 - (ii) *Relation of the Mosaic Law to the Law of man's creation*
 - (iii) *Mosaic Law not for justification*
- D. LAW AS A MEANS OF GRACE
 - (i) *The continuity of the Covenant of Grace*
 - (ii) *Mosaic Covenant consistent with grace*
 - (iii) *The expression of grace in the Law*
 - (iv) *Law as an instrument of grace*
- E. THE DISTINCTIVE PLACE OF LAW
 - (i) *Obscurity of its revelation*
 - (ii) *Rigour of its ministry*
- F. OPPOSITION BETWEEN LAW AND GOSPEL
 - (i) *The historic abuse of the Law*
 - (ii) *No absolute opposition*

Chapter III

THE PLACE OF LAW IN THE PURPOSE OF GOD

THE object of this chapter is to exhibit the ways in which the Puritans understood the Mosaic Law and its place in God's purpose of grace for mankind, for

The Mystery of the Gospel cannot be throughly apprehended by us, without some good understanding of the Oeconomy of the Law, yea, and also of the State of things before the Law.¹

First, the twofold use of the word "law"—sometimes as that which is solely preceptive, and sometimes as covenant—is distinguished, and then an examination is made of the Puritan view of the relation of the Law to the different forms and administrations of the Covenant of Grace, showing that the Law itself is an instrument of grace. Then it is necessary to inquire into Paul's deprecatory language about the Law, and the appearance of opposition of the Law and the Gospel.

A. USE OF THE WORD "LAW" IN SCRIPTURE

The Puritans accepted the distinctions between moral, ceremonial and judicial laws which have been observed already,² and also the commonly understood meanings that arise from the history of such terms as *tôrâh*, *nomos* and *lex*.³ In the light of this general agreement about the laws of the Old Testament, and in view of his own special concern, Anthony Burgess does not think it is required of him to "say much about Lawes in generall" because "many have written large Volumes, especially the School-men, and it cannot be denied but

1. Nehemiah Cox, *Of the Covenants*, p. 3.

2. See above p. 43; cf. Edward Elton, *Treatises*, "Mystery of Godliness Opened", 1653, p. 27; Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 147; Francis Roberts, *God's Covenants*, p. 661. Some recent writers repudiate this distinction, at least so far as to say that it is non-Biblical. M. F. Wiles allows himself to say that he does not believe it is possible to find "any trace" of it in the writings of Paul, and he quotes Kirsopp Lake as his authority ("St Paul's Conception of Law", *The Churchman*, LXIX. 3, p. 148), but the Puritan Paul Baynes considers that Paul makes this distinction in Ephesians ii. 15 (*Ephesians*, 1643, p. 293). Cf. Patrick Fairbairn, *Law in Scripture*, 1868, pp. 82-146. He and many others understand the distinction to be implicit in Christ's attitude to the ceremonial aspects of the Law. *Op. cit.*, pp. 216 f.

3. Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 11, Francis Roberts, *God's Covenants*, pp. 656, 657.

God must be integrated into the entire system of Christian theology. Law and grace belong together, and are the same under the Old Covenant and the New. In these beliefs the Puritans were true followers of the Reformers; for Luther and Melancthon recognized no difference in principle between God's dealings with His people under the old dispensation and under the new,²¹⁷ and Calvin devoted many pages of the *Institutes* to the exposition of the continuity of the purpose of Divine grace in the Old and New Testaments.²¹⁸ It is a fair summary to say with H. G. Wood that "the Puritans were more impressed with the unity of the Bible than with the difference between Law and Gospel".²¹⁹ The moral Law thus comes into its own and enters upon its essential fulfilment in the grace manifested in Christ.

217. W. Adams Brown, Article "Covenant Theology", *ERE*, IV. 220.

218. *Inst.* II. vii. and ix.

219. Article, "Puritanism", *ERE*, X. 512.

Chapter IV

THE END OF THE LAW

Synopsis

- A. THE END AS FULFILMENT
- B. THE PASSIVE AND ACTIVE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST
 - (i) *Passive obedience*
 - (ii) *Active obedience*
- C. IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS
- D. ANTINOMIAN DOCTRINE OF ABROGATION
- E. LAW IN ITS COMMANDING AND COVENANTING ASPECTS
 - (i) *Distinguishable and separable*
 - (ii) *The Law in covenant form*
- F. LAW NOT ABROGATED BY THE FALL
- G. LAW NOT ABROGATED BY GRACE
- H. IDENTITY OF THE MOSAIC LAW AND THE LAW OF CHRIST
- I. RELATION OF BELIEVERS TO THE LAW
 - (i) *"Dead to the law" and "not under the law"*
 - (ii) *"The law of sin and death" and the bondage of the Law*
 - (iii) *"That being dead wherein we were held"*

Chapter IV

THE END OF THE LAW

THE place of the Law of God in the Divine purposes having been surveyed, it now becomes necessary to inquire what impact on the Law, if any, was made by the work of Christ. This chapter, therefore, examines how the Puritans related the work of Christ to the Law, and, in particular, in what ways they thought Christ could be said to be the end of the Law.

Many questions arise, such as whether the work of Christ can be regarded as a fulfilment of the Law; whether such fulfilment includes the whole obedience of Christ, the active as well as the passive; whether the active obedience of Christ is imputed to the believer; and, if so, what this means for Him in His relation to the Law. The investigation of this last question calls, first, for a distinction between the Law as command, and the Law as covenant, and then yields the answer that the Antinomians held that the Law was abrogated, the Baxterians, that the Law was modified, and the Puritans, that the Law was established.

A. THE END AS FULFILMENT

The apostle Paul strikingly declares that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth".¹ But what does he mean by this? The asking of this question immediately uncovers a double problem, namely, that of finding out what Law it is to which the apostle refers, and what he means by the word "end".

It is easy to suggest that it is the ceremonial Law which the apostle has in mind. But this would not be pertinent to his argument; he is speaking of the kind of Law that was thought to produce righteousness, "which must be the Morall Law only".²

If it be accepted that the reference is to the moral Law, the remaining question has to do with the meaning of the word "end". Here an important divergence appears, for not all the Puritans understood the word *τέλος* in the same way. The Antinomians understood it to mean termination, or abolition, and they had no hesitation in affirming that Christ brought the demands of the moral Law to an end. Those who thought that the apostle was here referring to the

1. Romans x. 4.

2. Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, pp. 265 f.

the works of Christ are "the meritorious Cause" of the believer's justification.⁷⁶ One of his reasons for rejecting the commonly-received Puritan doctrine is found in his peculiar view of the mediatorial work of Christ. He teaches that Christ rendered "Perfect Obedience to the Law of Innocency", which obedience, he says, "exempteth us".⁷⁶ Richard Baxter's antipathy to the doctrine of imputed righteousness was partly provoked by his fear of Antinomianism, and his assumption that "an imputed holiness takes away any need for a real one",⁷⁷ but the doctrine under review is not that of imputed "holiness", but imputed "righteousness". Puritans, such as William Twisse and Thomas Gataker, did not hold the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ, but this was for reasons other than the Grotian-neonomianism of Richard Baxter.⁷⁸

D. ANTINOMIAN DOCTRINE OF ABROGATION

The inevitable question when an endeavour is made to understand the significance of Christ as "the end of the Law" is that stated by Francis Roberts.

Whether the Law of God given by Moses on Mount Sinai to Israel, be abrogated to us now under the New Testament or no? And how far it concerns or obligeth us, if not abrogated?⁷⁹

This demands an answer, he says, because of "the Antinomian error, endeavouring totally to abolish the Law given by Moses on Mount Sinai, as of no use at all, for Matter or Form, to Christians now under the New Testament"; but it is nevertheless "a Knotty and difficult Question: and learned men have rendered it the more intricate, by their cross disputes about it".⁸⁰

The Puritans frequently accused the Antinomians of abrogating the Law. Thomas Taylor, for example, lists "Twelve Antinomian Errors", the first of which is that "Christ came to abolish the Morall Law",⁸¹ and, therefore, that as creatures believers are under moral

75. *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, pp. 240-54.

76. *Scripture Gospel Defended*, "Breviate of Justification", pp. 8, 22.

77. J. I. Packer, *op. cit.*, p. 280.

78. In the final draft of Chapter XI of the *Confession of Faith*, the Assembly agreed to omit the word "whole" before "obedience" in Section i, in deference to William Twisse and Thomas Gataker. A. F. Mitchell, *Westminster Assembly*, pp. 149-56. The doctrine of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ was rejected also by those who adhered to the Arminian system, their main objection being that it is a legalistic conception. See John Goodwin, *Imputatio Fidei*, 1642, Part I. p. 69 ff.

79. *God's Covenants*, p. 689.

80. *Op. cit.*, p. 689.

81. *Regula Vitae*, pp. 65, 70; cf. Thomas Welde, *Rise, reigne, and ruine*, p. 1.

Law, but as Christians they are only bound to do what Christ bids.⁸² Anthony Burgess charges Tobias Crisp with indulging in a decrying of the Law,⁸³ and remarks that it is the assertion that the Law is abrogated which gives Antinomianism its name.⁸⁴ Richard Byfield affirms that the Antinomians "over-throw the Law Morall" and "hold that Christ came to abolish it".⁸⁵

Reason has been found, earlier,⁸⁶ for observing that many of the charges made against the Antinomians appear to be based on hearsay from sermons or reports of their sayings. It is more than probable that some of the radicals among them may have spoken as they are reported, but an examination of the deliberate writings of the Antinomian authors does not yield the same amount of colourful evidence as their opponents found themselves able to discover. Without doubt, the Antinomians made strong statements to the effect that the Law was abrogated, but it is clear that, here and there, they qualified their assertions in ways that can be interpreted in a less unorthodox manner. Perhaps, too, it is easier for a twentieth century reader to perceive this, than it was for those engaged in the controversies of the seventeenth.

What do the Antinomians say in their books? John Eaton, upon whose head so much orthodox wrath descended, says in the *Honeycombe*,

The Law . . . failing in works, terrifieth the conscience, . . . therefore let us not suffer the Law in any case to beare rule in our conscience; . . . let the godly learn therefore, that the Law and Christ are two contrary things, . . . when Christ is present, the Law may in no case rule, but must depart out of the conscience.⁸⁷

Tobias Crisp holds that Christ is the end, not only of the curse of the Law, but also of the life of the Law,⁸⁸ and that a believer has no more to do with the Law of Moses than an Englishman has with the "Laws of Turkey", though he at the same time admits that the Law is not "absolutely abolished", but only in its curses.⁸⁹ Robert Towne speaks with a double voice, when he says,

I am of that mind, that the whole Law is in as full force and power as ever it was . . . Matt. 5. 19. But yet that beleevers

82. Op. cit., pp. 183-91.

83. Cf. Tobias Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, in *Works*, I. 119, alluded to by Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 15.

84. Op. cit., p. 208; cf. Thomas Gataker, *God's Eye*, p. 97.

85. Richard Byfield, *Temple Defilers*, p. 20; cf. *Epistle Dedicatory*.

86. See above, p. 31.

87. Op. cit., p. 449.

88. *Christ Alone Exalted*, in *Works*, I. 154.

89. Op. cit., I. 123, and note his concession in IV. 93.

should be under it, its to me full of danger, and contrarie to all Scripture.⁹⁰

He dislikes being charged with affirming the abrogation of the Law, and in his *Re-assertion* he says that the Law is "inviolable and for ever".⁹¹ He refers this only to unbelievers, however, for his main contention is that if believers are not under the Law in its damnatory aspect, they cannot be under it in the mandatory.⁹² John Saltmarsh makes a curious collocation of "Satan, sin, sinfull flesh, and the Law",⁹³ as if all were in the same category and were equally abolished by Christ.⁹⁴

E. LAW IN ITS COMMANDING AND COVENANTING ASPECTS

The inquiry into the subject of the abrogation of the Law calls, first, for the separation of the two ideas of commandment and covenant.

(i) *Distinguishable and separable*

There can be commandment without covenant, and there can be covenant without commandment; and there can also be a close relation between them. The important thing to understand, however, is that they are not only distinguishable, but separable.

In their discussion of the abrogation of the Law the Puritans were not always careful to be sure that they were talking about the same thing. One writer would be thinking of the Law as a covenant and would contend that it was abolished, while another, thinking of the Law in terms of commandment, would write a book against his brother insisting that the Law could never be abolished. There is no doubt that much of the seventeenth century controversy on this subject was vitiated by a misunderstanding among the protagonists in their use of terms. Ambiguities lurked everywhere, and in consequence much unfair judgment was given.

Happily, the Puritans themselves drew attention to the necessity of observing the distinction between commandment and covenant; and they had this in mind when they distinguished "substance" from "promulgation". Thomas Taylor thinks in this way when he says

90. *Assertion of Grace*, p. 33.

91. *Re-assertion*, pp. 95, 139.

92. *Assertion of Grace*, p. 32.

93. *Free-Grace*, p. 140; the 1792 edn. puts it, "the world, the flesh, the devil, and the law", p. 154.

94. Cf. G. Huehns, *Antinomianism*, 1951, pp. 37-54 and J. Buchanan, *Justification*, 1867, pp. 158, 159.

that the Law is to be understood, first, in the substance of it, and secondly, in the circumstances of it, and that the believer is "under the Law" in the first sense, but not in the second.⁹⁵ John Ball distinguishes the functions of the Law in its different dispensations. In the Covenant of Works, he says, it is itself a covenant, and as such is abolished; but in the Covenant of Grace, it is an unchangeable rule of life, and so is as lasting as the grace itself. The rule is one, but the covenants differ.⁹⁶ The author of *The Marrow* argues that the commandments of the moral Law can be regarded as either the matter of the law of works, or the matter of the law of Christ; and by "matter of" he means according as they have their place in one or the other, thus distinguishing the covenant aspect from the preceptive.⁹⁷ It is not without significance that *Nomista* and *Antinomista*, in the dialogue, are both corrected by the one principle of making this necessary distinction.⁹⁸ Thomas Bedford likewise insists that the moral Law must be distinguished in its Substance (Duties) and Circumstance (Covenant).⁹⁹

(ii) *The Law in covenant form*

The distinction between the Law as a command and as a covenant becomes important when the question is asked about the continuance of the Law as a Covenant of Works. The Puritans had no doubt about the answer so far as the believer was concerned. Samuel Bolton states the normal Puritan position—with a justifiable little grumble of his own—when he writes:

We are freed from the Morall law. First, as a Covenant say our Divines. It would save a great deale of trouble to say we are freed from the law, as a condition upon the obedience whereof we expected life. But take it in those words, we are freed from the law as a covenant.¹⁰⁰

When the Puritan view about the relation to the Covenant of Works of those who remain unbelievers is examined, the solution is not so simple. Different opinions emerged, and some Puritans maintained the continuance of the Covenant of Works for those who were not believers. Richard Sibbes, for example, acknowledges that "the covenant of works was disannulled by our sins", but at the same time thinks of the Mosaic Covenant as a renewal of the Covenant of Works

95. Cf. *Regula Vitae*, p. 19. 96. *Covenant of Grace*, p. 15; see above, pp. 118, 119.

97. *Op. cit.*, pp. 13-15. 98. *Op. cit.*, pp. 196, 197.

99. Thomas Bedford, *An Examination*, pp. 10-12.

100. *True Bounds*, p. 21. Unless the context intimates otherwise, the Puritan assertion that believers are "freed from the Law as a Covenant" may usually be taken in the sense of a Covenant of Works. It is from the tyranny of law-keeping for the purpose of justification that Christ delivers His people.

for a subordinate purpose.¹⁰¹ It is this subordinate purpose that the author of *The Marrow* has in mind when he says that the Law as a Covenant of Works is useful to unbelievers, and when he adds the curious comment that although obedience cannot procure heaven it might secure the easiest place in hell.¹⁰² With the same meaning William Strong writes,

To all those who are in the first Adam, the first Covenant stands in force to this day. . . . Every unregenerate man is under the Law as a Covenant of works.¹⁰³

The quotations given above reveal a failure carefully to separate the ideas of command and covenant, and it is likely that the writers do not really mean the Covenant as such, but only the Law which underlies it.

Other Puritans declared that the Covenant of Works was abolished for all men, but they asserted this on fundamentally different grounds. Richard Baxter, who at first thought that the Covenant of Works was still in force,¹⁰⁴ changed his mind, though even in the *Aphorismes* he reveals that he was not quite sure of himself.¹⁰⁵ His formal withdrawal of the statement about the continuance of the Covenant of Works is found in *Confession*, where he says there is no "continuation of the whole Covenant, Promise and all",¹⁰⁶ and in *Catholick Theologie* he says that the Law is laid aside as a "Covenant".¹⁰⁷ His reason for the abolition of the Covenant of Works arises from the humanistic philosophy which defines responsibility in terms of ability,¹⁰⁸ and therefore regards man as no longer "a capable subject" of such a covenant.

When the Puritans declared that the Covenant of Works was abolished, they spoke from the Godward aspect, rather than the human, and laid stress on the fact that the best works of fallen man could never repair the breach of the covenant, or satisfy the demands of God contained within it. Nehemiah Cox writes about the impossibility "that this Covenant now broken should be renewed . . . for the same Ends",¹⁰⁹ and John Flavel that "this Covenant of Works being once broken, can nevermore be available to the Justification and Salvation of any Fallen Man."¹¹⁰

101. Richard Sibbes, *Faithful Covenanter*, in *Works*, VI. 5.

102. *Op. cit.*, pp. 68, 70, 335.

103. *The Two Covenants*, pp. 2, 38; cf. Thomas Brooks, *Paradise Opened*, in *Works*, V. 303, John Barret, *Treatise of the Covenants*, pp. 76, 78.

104. *Aphorismes*, p. 78.

105. *Op. cit.*, p. 283.

106. *Confession*, p. 106.

107. *Op. cit.*, Book I. Part 2, p. 21.

108. *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, p. 120; see below, p. 151.

109. *Of the Covenants*, p. 36. Cf. John Owen, *Principles*, 1645, in *Works*, I. 476, footnote.

110. *Vindiciae Legis & Foederis*, p. 32; cf. Francis Roberts, *God's Covenants*, p. 68.

The consideration of the relation of believers to the Law in the Mosaic Covenant brings another set of problems, because of the shades of Puritan opinion about the nature of the Covenant itself.¹¹¹ By most of the Puritans, the Mosaic Covenant was held to be part of the Covenant of Grace; and within this whole the Mosaic portion was called the "Old Covenant", in view of its replacement by the "New Covenant" of the Gospel era. In so far as the New Covenant had taken the place of the Old, they held that it was true to say that the Law as a Covenant was abrogated.¹¹²

F. LAW NOT ABROGATED BY THE FALL

The ending of the Law in its covenant aspect leaves the Law still to be considered as a commanding rule.

It was the generally accepted Puritan view that the Law was not abrogated by the Fall. "Is not right right? Is not the Law the Law!"¹¹³ The Puritans held tenaciously to the fundamental principle that moral inability did not cancel obligation. The Law is "a rule of our duty, not of our strength".¹¹⁴ Man had the responsibility of keeping himself morally able, and he is to blame for what he has allowed himself to become.¹¹⁵

Anthony Burgess repudiates the idea that human inability negates the Law. He takes notice of the objection of those who say that, man now being unable to obey, it is mockery for God to command him, and that it would be as if a blind man were commanded to see, and meets this by pointing out that there are three ways in which a thing may be said to be impossible. There is simple impossibility, there is natural impossibility, and there is moral impossibility, in which things having no simple or natural impossibility attaching to them sometimes become morally impossible through man's fault. It is no mockery for a man to be commanded to do something which through his own fault he has made himself unable to do. It is, therefore, irrelevant to bring into the argument such an impossibility as commanding blind men to see; the impossibility under discussion is a moral one, and the impossibility to fulfil the commandment is an impossibility

111. See Chapter III above.

112. William Hinde, *Office and Use of the Morall Law*, 1622, p. 16, says, "Luther speaks only of the abolishing of certain uses of the Law, as, for righteousness, justification, life and salvation, for terrifying, accusing, condemning those that are justified by faith in Christ Jesus".

113. Richard Sibbes, *Precious Promises*, 1638, in *Works*, IV. 117.

114. Thomas Blake, *Covenant of God*, p. 107.

115. See Nathanael Culverwel, *Light of Nature*, p. 21, in which he insists that "the want of his will is not enough to enervate and invalidate a Law when 'tis made; all Lawes would then be abrogated every moment."

which man has brought upon himself.¹¹⁶ The objection would be valid "if God had given a Law which Men never had strength to performe," but the situation is the opposite of this, and "Adam had strength sufficient to fulfill it. . . . Nevertheless though Strength to obey be lost: yet the obligation to Obedience remaines. We are no more discharged of our duties, because we have no strength to doe it: then a debter is quitted of his Bands because he wants money to make payment."¹¹⁷ The sophistry about "impossibility" is repudiated by James Ussher,¹¹⁸ and the indignation of John Ball can be felt as he writes,

It is altogether undecent . . . that that which provoketh the execution, should procure the abrogation of his Lawes, that that should supplant and undermine the Law, for the alone preventing whereof the Law was before established.¹¹⁹

John Barret says equally incisively that such a view is "as if a man could satisfie and discharge a Bond by forfeiture. As if a subject by breaking the Law, could make himself lawless"; and he regards it as altogether unreasonable to think that God would "take Man's failing in his duty, as a ground of excusing him from his duty."¹²⁰

It was the conviction of the Puritans that the authority of God was bound up with the continuance of the moral Law. "God hath not lost his right, though man hath lost his power; their impotency doth not dissolve their obligation".¹²¹ Men are born necessarily under the obligation to obey their Creator. "The Law of Creation binds, when the Covenant of Creation is broken; tho' the Transgression of Man hath forfeited his Interest in the one, yet it cannot dissolve the Obligation of the other."¹²²

With the writings of Richard Baxter, the discussion of the abrogation of the Law becomes exceedingly confused. He imagines that he has solved his own problem, and the problems of everybody else, when he withdraws his aphorism about the continuance of the Covenant of Works, and when he affirms in *Catholick Theologie* that though the Law is abolished as a "covenant", yet "the Precept as a Rule of Life continues"¹²³ and "undoubtedly is still in force."¹²⁴

These words sound straightforward enough, but, unfortunately,

116. Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, pp. 15, 96, 97; and Edward Elton, *Gods Holy Minde*, "Matters Morall", p. 380.

117. William Pemble, *Vindiciae Fidei*, pp. 91, 92.

118. *Body of Divinitie*, pp. 124, 125; cf. Andrew Willet, *Hexapla: Romanes*, p. 139.

119. *Covenant of Grace*, p. 289.

120. *Treatise of the Covenants*, pp. 76, 77; cf. p. 125.

121. Thomas Manton, *Lord's Prayer*, 1684, in *Works*, I. 143; cf. Thomas Goodwin, *Work of the Holy Ghost*, in *Works*, VI. 233.

122. Nehemiah Cox, *Of The Covenants*, p. 44.

123. Richard Baxter, op. cit., Book I. Part 2, p. 21.

124. Op. cit., Book I. Part 2, pp. 35, 67 and Book I. Part 3, pp. 4, 5.

they cannot be taken at their face value, for in the same context he writes,

These Precepts bind us not now in so full a sort as they did Adam, even to obedience; Though the Law be as perfect: Because there is some *Dispositio Recipientis* necessary to the effecting an Obligation upon us: And where any Natural Impossibility hath befallen us, though by sin, it will make some alteration in the obligation.¹²⁵

Hidden in these words there lies the ultimate ambiguity of Richard Baxter's position. In something of an aside, he says, "though the Law be as perfect", and yet his main purpose in this paragraph is to prove that there is "some alteration in the obligation." If the obligation be not of "so full a sort" as it was, then the Law cannot be "as perfect" as it was, and the demands of the Law have been lowered to the level of the changed *Dispositio Recipientis* in man. By reducing the Law in this manner, he has virtually abolished it. In the *End of Doctrinal Controversies* he says

It is not to be supposed, that the very preceptive part of the Law of Innocency is now in force to us, as it was to Adam: For it bound him to be perfectly innocent in Act and Dispositions. But to a Man that has lost his Innocency . . . it is not to be supposed, that the Law saith, Thou shalt be innocent: For that were to command not only a Moral, but a Physical absolute impossibility, as saying, Thou shalt not have sinned.¹²⁶

This "Law of Innocency", however, is a "man of straw", which Richard Baxter puts up in order to knock down. He imagines it to be an absurdity that a "Law of Innocency" should say to a guilty man "be innocent", or that it should require "that existent sin should not be existent."¹²⁷ But no one has ever uttered such an absurdity, and he has merely demolished an imaginary foe.

In so far as, by "the Law of Innocency", he means the Covenant of Works, he affirms no more than is found in the writings of all the other Puritans. But the fact is that Richard Baxter's argument about the Law of Innocency becomes, in effect, an abrogation of the moral Law, for he destroys not merely the idea of the continuance of the Law as a Covenant, but also its "very preceptive part." A page or two later he teaches the abrogation of the Law of Nature in its primary sense.

The Law of Nature is now the Law of lapsed redeemed Nature, and not of innocent Nature. And it obligeth us for the future to

125. Op. cit., Book I. Part 2, p. 29.

126. Richard Baxter, op. cit., p. 150.

127. *Catholic Theologie*, Book I. Part 2, p. 61.

as much perfection of Duty, as we are naturally capable of performing at that time.¹²⁸

Here are two forms of the "Law of Nature", the earlier of which is abolished, and the later one takes its place.

In *Scripture Gospel Defended*, Richard Baxter makes the orthodox statement that "we are not under the . . . Law of Moses as such", meaning the Law of Moses in the Covenant sense, and then he melodramatically adds, "If this be Antinomianism, I am an Antinomian that have written so much against them."¹²⁹ This, however, is nothing less than theatrical, for Richard Baxter knew that no one considered that opinion to be Antinomian, but he also knew that it was his modification of the Law of Nature that drove some of his contemporaries to speak of him in that way.¹³⁰ John Crandon, for example, says,

Mr Br. . . . denies Christ to require under the Gospel, the perfect holiness and righteousness which the Law commandeth, and consequently that it is not either our duty to perform it, or our sinn to fail in it. . . . If this be not Antinomianism then Islebius himself hath been unjustly Charged with it.¹³¹

Walter Marshal, a writer of different temperament from John Crandon, likewise considers Richard Baxter's doctrine to be "ranked among the worst Antinomian Errors."¹³² Paradoxical as it may seem, there is an affinity between Antinomianism and Neonomianism,¹³³ and Richard Baxter comes strangely near to Antinomianism in his own scheme. All this seems to make the open and naive Antinomianism of those who are generally so named a much less unpleasant error than the hidden and subtle form of it which is found in its alleged opponent. It is not difficult, however, to sympathize with the

128. *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, p. 151.

129. Op. cit., "Breviate of Justification", p. 70.

130. Cf. Thomas Edwards, *Baxterianism Barefac'd*, p. 2.

131. *Aphorisms Exorized*, Epistle Dedicatory, cf. Part I, p. 277. On this charge of Antinomianism Isaac Chauncy says, "One that Asserts the Old Law is abolished, and therein is a superlative Antinomian, but pleads for a New Law, and Justification by the Works of it, and therein is a Neonomian", *Neonomianism Unmask'd*, Part I, Epistle Dedicatory, and cf. p. 3. In *Rejoynder* he says to Daniel Williams, "I treated you under the Appellation of a Neonomian (which is an Antinomian in the truest Sense)", op. cit., p. 21.

132. *Sanctification*, 1692, p. 125, cf. p. 23.

133. Robert Towne, for example, deduces that the Gospel is "a new Law" from the fact that it is "called a New Covenant." (*Assertion of Grace*, p. 151). Tobias Crisp makes a similar inference when he speaks of the absurdity of telling a man to take England on his shoulders to the West Indies, and thus puts obedience to the moral Law, as Richard Baxter does, in the category of the naturally impossible. (*Christ Alone Exalted*, in *Works*, I. 119).

feelings of Thomas Blake when he says, "It is a wearisome thing to rake further in this puddle."¹³⁴

Needless to say, Richard Baxter's view of a new Law with altered obligations was rejected by most of his contemporaries.¹³⁵ They insisted that the Law still demanded perfect righteousness, and that no change in human ability could have the slightest effect on moral obligation.

G. LAW NOT ABROGATED BY GRACE

If the Law is not abrogated by man's failure, neither is it abrogated by his recovery; God's grace cannot destroy God's Law.

The Law of God, although in respect of the faithfull it bee as it were abrogated, both in respect of the power of justifying which it had in the state of integrity, and in respect of the condemning power which it had in the state of sinne: yet it hath force and vigor, in respect of power to direct, and some power also it doth retaine of condemning, because it reproveth, and condemnes sinne in the faithfull themselves, although it cannot wholly condemne the faithfull themselves, who are not under the Law, but under Grace.¹³⁶

As it was humanism, and subsequently Richard Baxter, that provoked the Puritans to declare that the Law was not abrogated by the Fall, so it was the Antinomian extolling of "free grace" that made it necessary for them to affirm with equal intensity that the Law was not abrogated by the Gospel.

There is many that make a great noise about Evangelical truths . . . and they think that this doth wholly take away their obedience to the Law of God, and that it must not be so much as a rule of life. Certainly there is nothing holds forth the excellency of the Law more then the knowledge of Jesus Christ . . . being subjected to the Law, . . . But we never read that this subjection to the Law was to make voide our obedience to it.¹³⁷

The Antinomian view was that "the Law-giver, in the Gospel, gives up all his authority as Law-giver, to command beleevors".¹³⁸ With his usual inability to penetrate to the heart of the distinctions

134. *Covenant of God*, p. 57.

135. The attempts of Daniel Williams to defend Richard Baxter against the charges of Isaac Chauncy are not particularly successful, and do little more than repeat Richard Baxter's own arguments. Cf. Isaac Chauncy, *Neonomianism Unmasked*, and Daniel Williams, *Gospel-Truth*, and *Defence of Gospel Truth*.

136. William Ames, *Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, p. 194.

137. Jeremiah Burroughs, *Gospel-Conversation*, p. 79.

138. Samuel Rutherford, *Survey*, Part II. p. 121.

involved, Robert Towne says to Thomas Taylor, "You say, Christ was the end of Morall Law because he obeyed the Law . . . And what Christ performed for us we are freed from, now you are with us, that is, Christ hath freed us from subjection to the Morall Law."¹³⁹ Anthony Burgess refutes the argument¹⁴⁰ that the Law cannot be a law unless it be a cursing law, by asking what kind of Law that was which was given to the holy angels and to Adam in his innocency,¹⁴¹ and he reasons with considerable force that if the Law be abrogated to believers under the New Covenant then it must also have been abrogated to believers under the Old.¹⁴² He holds that when God afflicts a godly man He

doth so farre use the Law as an instrument to make him sensible of his sinne: and therefore this is a sure Argument, that the Law is not abolished as to all uses to the Believer.¹⁴³

In contradiction to the Antinomian assertions, John Sedgwick declares that the Law is valid to believers "in its Mandatory part".¹⁴⁴ He gives ten reasons why "the Doctrine of Faith doth not make void the doctrine and duty of the Morall Law" and follows these with a list of twelve ways in which the moral Law is strengthened by the doctrine of faith.¹⁴⁵ God never abdicates His throne, even in grace, and "when God became a Saviour to the Elect of mankind, he did not cease to be a Sovereign".¹⁴⁶ There is no suggestion anywhere in the New Testament that the Law has lost its validity in the slightest degree, nor is there even a hint of its repeal. "Christ hath expunged no part of it".¹⁴⁷

That it is not repealed, I shall shew, and that it is not capable of any repeal. If it be repealed, then either by Christ at his coming in the flesh, or else by his Apostles by commission from him after the Spirit was given; But neither Christ in person, nor the Apostles by any Commission from him did repeal it; but instead of a repeal, did put a new sanction upon it.¹⁴⁸

139. *Assertion of Grace*, p. 140.

140. Put forward by Robert Towne, op. cit., pp. 30, 31.

141. *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 6.

142. Op. cit., p. 215. The Antinomian rejoinder to this, that there is a difference between believers in the Old Testament and in the New, will not stand; for if they were in Christ in God's sight—as their arguments about no sin in the believer require—then Christ is the same for all.

143. *Justification*, Part I. p. 31, cf. an unusual argument employed by Edward Reynolds, *Three Treatises*: "Sinfulness of Sinne", p. 368.

144. *Antinomianisme Anatomized*, p. 12.

145. Op. cit., pp. 13-24.

146. Thomas Blake, *Covenant of God*, p. 47.

147. John Crandon, *Aphorisms Exorized*, Part I. p. 214; cf. Epistle Dedicatory.

148. Thomas Blake, *Covenant of God*, p. 49; cf. pp. 55, 56.

Samuel Bolton infers from Galatians iii. 17 that the coming of the Law "four hundred and thirty years after" is proof that the Law abides as a rule,¹⁴⁹ and

Against that opinion which holds forth the abrogation of the law, and saith that we are freed from the obedience of it; I shall lay downe, and endeavour to make good . . . That the law for the substance of it (for we speake not of the circumstances and accessories to it) doth remain as a rule of walking to the people of God.¹⁵⁰

Samuel Rutherford rejects the Antinomian argument that the mandatory and damnatory aspects of the Law are inseparable, and confesses,

Because Christ hath died for me, therefore Ile keep that same Law of God I was under before, only now I fear not actual condemnation which is accidentall to the Law.¹⁵¹

A searching question is put by Thomas Manton, when he asks,

If the law might be disannulled as to new creatures, then why doth the Spirit of God write it with such legible characters in their hearts? . . . Now that which the Spirit engraves upon the heart, would Christ come to deface and abolish?¹⁵²

Nothing can "annihilate the commanding authority of the law",¹⁵³ for "though God laid aside his Wrath through Christ, yet he will not lay down his Authority".¹⁵⁴

The Puritans were convinced that no change in dispensation could in any wise involve the abrogation of the Law, and that since "covenant" was but an accident of "law",¹⁵⁵ the moral Law was steadfast whatever the covenants might be. "The Saints are bound to the Law under the danger of committing sin", and "they are as strictly bound to obedience in their own persons, under the second Covenant, as they were under the first".¹⁵⁶

The concise summary of the Puritan conviction about the continuing authority of the law of God is provided in the Westminster *Confession of Faith*.

149. *True Bounds*, p. 46.

150. Op. cit., p. 76, and cf. pp. 77-79; James Ussher, *Body of Divinitie*, p. 159; Francis Roberts, *God's Covenants*, pp. 862, 1052, and Thomas Manton, *Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm*, II. 502.

151. *Triumph of Faith*, p. 196.

152. *Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm*, I. 5; and see the same question in Francis Roberts, *God's Covenants*, pp. 1392, 1393.

153. John Owen, *Justification*, in *Works*, V. 146 and cf. *Holy Spirit in Works*, III. 609; *Principles*, in *Works*, I. 476.

154. Thomas Gouge, *Principles of Christian Religion*, p. 192; Samuel Rutherford, *Survey*, Part II. p. 122.

155. Samuel Rutherford, *Survey*, Part II. p. 8.

156. William Strong, *The Two Covenants*, pp. 106, 164; cf. John Barret, *Treatise of the Covenants*, p. 20.

The moral law doth for ever bind all, . . . and that not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God, the Creator, who gave it. Neither doth Christ in the gospel any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation.¹⁵⁷

H. IDENTITY OF THE MOSAIC LAW AND THE LAW OF CHRIST

The Law which is obligatory on the believer is the same in substance as the Law of Moses. This is implicit in the foregoing discussion, but, because of ambiguities that made their appearance in the midst of the Antinomian controversy, the Puritans deemed it necessary to emphasize this. William Perkins says that the Law was cleansed by Christ from the glosses of the Pharisees, and, "it being defaced . . . by originall sinne," the Law was "renued againe in the hearts of beleivers".¹⁵⁸ Thomas Taylor reasons to the same effect,¹⁵⁹ and concludes,

Wee must conceive the Law in the substance of it, the image of God written in the heart of Adam, in innocency, and by the finger of the same spirit written in the hearts of all the elect.¹⁶⁰

It is the same Law of Moses which is now written in the affections of the heart, and "administred in the hand of Christ."¹⁶¹ "The Morall law belongeth to us Christians",¹⁶² and the Gospel which is the rule by which believers walk, "implies in it all the substantiall Precepts of the Law: so in that respect we are bound to the Law."¹⁶³ In *The Marrow*, *Nomista* asks for a definition of the Law of Christ, and receives the following answer from *Evangelista*.

The law of Christ in regard of substance and matter, is all one with the law of works. . . . Which matter is scattered through the whole Bible, and summed up in the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments. . . . So that evangelical grace directs a man to no other obedience than that whereof the law of the Ten Commandments is to be the rule.¹⁶⁴

157. Op. cit., XIX. 5. "I take that to be very sound", says John Barret, *Treatise of the Covenants*, p. 17.

158. *Galatians*, pp. 419, 420.

159. *Regula Vitae*, pp. 40-43.

160. Thomas Taylor, *Regula Vitae*, pp. 232, 233; cf. William Ames, *Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, pp. 193, 194; Richard Sibbes, *Bruised Reed*, 1630, in *Works*, I. 59.

161. John Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, p. 118.

162. George Gillespie, *Severity*, p. 7.

163. Walter Cradock, *Divine Drops Distilled*, 1650, p. 161.

164. Op. cit., p. 144; cf. Thomas Gataker, Preface to Edward Elton, *Gods Holy Minde*.

Christ gave no new laws, but expounded and cleared the old, as a painter who works over an old picture and recovers its glory.¹⁶⁵ The Law of Moses is newly-minted "as a Gold-smith doth with old coyne" as "The New Commandement and Law of Christ"¹⁶⁶ so much so, that "every beleever . . . is answerable to the obedience of the whole Law."¹⁶⁷ The obedience of the believer "is the same very obedience commanded in the Law,"¹⁶⁸ and his instruction in holiness is that "which the Spirit borroweth from the ten Commandements delivered by Moses".¹⁶⁹ The moral Law was "adopted and taken in as a part of the gospel by Christ",¹⁷⁰ that "there is no sin prohibited in the Gospel which is not a breach of some Precept in the Decalogue".¹⁷¹

I. RELATION OF BELIEVERS TO THE LAW

(i) "Dead to the law" and "not under the law"

The understanding of the relation of the believer to the Law is closely bound up with the interpretation of such phrases as "dead to the law",¹⁷² and "not under the law".¹⁷³ The general view among the Puritans was that these expressions were almost synonymous, and that they meant that the believer was free from the Law as a Covenant of Works.¹⁷⁴ Walter Cradock teaches that the words in Galatians ii. 19 and Romans vii. 4 mean:

I am dead to the law, as it is a Covenant of works, the law hath no more to doe with me then the Lawes of men have to doe with a man that is in debt when he is dead, when he is dead he is free from it. . . . The meaning is not as though the substance and matter of law were not eternall; . . . but the law as it is . . . a Covenant of works . . . is perfectly fulfilled by Christ, and we are dead to it.¹⁷⁵

The believer is dead to the Law in the sense that he is "never more looking for righteousnesse and justification of life that way",¹⁷⁶ and

165. Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 177.

166. Vavasor Powell, *Christ and Moses*, p. 240.

167. Thomas Taylor, *Regula Vitae*, p. 10.

168. Samuel Rutherford, *Survey*, Part II. p. 7; cf. Walter Marshall, *Sanctification*, p. 107.

169. Samuel Rutherford, *Survey*, Part II. p. 117.

170. Thomas Manton, *James*, in *Works*, IV. 163.

171. Richard Baxter, *Aphorismes*, pp. 147-9, 156.

172. Romans vii. 4; Galatians ii. 19.

173. Romans vi. 14, 15.

174. Cf. William Perkins, *Galatians*, p. 245; Thomas Taylor, *Regula Vitae*, pp. 2, 23.

175. Walter Cradock, *Gospel-Holinesse*, "Priviledge and Practice of the Saints", p. 218.

176. Richard Byfield, *Gospels Glory*, p. 36.

no longer expects "by duties to get Christ and God's favour".¹⁷⁷ This is the view also of Richard Sibbes,¹⁷⁸ Jeremiah Burroughs,¹⁷⁹ Thomas Adams,¹⁸⁰ and, indeed, of all the other Puritan writers. The opinions of later commentators show no appreciable variation from this view, and many of them give the meaning in almost the same terms as the Puritans.

These phrases were certainly taken by the Puritans to apply to the sphere of justification, but they insisted that they were not to be understood in any manner that would be detrimental to the continuing authority of the Law.

Wee are dead to the Law . . . in regard of the terrour and rigour of it; as a woman is from the threats and rigour of a dead husband: but the Apostle saith not, that the Law is dead either in respect of the direction of it, or our obedience to those directions.¹⁸¹

Francis Roberts points out that the apostle's words cannot mean that believers are not under the rule of the Law, for that would not prove the thing in hand, namely, that sin shall not have dominion. He thinks, therefore, that the words mean that believers are not under the terror of the Law.¹⁸² Anthony Burgess likewise considers that the reference is not to the Law *per se*, but to the provocative power of the Law as it stirs up the desire to sin, as in Romans vii. 8, and suggests that the phrase, "under the Law", implies more properly "under sin".¹⁸³

(ii) "*The law of sin and death*" and the bondage of the Law

Most Puritan writers regard the phrase "the law of sin and death"¹⁸⁴ as a metaphorical expression indicating the imperious mastery that sin acquires in the life of fallen man. "This is the title that he gives unto the powerful and effectual remainder of indwelling sin even in believers".¹⁸⁵ Andrew Willet considers "the lawe of sinne" to be "the corruption of nature",¹⁸⁶ and Edward Elton regards the word "Law" as "put . . . Metaphorically, to signifie the corruption of nature, and not that barely, but the power, and force and strength of it".¹⁸⁷ Thomas Jacomb likewise understands the word "Law" to be a meta-

177. Thomas Goodwin, *Christian's Growth*, in *Works*, III. 472.

178. *Hidden Life*, 1639, in *Works*, V. 205.

179. *Saints Treasury*, p. 100.

180. *Fatal Banquet*, 1614, in *Works*, I. 229.

181. Thomas Taylor, *Regula Vitae*, p. 172, on Romans vii. 4-6.

182. *God's Covenants*, p. 729.

183. *Vindiciae Legis*, pp. 227, 228; and note his comment on p. 212 that the change is not in the Law but in the believer towards it.

184. Romans vii. 23, 25; viii. 2.

185. John Owen, *Indwelling Sin*, in *Works*, VI. 163-9.

186. *Hexapla: Romanes*, p. 331.

187. *Treatises: "Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner"*, pp. 193, 196.

phor for the way in which sin "assumes a strange kind of authority" over the sinner.¹⁸⁸

But not all the Puritans interpret the phrase in this way, and there are some who hold that what Paul here calls "the law of sin and death" is the Law of God, and that the apostle describes it in this manner, not in respect of what it is in itself, for it is "holy",¹⁸⁹ but in respect of what it has become in the experience of sinful men. Thomas Jacomb draws attention to this other view when he says that a large number of the older expositors considered "the law of sin" to be the Mosaic Law, "because it discovered sin, irritated sin, made sin to be sin".¹⁹⁰ Edward Elton seems to hold both views, or else not to make himself clear, for he not only regards the phrase as standing for the "corruption of nature", but, when expounding Romans vii. 10-13 and rightly following the apostle's thought, he argues that through the wickedness of man's heart, which turns every good thing to its opposite use, God's holy commandment thus becomes the cause of both sin and death in the same way as the Gospel becomes "the savour of death unto death".¹⁹¹ Thomas Manton approaches the subject a little differently and says that the Law is described in this manner "because it convinceth of sin, and bindeth over to death".¹⁹² In his exposition of the Law as "the ministration of death",¹⁹³ John Preston says "this ariseth not from hence, that the Law of God is a cruell deadly Law: (for the Law is good) but it ariseth from the weaknesse and the infirmity of the flesh".¹⁹⁴ Walter Cradock affirms that "There is so great affinity and nearness between walking legally, and walking sinfully that they are promiscuously in Scripture taken one for another. . . . Sin, and the law are (as it were) of so near a kin, that the law makes sin more sinfull, and the more a man strives to keep the law, the more he sins".¹⁹⁵

If this second view contains any element of truth, it demonstrates the profound relation that exists between the Law of God and the sin of man, and at the same time it provides an insight into the nature of that freedom with which Christ sets free.¹⁹⁶

188. *Romans*, p. 109.

189. *Romans* vii. 12.

190. *Romans*, p. 102.

191. *Op. cit.*, pp. 130, 131.

192. *Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm*, I. 301.

193. II *Corinthians* iii. 7.

194. *New Covenant*, p. 319.

195. *Gospel-Holiness*, "Privilege and Practice of the Saints", p. 265.

196. There is a harshness about this expression—though not more so than in "the ministration of death"—which compels some commentators to repudiate the idea that it could possibly refer to the Law of God, but this reference should not be dismissed solely for that reason. It is defended, for example, by J. A. Bengel, (*Gnomon*, III. 98) J. Forbes, (*Romans*, 1868, pp. 275, 304, 305) R. Haldane, with special reference also to *Romans* vii. 5 and I *Corinthians* xv. 56, (*Romans*, 1835, pp. 317, 318), C. Hodge, (*Romans*, 1864, p. 249), B. Jowett, (*Romans*, 1859, II. 251) and more recently by C. K. Barrett who says

The "bondage of the Law"—an expression which the Puritans frequently used—needs to be understood in the same way as the Biblical phrase just examined. The freedom of the Gospel was often spoken of by the Puritans as deliverance from "the bondage of the Law",¹⁹⁷ but this was to speak metonymically, by substituting "law" for "sin". Strictly, there is no bondage in the Law;¹⁹⁸ the bondage is either that of sin and corruption which, in turn, derive their strength from the Law,¹⁹⁹ or it arises from an abuse of the Law.²⁰⁰ When the Puritans exulted in deliverance from the Law, they meant first of all that they were made free from sin's condemnation,²⁰¹ and so the curse of the Law having been removed they were brought out from under sin's bondage.

(iii) "That being dead wherein we were held"

There was considerable difference of understanding among the Puritans about the interpretation of the apostle's words in Romans vii. 6, "that being dead wherein we were held," particularly in their connection with verses 2 and 3. Some of the Puritans took Paul's analogy to mean that the "Law" was the "husband", and that the Law was now dead. Robert Towne speaks of "the Law our former husband",²⁰² and says, "The law is dead to us. . . . The Law and Christ are set in opposition, as two husbands to one wife successively."²⁰³ The author of *The Marrow* expounds Romans vii. 1 by changing "he" to "it", and reads, "the law hath dominion over a man as long as it liveth". He therefore concludes from verse 6 that the Law is "dead",²⁰⁴ and, borrowing from Richard Greenham, he says, "O Law! be it known unto thee that I am now married unto Christ".²⁰⁵

Some writers were led into a mixture of interpretations—partly justified by the multiple use which the apostle makes of his analogy—

"Sin has taken possession of the law ('the law of sin', v. 23), and made out of it a subtle perversion of law", and that by the "law of sin and death" is meant "the law of Moses, seized and perverted by sin and consequently leading to death". (*Romans*, pp. 151, 155). Some further discussion of this subject can be found in E. F. Kevan, *The Evangelical Doctrine of Law*, 1955, pp. 22-25.

197. E.g. William Ames, *Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, p. 123.

198. Psalm xix. 8; cxix. 47, 96; Romans vii. 22.

199. Romans vii. 8, 13; I Corinthians xv. 56.

200. Galatians v. 1.

201. William Perkins, *Galatians*, p. 320.

202. *Assertion of Grace*, p. 118.

203. Op. cit., pp. 141, 142.

204. Op. cit., pp. 107, 139, 151.

205. Op. cit., p. 141; cf. Samuel Bolton, *True Bounds*, p. 26; Thomas Goodwin, *Work of the Holy Ghost*, in *Works*, VI. 257, 258; Robert Traill, *Galatians*, in *Works*, IV. 229, 230.

and spoke of both the Law and the believer being “dead”. Vavasor Powell was one of these and says,

Believers are dead to, and free from the law as it is a Husband. . . .
If you be believers, and married to Christ, the law hath no more power over you, then a dead husband hath over his relict and liveing wife.²⁰⁶

William Woodward writes with the same uncertainty of meaning when he regards the Law as “the husband”, but adds that Paul “doth not say the law as a Husband is dead, ’tis not dead to this day as a rule; mark that, but we are dead to the law.”²⁰⁷

John Flavel introduces a cautious observation when he sees the husband as the abused Law,²⁰⁸ and so prepares the way for the views of others that the former “husband” of Romans vii is not the Law, but sin. Thomas Blake bridges the gap between these interpretations, and writes:

The power which the Law loseth, is that which corruption gave it, which is irritation and condemnation; corruption never gave command to the Law, and the death of corruption through the Spirit can never exempt the soul from obedience, or take the power of command from it. Let it be granted that the Law is the husband here mentioned, the similitude is this. That as the Law through our corruption was fruitful in mans nature to the bringing forth of sin and condemnation; So Christ by the Spirit is to be fruitful in our nature to bring forth works of grace to salvation, and so the death of the Law is meerly in respect of irritation or enflaming to sin, and binding over to condemnation, not in respect of command.²⁰⁹

Samuel Rutherford stands in this mediating position when he explains the “husband” to be “the Law, as given to the siner”.²¹⁰ The argument of Thomas Blake and the Law-for-the-sinner concept of Samuel Rutherford move in the direction of the latter’s main exposition, namely, that the “husband” is sin itself.

Anthony Burgess teaches that the “husband” is sin,²¹¹ so also do Francis Roberts²¹² and William Strong.²¹³ John Preston interprets the passage as meaning:

206. *Christ and Moses*, p. 233; see Thomas Blake, on Vavasor Powell in *Covenant of God*, p. 51.

207. *Lord our Righteousness*, p. 84.

208. *Vindiciae Legis & Foederis*, Prolegomena.

209. Thomas Blake, *Covenant of God*, pp. 53, 54.

210. *Triumph of Faith*, p. 196.

211. *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 228.

212. *God’s Covenants*, p. 730.

213. *The Two Covenants*, p. 19.

We were married to sinne, and it had dominion and command over us, as the husband over the wife, but now it is dead, and there is a divorce betweene us, and now wee are married to Christ and hee commands us, and wee obey.²¹⁴

Edward Elton warns against overpressing the details of the analogy, and he says the difficulties will be removed

if we consider the drift and purpose of the Apostle, which is this, to shew that death sets a man free from the Law of God . . . as death sets a wife free from the Law of Marriage . . . whether it be by the death of the wife; or by the death of the husband it skills not.²¹⁵

He says, however, that the words, "that being dead", are

rather put down absolutely, as if the reading were thus, "that thing being dead". And if any demand what is then meant by that thing? I answer in a word, that sin, that corruption, that is in us by nature . . . Which did strongly, forcibly, and as a tyrant hold us in bondage under the Law.²¹⁶

Andrew Willet may best summarize and conclude the Puritan discussion of this complicated passage. After having surveyed the many opinions that have been expressed, he gives his own view as follows:

Now that the law is not as the husband, but sinne, the Apostle evidently sheweth, v. 5. "When we were in the flesh the motions of sinne which were by the law had force in our members to bring forth fruit unto death . . ." ²¹⁷

He then refers to the double similitude in verse 4, and says that the apostle

joyntly applyeth the two similitudes before alleadged: the one, that the lawe hath no dominion over one, but while he liveth, v. 1, the other that the woman is bound to the man, but while he liveth: in the application, he putteth both together: to answer to the first, he saith we are mortified to the lawe, and so it hath no more power over us: and touching the second, he saith, that beeing dead, wherein we were holden, namely, sinne, v. 5, we should be now for an other husband.²¹⁸

One of the superficial causes of the Puritan difficulty was the false

214. John Preston, *Law out lawed*, p. 2.

215. *Treatises*: "Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner", p. 10

216. *Op. cit.*, p. 52.

217. *Hexapla: Romanes*, p. 316.

218. Andrew Willet, *Hexapla: Romanes*, p. 317.

reading, ἀποθανόντος instead of ἀποθανόντες, followed by the translators of the A.V. and which appears subsequently in the *Textus Receptus*. But the Puritans were not unaware of this textual weakness, and it must not be thought that when some of them wrote of the Law as "dead" they were building their argument on verse 6 alone. Their chief problem lay in the analogy itself and confronted them in the ambiguity of the death not only of the "husband" but also of the "wife".

Among later expositors there are but few who understand Paul to mean that the Law is "dead",²¹⁹ and the generally recognized interpretation follows the line suggested by the R.V. and now in the *New English Bible*.²²⁰ It is thus the "old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts"²²¹ in which the believers are considered to have died, and this is in keeping with Paul's teaching in such passages as Romans vi. 2-11; vii. 4; Galatians ii. 19, 20; vi. 14.²²²

From the evidence surveyed in this chapter it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the Puritans, when rightly discerning the mandatory aspects of the Law of God, affirmed with well-nigh one voice that the eternal Law of God was incapable of being terminated in time. The true end of the Law is, therefore, to be found in its perfect realization in the work of Christ and through that work in the obedience of regenerate sinners.

219. F. Godet says, "the idea of the abolition of the law is foreign to this passage". *Romans*, II. 12.

220. See Alford, Barrett, Barth, Beet, Denney, Forbes, Garvie, Gifford, Hodge, Jowett, and Sanday and Headlam.

221. Ephesians iv. 22.

222. J. A. Bengel does not concern himself unduly with the niceties of the analogy and writes, "When either party dies, the other is considered to be dead", *Gnomon*, III. 86, 87, and J. Murray similarly contends that it is arbitrary to construct a rigid allegory. *Romans*, 1959, I. 241, 242; cf. C. H. Dodd, *Romans*, p. 101 and C. K. Barrett, *Romans*, p. 138.

Chapter V

THE CONTINUANCE OF MORAL OBLIGATION

Synopsis

- A. ANTINOMIAN REJECTION OF COMMANDMENT
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Chapter V

THE CONTINUANCE OF MORAL OBLIGATION

IT has been established that the Puritans held that the work of Christ as "the end of the Law" does not mean that the Law is abolished, and, more particularly, that the experience of the grace of God in no way detracts from the authority and permanence of the Law of God.

The purpose of this chapter is to trace the ways in which the Puritans worked out the implications of this in terms of Christian experience. The unalterable fact of human obligation is first recognized, together with the undiminished demands of the Law of God. It is then shown that these demands are to be acknowledged, not merely in their intrinsic goodness, but in their form as authoritative commands, and that, so far from an action losing moral value when performed because commanded, it is only when an action is performed in this manner that it possesses the quality of true goodness. This commanding Law is "in the hand of Christ"; nevertheless, sanctions are attached to it, and chastisements follow upon the believer's breach of it.

A. ANTINOMIAN REJECTION OF COMMANDMENT

There is possibly no part of the discussion of the place of the Law in the life of the believer where Antinomians were more "antinomian" than at this place. They were mostly willing to concede the eternity of the matter of the Law, but they held that to serve God because of commandment to do so was legalistic and unspiritual.

(i) "No Moses now"

On the basis of the view that the Law was abrogated,¹ John Eaton complains of those who "turne Christ into Moses, and Moses into Christ".² Robert Towne rejects the distinction between the "Raigne" of Law and the "Rule" of Law,³ and although he readily agrees that "the Spirit . . . doth ever guide and bring forth fruits of holinesse

1. See Chapter IV.

2. *Honey-combe*, p. 381; John Sedgwick quotes them as saying, "Away with Moses, Out of doors with Moses, we belevvers can no longer abide his voice". (*Antinomianisme Anatomized*, p. 4).

3. *Assertion of Grace*, pp. 1, 2.

and righteousnesse according to the Law",⁴ he cannot accept the active and authoritative aspect of the Law. He displays his complete intermixing of opposite concepts when he asks the lame question, "What if it be affirmed that even in true sanctification the Law of works is a meer passive thing, as the Kings high way which a Christian freely walketh in?"⁵ Later on he adds the petulant remark, "If the Spirit be free, why will you controll and rule it by the Law, whereas the nature of the Spirit is freely to conform the heart and life to the outward rule of the law and without the help of the law."⁶ The utmost that he seems willing to acknowledge in this respect is that the Law "ministreth occasion"⁷ to do the things that are right, but ten years later in the *Re-assertion*, he becomes bolder and asserts, "To faith, or in the state or things of faith, there is no obligation, nor use of the law."⁸

As so often, Robert Towne speaks with two voices. He rejects the idea of walking by the rule of the Law and charges Thomas Taylor with an unwillingness to "trust a beleever to walke without his Keeper; as if he judged no otherwise of him then of a malefactor of Newgate."⁹ But when statements of this kind expose him to the charge of Antinomianism, he replies, "I never deny the Law to be an eternall and inviolable Rule of Righteousnesse: but yet affirme that its the Grace of the Gospel, which effectually and truly conformeth us thereunto", and retorts again to Thomas Taylor by saying, "I am perswaded that neither you nor any your confederates dare say that ever they heard one of an indifferent judgment and understanding . . . simply to deny the use of the Morall Law to true beleevers."¹⁰ He holds that "the Law is useful" to the believer, "for if I love God and my Neighbour, I can testifie it onely by the workes of the Law",¹¹ and when asked by Thomas Taylor, "What is the law of Christ, but the commandment of Christ enjoying the love of our brethren?" he replies, "Its his law for the expression of our love; but not to beget the inward affection of it."¹²

There is something exasperating about this kind of argument—these cross-questions and crooked-answers. It shows how confused Robert Towne is, and at the same time reveals the problem he makes for himself as he confounds the requirements of duty with the power to fulfil them.

John Saltmarsh dislikes those who say "that duties are to be done

4. Op. cit., p. 9.

6. Op. cit., p. 138.

8. *Re-assertion*, p. 118.

9. Robert Towne, *Assertion of Grace*, p. 5, and *Re-assertion*, p. 5.

10. *Assertion of Grace*, pp. 6, 37.

11. Op. cit., p. 147.

12. Op. cit., p. 149.

5. Op. cit., p. 10.

7. Op. cit., p. 170.

because commanded",¹³ and in *Free-Grace* he reveals his contempt for those whose Gospel preaching is "over-much heated by the Law, and conditions and qualifications",¹⁴ and who hold the believer in poverty of spirit by keeping him "both under Grace and the Law at the same time".¹⁵ He says that to urge believers to "Repent . . . and walk according to the law of God" is a legal way of bringing comfort to a soul,¹⁶ and that the preachers who do this give "rather something of the Law then the Gospel",¹⁷ for "nothing but the taking in of the Law . . . can trouble the peace and quiet of any soul."¹⁸ "The Gospel is . . . a perfect law of life and righteousness . . . and therefore I wonder at any that should contend for the ministry of the Law or ten Commandments under Moses."¹⁹ The believer is now under grace, and there is "no Moses now".²⁰ It can do no other than bring the believer into bondage if he does things "meerly as commanded from the power of an outward commandment or precept in the Word", and such a relation to the Law produces "but a legal, or at best but a mixt obedience and service of something a finer hypocrisy".²¹

Most of the expressions used by John Saltmarsh are capable of being sympathetically understood when the Law, or "Moses", is thought of as a Covenant, but it is clear that at the root of these Antinomian controversies there lies the inability of many to keep the distinction between the Law as commandment and the Law as Covenant.

(ii) *The Puritan reply*

The Puritans did not fail to see the drift of Antinomian thought, and they wrote against it in no uncertain terms.²² John Sedgwick considers the Antinomian war-cries of Free Grace, Christ's Righteousness, and Gospel Liberty, to be "Baits and Snares . . . to cast down Obedience, to keep Christians from their dutie to God", and he deplores the "Law-destroying, and Dutie-casting-down course"

13. John Saltmarsh, *Sparkles of Glory*, p. 242; cf. pp. 193, 194.

14. John Saltmarsh, *Free-Grace*, An Occasional Word.

15. Op. cit., To the Reader.

16. Op. cit., p. 27.

17. Op. cit., p. 37.

18. Op. cit., p. 44.

19. Op. cit., p. 146; cf. *Sparkles of Glory*, pp. 240, 243, 246. It is this kind of statement that justifies Henry Burton in saying "our Adversary shuts out the law quite, as out of date to a true beleever, and of no use at all, not so much as to be a rule of life." *Law and Gospel Reconciled*, p. 21.

20. John Saltmarsh, op. cit., p. 160. Cf. Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, 1692, p. 2.

21. John Saltmarsh, *Free-Grace*, pp. 179, 180.

22. Cf. Thomas Taylor, *Regula Vitae*, Preface; Thomas Welde, *Rise, reigne, and ruine*, p. 1; Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena*, p. 25; Henry Burton, *Law and Gospel Reconciled*, pp. 22, 69; Thomas Bedford, *An Examination*, p. 9; Samuel Rutherford, *Survey*, Part I. p. 151.

of the Antinomians.²³ James Durham affirms that this rejection of the principle of obligation is itself a breach of the First Commandment,²⁴ and Thomas Gataker defends the principle of obligation by reference to the word, ὀφείλει in I John ii. 6, and the occurrence of the same verb in Romans viii. 12.²⁵

To deny the Morall Law to be of any more use to believers, or to be so much as a rule of conversation, or that they owe obedience unto it in poynt of duety and conscience: this strikes at the very root, and cutts in sunder the knot, not onely of christian charity, but even of all civill society.²⁶

The issue involved in this controversy is put plainly by Anthony Burgess in *Vindiciae Legis* when he says,

The question is not, whether the things of the Law be done, . . . but, Whether, when these things are done, they are done by a godly man, admonished, instructed, and commanded by the Law of God.²⁷

The possibility of such a question, however, is based on "the Antinomian distinction of the Law abolished as a Law, but still abiding in respect of the matter of it".²⁸ To Robert Towne's protest that "the law in the matter of it so farre as I know was never denied to be the rule, according to which a beleever is to walk and live",²⁹ Anthony Burgess replies, "To say the matter of the Law bindeth, but yet not as a Law, is a meere contradiction; for what is a Law, but such an object held forth by the command and will of a superiour?"³⁰ By way of defence, Robert Towne makes the assertion:

If you apply and urge these or any other never so earnestly with all your motives, and meanes fetcht from the Law, you can never hereby make me to keep them inwardly. . . . The law sanctifieth not therefore, nor giveth any heart or ability in truth to perform what it requireth.³¹

But no one ever claimed that the Law could do this, nor is it a valid denial of the authority of the Law to say that it affords no aid. Samuel

23. *Antinomianisme Anatomized*, To the Reader; cf. Richard Allen, *Antidote against Heresy*, p. 84.

24. *Law Unsealed*, p. 25.

25. *Antinomianism*, pp. 14, 15.

26. Henry Burton, *Law and Gospel Reconciled*, Epistle Dedicatory; cf. Robert Bolton, *Three-fold Treatise*, "Saints Guide", 1634, p. 87.

27. *Op. cit.*, pp. 51, 277.

28. Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 214.

29. *Assertion of Grace*, p. 170.

30. *Vindiciae Legis*, pp. 214, 215.

31. *Assertion of Grace*, p. 38, 170.

Rutherford gives a direct and uncompromising reply to the Antinomian denial.

The Law is yet to be preached, as tying us to personall obedience, whatever Antinomians³² say on the contrary. . . . Antinomians judge that by the Gospel, Christ hath done all for us, which is most true in the kinde of a meritorious and deserving cause, satisfying justice, but they doe loose us from all personal duties, or doing ourselves, or in our own persons, so as we should be obliged to doe, except we would sinne. We thinke the same Law-obligation, but running in a Gospel-channel of Free-grace, should act us now as if we were under a covenant of works, but not as if the one were Law-debt, and the other wages that we sweat for, and commeth by Law-debt; Antinomians make all duties a matter of courtesie.³³

He points out that the Antinomians³⁴ “contend for a Christian liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and we contend for the same, but the question is, wherein the liberty consisteth, it concerneth us much, that we take not licence for liberty”,³⁵ and in reply to Robert Towne’s assertion that the Gospel persuades rather than commands he makes the rejoinder, “But say we, it both commands, (as the Law doth) and with a more strong obligation of the constraining love of Christ, beside the authority of the Lawgiver, and also perswadeth”.³⁶

Some of the orthodox writers probe deeper than the theoretical discussion of this subject, and Ezekiel Hopkins, for example, speaks with penetrating insight, of “a company of flush Notionists, who are very willing to shake off the Yoke from their Necks; and to deliver themselves rather from the Conscience, than from the Power of Sin.”³⁷ John Bunyan tells of his conversations with the “Ranters” who condemned him “as legal and dark”, pretending that in their perfection they “could do what they would and not sin”, but exclaims, “Oh! These temptations were suitable to my flesh.”³⁸ Richard Baxter dismisses whatever evidence of virtue the Antinomians produce with the scornful remark, “But how conscionably soever they live, it is no thanks to their ungodly unchristian Doctrine”,³⁹ and, fairly or unfairly, he writes

Truly I finde as farre as I can discern, that most of the prophane people in every Parish where yet I have liv’d, are Antinomians;

32. See Robert Towne, *Assertion of Grace*, p. 31.

33. *Survey*, Part II. pp. 28, 29.

34. See Robert Towne, *Assertion of Grace*, p. 26.

35. Samuel Rutherford, *Survey*, Part II. p. 93.

36. *Op. cit.*, p. 122.

37. *John*, in *Works*, p. 239.

38. *Grace Abounding*, 1666, p. 21.

39. *Scripture Gospel Defended*, “Defence of Christ and Free Grace”, To the Reader.

They are born and bred such; and it is the very natural Religion of men, that have but the advantage to believe traditionally in Christ: I mean, their corrupt nature carrieth them without any teaching to make this use of Christ and the Gospel. And almost all the successe of my Labours which hath so much comforted me, hath been in bringing men from natural Antinomianism or Libertinism, to true Repentance and saving Faith in Christ.⁴⁰

There was, without doubt, considerable misunderstanding between the Antinomians and their opponents, and a tendency among the orthodox unjustly to impute wrong motives to the Antinomians. Any endeavour for freedom, in whatever sphere, is accused at some time or other with anarchic or unworthy motives, and it has to run the risk of this. In this present instance the Antinomians suffered as much through the excessive fervour of their friends—the “Ranters”—as they did from their opponents. The Antinomians were in error, however, and the Puritan exposure of their mistaken inferences must be regarded as necessary in the interests of true godliness.

B. THE HUMAN OBLIGATION TO OBEY

The human obligation to obey is implicit in the Divine right to command, but the Puritans did not leave it tacitly there. They taught that man “is bound to acknowledge Divine Sovereignty, together with his own subjection.”⁴¹

(i) *Its basis in man's creaturely relation to God*

An Obligation to obey our Creator, is a Natural resultancy from our Condition, as we are Creatures. . . . If Gods Commands, as they are his Commands, do not constitute and determine Man's duty, and lay a necessary tye upon man to Obedience, then God hath lost his Authority over man.⁴²

Man, therefore, is subject to the Law “by nature”,⁴³ for the moral Law “bindes the consciences of all men at all times, even of blind and ignorant persons, that neither knowe the most of it nor care to knowe it.”⁴⁴ “To binde (in this morall sense) is to have such an authority, as the Conscience ought to submit it selfe unto.”⁴⁵ The duty of obedience is based on “a law, whose obligation arises from our very nature and being, and is founded in the relation between God and

40. Richard Baxter, *Apology*, “Admonition of Mr William Eyre”, Preface.

41. John Ball, *Power of Godliness*, p. 1.

42. John Barret, *Treatise of the Covenants*, pp. 16, 19.

43. Edward Reynolds, *Three Treatises: “Sinfulness of Sinne”*, p. 368.

44. William Perkins, *Of Conscience*, in *Works*, p. 622.

45. William Ames, *Conscience*, Book I. p. 6, cf. Book V. pp. 166–7.

man. . . . To deny perfect obedience to be due from man is to deny him to be man."⁴⁶ Whatever incapacities may have come about through the entry of sin into human life, man's "obligation to God is . . . indelible",⁴⁷ and the Decalogue obliges "all Christians, to the worlds end."⁴⁸ "The thing properly willed by God in a Law, is but the *debitum*, the duty of the subject to do what is commanded",⁴⁹ yet it must not be thought that the obedience rendered by man is something that God "hath any neede of."⁵⁰ Isaac Ambrose yields to a play on words by defining "duty" as "mans tye to that which is due."⁵¹

Moral obligation is nothing short of a strict subjection. Our obedience towards God, although in respect of readinesse of mind it ought to be the obedience of sons: yet in respect of that strict obligation to subjection, it is the obedience of servants.⁵²

One of the clearest evidences of the obligatory nature of the Law is found in fallen man's resentment against it: sinful man resists the Law because, by its holy obligations, the Law first resists him, for "without the law sin is dead."⁵³ Conversely, because by man's sinful nature he "would not be under command",⁵⁴ the best evidence of the believer's restored relation to God is obedience.⁵⁵

The challenge to God's sovereignty contained in man's fall must be matched in his restoration by the renewed recognition of that sovereignty, for it is "the authority of God" which constitutes "the formal object of our obedience, or the reason why we observe the things he hath commanded."⁵⁶

(ii) *Obligation increased by grace*

"Howsoever we are freed from the curse . . . of the law; yet we are not freed from the obedience of the law morall."⁵⁷ The believer is committed to an "inward and sound obedience due to Gods law",⁵⁸

46. David Clarkson, *Justification*, in *Works*, I. 297; *The Lord Rules over all*, 1696, in *Works*, II. 487; Richard Baxter, *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, p. 298. See above Chapter I.
47. Stephen Charnock, *Efficient of Regeneration*, 1683, in *Works*, III. 225; cf. Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, pp. 61, 64.
48. Samuel Rutherford, *Survey*, Part II. pp. 5-7.
49. Richard Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, Book I. Part I. p. 77.
50. John Preston, *New Covenant*, p. 103.
51. *Prima, Media, & Ultima*, "The Middle Things", p. 15, cf. p. 38.
52. William Ames, *Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, pp. 191, 195, 196.
53. Romans vii. 8. Cf. Edward Elton, *Treatises*: "Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner", pp. 78, 84, 85.
54. Thomas Manton, *Thessalonians*, in *Works*, III. 142; cf. Stephen Charnock, *Man's Enmity to God*, 1699, in *Works*, V. 472.
55. Cf. George Hughes, *Dry Rod Blooming*, 1644, p. 103.
56. Stephen Charnock, *Attributes*, in *Works*, II. 494; cf. 427-33.
57. George Downname, *Covenant of Grace*, p. 66.
58. William Perkins, *Golden Chaine*, in *Works*, p. 14.

and, having believed, he “must goe yet further, and enter into a practise of the doctrine of the Gospell as wel as of the precepts of the morall lawe; knowing that the gospell doeth as well bind conscience as the law, and if it be not obeied will as well condemne.”⁵⁹ The Law “doth tye even Christians and Believers now, as well as of old.”⁶⁰ “Christians are bound to serve God”,⁶¹ and, having the Law of God in their hearts, “they make conscience of internal obedience” and of external obedience too.⁶² They recognize that although they are not under the reign of the Law, they are still under the rule of it.⁶³ “It is the doctrine of the Scripture”, says Richard Rogers, “that all the commaundements of God be had in account of us, and conscience made of one as well as of another.”⁶⁴ “Our freedome and deliverance from the rigour and curse of the Law, binds us strongly to the service of God”,⁶⁵ hence the mandatory part of the Law is to be preached “as it doth teach beleevvers their duties.”⁶⁶ Sanctifying grace is as a law that rules,⁶⁷ and “Gospel-duties” are called for because the Law itself is part of the Gospel and never was anything but a Covenant of Grace.⁶⁸ The obligations of the believer towards the Law of God are part of the terms of that saving Covenant.

Thomas Bedford deals with objections based on Paul’s statement that “the law is not made for a righteous man”,⁶⁹ and says that although it does not condemn the law-abiding man, it is still of use to instruct him, as it was to Adam in Paradise.⁷⁰ Christ’s full submission to the Law does not “take us away from obeying the Will of God, which was Christs meat and drink to do.”⁷¹ A saving relation to Christ increases obligation to Christ, and the Covenant vow, renewed continually at the Lord’s Supper, acknowledges that “we are bound to the strictest duties.”⁷² In his strong opposition to Antinomianism, Samuel Rutherford writes,

59. William Perkins, *Of Conscience*, in *Works*, p. 625; John Dod and Robert Cleaver, *Ten Commaundements*, p. 7.
 60. James Durham, *Law Unsealed*, pp. 2, 3, 5; cf. Thomas Blake, *Covenant of God*, pp. 50, 51.
 61. John Ball, *Of Faith*, p. 368.
 62. John Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, pp. 132, 133.
 63. Thomas Taylor, *Regula Vitae*, pp. 1, 2.
 64. *Seven Treatises*, Preface.
 65. Edward Elton, *Treatises*: “Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner”, p. 53, cf. p. 29.
 66. Vavasor Powell, *Christ and Moses*, p. 255; cf. the anonymous work, *Covenant of Grace, not Absolute*, 1692, p. 34.
 67. Edward Elton, *Treatises*: “Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner”, p. 205.
 68. James Durham, *Law Unsealed*, pp. 10, 16.
 69. I Timothy i. 9.
 70. *An Examination*, pp. 13, 14, 17. Cf. Thomas Taylor, *Regula Vitae*, p. 161; Calvin, *Inst.* II. vii. 10 where he explains this of the *usus politicus*.
 71. Jeremiah Burroughs, *Gospel-Conversation*, p. 79.
 72. Thomas Manton, *Mark*, 1678, in *Works*, II. 228; Richard Greenham, *Of Quenching the Spirit*, in *Works*, p. 54; Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 4; *Justification*, Part II., p. 21.

Gospel-motives vary not the nature of duties: as a Master may command the same duties to his sonne and his servant, upon different grounds. . . . Let none thinke that Law-curses, looseth us from all Law-obedience; or that Christ hath cryed downe the tenne Commandements; and that Gospel-liberty is a dispensation for Law-loosenesse. . . . Grace is active, dutifull in acting . . . solicitous in doing, as if there were not a Gospel; free, fearlesse bold; as if there were not a cursing Law, tender of the honour of the Law-giver, and of Gospel-glory due to him who justifies the ungodly.⁷³

Thus, although the voluntary and loving obedience of the believer does not come from the fears and curses of the Law, it does nevertheless derive "from the binding and obliging authority of the Law-giver."⁷⁴ In the *Triumph of Faith* he exclaims

The way that cryeth down duties and sanctification, is not the way of grace; grace is an innocent thing, and will not take men off from duties, grace destroyeth not obedience; Christ has made faith a friend to the Law.⁷⁵

This view is supported by Thomas Blake who maintains that

It can be no part of our Christian freedome to be from under the Sovereignty of heaven. . . . God in the dayes of the Gospel keeps up the power and authority of his Law; the Obligation of it is still in force to binde the consciences of beleevers.⁷⁶

He refers to the opinion of some that the Law "bindes the unregenerate part of man, but not the regenerate part", and answers this by drawing attention to Paul's words about delighting in the Law of God "after the inward man."⁷⁷ He understands these words to mean "so far as regenerate", and so asks, "How could he delight in it as a Law, and not be subject to it?" His question compels him to add, significantly, "It seemes these think only wicked ones to be bound, or rather wickednesse to be obliged; It will shortly be a marke of unregeneration . . . to be subject to it."⁷⁸ It is unthinkable that the believer should be regarded as "freed from the lawe, in respect of the obedience thereto"⁷⁹ for, as Samuel Bolton so succinctly puts it, "the law sends us to the Gospel, that we may be justified, and the

73. *Survey*, Part II. pp. 8, 29.

74. Samuel Rutherford, *op. cit.*, Part II. p. 68.

75. Samuel Rutherford, *Triumph of Faith*, p. 121.

76. Thomas Blake, *Covenant of God*, p. 48.

77. Romans vii. 22.

78. Thomas Blake, *Covenant of God*, p. 57.

79. Andrew Willet, *Hexapla: Romanes*, p. 317.

Gospel sends us to the law againe to enquire what is our dutie being justified.”⁸⁰

Far from there being any reduction in the obligations resting on the believer, the facts are opposite, for “as Christ came to raise the comfort of the creature to the highest, so also the duty of the creature to the highest”,⁸¹ and “in the Christian religion all moral duties are advanced and heightened to their greatest perfection.”⁸² The Westminster Divines made an addition to an earlier draft of Chapter XIX, paragraph 6 of the *Confession of Faith*, and particularly instructed that the words “and bound” should be added after the word “directed” in the statement that the Law of God not only informs believers of their duty but “directs and binds them to walk accordingly.”⁸³

(iii) *The holy fear of God*

We are not to consult whether the will of God is to be obeyed or no, for such a consultation cannot be free from impietie: but wee are to enquire onely to this end, that wee may understand what is the will of God.⁸⁴

This dread of “impietie”, and the realization of their relation to the holy Law of God, engendered that godly fear within the Puritans which has ever been regarded as one of their outstanding characteristics. William Perkins teaches that among the sanctified affections “is the feare of God, a most excellent and wonderfull grace of God”,⁸⁵ and Richard Rogers, likewise, speaks of “fearing most of all to offend God.”⁸⁶ There are two kinds of fear—a fear of holy diligence and a slavish fear—and the believer should have “the first kinde of fear” about “a duty commanded by God”,⁸⁷ and this must “awe us, and hold us under a sense of our duty” to Him.⁸⁸

The Puritans invested the concept of obligation with moral grandeur by means of the theological context in which they presented it. They lived in an awareness of the commanding authority of God, and this gave glory and dignity to all their actions. The Antinomian minimizing of this—although with the intention of magnifying grace—tended to obscure the Divine perfections and thus to destroy the glory of God.

80. *True Bounds*, p. 98.

81. Thomas Manton, *Ephesians*, 1678, in *Works*, II. 400.

82. Thomas Manton, *James*, in *Works*, IV. 122.

83. A. F. Mitchell and J. Struthers, *Minutes*, p. 272.

84. William Ames, *Conscience*, Book IV. p. 25.

85. *A Treatise*, 1588, in *Works*, p. 443.

86. *Seven Treatises*, p. 316.

87. Anthony Burgess, *Spiritual Refining*, “Of Sinne”, p. 125.

88. Thomas Manton, *Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm*, I. 6.

C. UNALTERED DEMANDS OF THE LAW

The corollary of the continuance of moral obligation is the undiminished requirement of the Law.

(i) *No licence to sin*

The Law is a free rule, but “we may not live as we list.”⁸⁹ The Christian enjoys a freedom from the bondage of evil and is ushered into a “Freedom in good things”,⁹⁰ but he must observe a right use of this liberty.⁹¹ Believers need the Law as a rule because of the reality of their freedom,⁹² for true freedom is freedom to do right. Forgiveness does not “open a doore of libertie to make men more loose.”⁹³

I am perswaded more souls drop down to Hell in our dayes under the abuse of Gospel Light, than ever did in the gross darkness of Popery. . . . Oh how many have we now adaies, who think they walk cleerly in the midst of Gospel Light, magnifying and exalting free Grace, triumphing in their Christian liberty, looking upon others as kept in bondage . . . and yet . . . make a mock of sin, being conceitedly set at liberty, but really sin and Satans bond-slaves.⁹⁴

“Christian liberty is not contrary to that subjection, which we owe either unto God or man”, because “we are freed from sinne, but not from that duty, which is contrary unto sinne.”⁹⁵

It will prove no good reason, that because an heire in minority is under tutours and rods, therefore hee may being come to yeares live as hee list, and become a lawlesse man: or that because the law as given by Moses to the Church of the Jewes is in some circumstances altered, therefore it must bee in the whole substance of it abolished.⁹⁶

The liberty of the Christian man is not a freedom from the obedience of the Law, but from the disobedience of it,⁹⁷ for “to be free from obedience, is to be servants of sin.”⁹⁸ An imagined “Liberty to Sin”,

89. William Perkins, *Galatians*, p. 320.

90. William Perkins, op. cit., p. 357.

91. William Perkins, op. cit., p. 372.

92. William Perkins, op. cit., 293, 383.

93. John Preston, *New Covenant*, p. 115.

94. John Yates, To the Reader, in Jeremiah Burroughs, *Evil of Evils*.

95. William Ames, *Epistles of Peter*, 1641, p. 59.

96. Thomas Taylor, *Regula Vitae*, p. 30.

97. Thomas Taylor, *Regula Vitae*, p. 165.

98. Thomas Taylor, op. cit., p. 213; Thomas Manton, *Lord's Prayer in Works*, I. 131.

says Walter Marshal, is "the worst of Slavery";⁹⁹ it "would not be freedom, but bondage."¹⁰⁰

Didst thou know the Tenor of the Covenant of Grace and Mercy, the Strictness of the Gospel, and Severity of Mercy it self against sin; thou wouldst see, There were an impossibility of having one sin forgiven, as long as one sin is unforsaken.¹⁰¹

"Damnation will befall such men as make Gods grace a stirrup for to help them up into the saddle of sin",¹⁰² but, fundamentally, there can be no abuse of grace: though there may be of the doctrine.¹⁰³ John Sedgwick finds it hard to believe that anyone should think that the "granting of a Pardon" to a rebel should "give him a dispensation to practice Rebellion more freely",¹⁰⁴ and, using another metaphor, Thomas Blake writes, "Though the Law (the former husband) be dead to a beleever, yet a beleever is no widow, much lesse an harlot; for he is married to Christ, and is under the Law of Christ, which is love."¹⁰⁵

At their 611th Session, 27 March, 1646, the discussion of the Westminster Divines on "Liberty of Conscience" produced the following Minute.

None may practice any sin, or cherish any lust, or oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, upon pretence of Christian liberty—the liberty which is of Christ's procuring, and the powers which are of God's ordaining, not being opposite, or intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another.¹⁰⁶

This subsequently found place in the *Confession of Faith*, with the added words that such as do practise sin in this manner "do thereby destroy the end of Christian liberty."¹⁰⁷

(ii) *Universal obedience*

The Puritans never surrendered their conviction that the Law demands perfect obedience. This is what they meant by speaking so

99. *Sanctification*, p. 148.

100. Samuel Bolton, *True Bounds*, pp. 45, 46; cf. Ezekiel Hopkins, *Conscience*, 1701, in *Works*, p. 734.

101. Samuel Bolton, *Sin*, p. 37.

102. Vavasor Powell, *Christ and Moses*, p. 179.

103. Robert Traill, *Justification Vindicated*, in *Works*, I. p. 275; cf. Walter Cradock, *Gospel-Holiness*, "Priviledge and Practice of the Saints", pp. 298, 299.

104. John Sedgwick, *Antinomianisme Anatomized*, pp. 37, 38.

105. *Covenant of God*, pp. 54, 55. Cf. Chapter IV for another view of the "husband" in Romans vii, but this does not destroy the truth which Thomas Blake is establishing.

106. A. F. Mitchell and J. Struthers, *Minutes*, p. 213.

107. *Op. cit.*, XX. 3.

often of "universal" or "entire Obedience".¹⁰⁸ "Universal" obedience is not merely obedience rendered by everybody and everywhere, but obedience given to all the parts of the Law without exception,¹⁰⁹ for "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all".¹¹⁰ The laws of the Decalogue are absolute, and they set out a righteousness that is "full and complet."¹¹¹

"The Gospel demands that we should keep the whole Law",¹¹² and "in a very strict, and spirituall manner",¹¹³ so that "it is altogether bootlesse, for men to thinke of entering into Covenant with God, if they be not resolved to obey in all things",¹¹⁴ for "the Law . . . doth not remit at all of . . . exactnesse of obedience."¹¹⁵

The Holiness aimed at, consisteth in Conformity to the whole Moral Law, to which we are naturally obliged, if there had never been any Gospel, or any such Duty as believing in Christ for Salvation.¹¹⁶

"The rigor of the Law is abated" for the believer, but not in such a way "that the Law, as the Law, requireth lesse of him then absolutely perfect obedience."¹¹⁷

The Gospel abateth nothing of the height of perfection, in commanding whatever the law commandeth in the same perfection; for tis as holy, pure, and spirituall in commanding . . . as the Law is.¹¹⁸

Christ came to "restore our nature unto such a perfection of righteousness, as the exactnesse of Gods Law doth require",¹¹⁹ and through His Spirit the godly are humbled and subdued by "the spirituall exactnesse of the Law."¹²⁰ Ezekiel Hopkins makes the observation, "I much doubt, whether if God did not command us to do more than we can, we should do as much as we do",¹²¹ and it is

108. E.g. John Ball, *Grounds of Christian Religion*, p. 196.

109. Cf. Thomas Manton, *James*, in *Works*, IV. 213; *Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm*, I. 330; William Strong, *The Two Covenants*, p. 52.

110. James ii. 10.

111. John Dod and Robert Cleaver, *Ten Commaundements*, p. 3. Cf. Isaac Chauncy, "If the Law require of me a small Matter or a great, it abates not one jot or tittle of what it requires, and my performing that is perfect obedience to the said Law. If the King's Law require one shilling Poll-Tax of me, eleven pence three Farthings, half farthing will not pay my due, nor be accepted." *Rejoynder*, p. 31.

112. John Preston, *New Covenant*, p. 216.

113. Vavasor Powell, *Christ and Moses*, p. 167.

114. John Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, p. 21.

115. Jeremiah Burroughs, *Saints Treasury*, p. 93.

116. Walter Marshal, *Sanctification*, p. 144.

117. Samuel Rutherford, *Survey*, Part I. p. 317.

118. Samuel Rutherford, *Survey*, Part II. p. 8.

119. Thomas Wilson, *Romanes*, p. 247.

120. Anthony Burgess, *Spiritual Refining*, "Of Sinne", pp. 119, 120.

121. *John*, in *Works*, p. 243.

in the spirit of this remark that John Owen declares that "a universal respect to all God's commandments is the only preservative from shame."¹²²

Some discussion took place among the Puritans about the relation between the requirement of the Covenant and what it accepts. Thomas Blake says that, after thinking about it for "more than twenty years", he must conclude that "the Covenant requires no more than it accepts."¹²³ But it is hard to believe that he is right in this conclusion, and it is possible that he is confusing the things which belong to the sinner's entry into the covenant-relation with those which are expected of him once he is within it. It is undoubtedly to the sinner's entry into the covenant-relation that Thomas Blake refers when he speaks about the abundant grace of "the termes" upon which the sinner is freed "from the sentence" of the Law, but in addition to these terms of entry (sometimes called antecedent conditions) there are the duties of the covenant-life itself (sometimes called consequent conditions). Because of the gracious terms of entry, "no breach of Covenant" is caused by the believer's sins, but this does not alter the fact that they constitute "a transgression of the Law" of the covenant-relation itself. It is therefore untrue to say that "the Covenant requires no more than it accepts."

It is possible, however, that Thomas Blake means differently from what he says, because in the next few lines he speaks of "our inherent righteousnesse, which in reference to its rule labours under many imperfections."¹²⁴ What is "its rule" but that which is within the Covenant itself and confessedly requires more than it accepts? "God in Gospel-condescensions will have this rule eyed, with a single and upright heart universally eyed, and observed both in our returns from sin, and in our application to God in new obedience."¹²⁵ This is the rule, he says, to which the believer must make a "sincere endeavour to conform". The "sincere endeavour", however, does not define what "the covenant requires", but merely indicates what God in His mercy will accept, and leaves the preceptive part of the Covenant of Grace identical with "the Moral Law". The Gospel "requireth perfection as well as the Law doth."¹²⁶ William Strong helps forward the explanation by saying,

It is true, that perfect obedience . . . is required of us, as well as of Adam . . . but yet in the Covenant of Grace it is not required as the righteousness of the Covenant.¹²⁷

122. *Indwelling Sin*, in *Works*, VI. 186.

123. *Covenant of God*, pp. 108, 109.

124. *Covenant of God*, p. 111.

125. *Op. cit.*, p. 112.

126. Samuel Rutherford, *Survey*, Part II. p. 8.

127. *The Two Covenants*, p. 139.

Richard Baxter differs from the normal Puritan view by regarding the moral Law as informative only. He describes it as Christ's instrument "for direction to his Subjects", but that Christ "hath made it a proper part of his Gospel, not only as a Directory . . . but also as a Command: I am not yet convinced."¹²⁸ Most of the Puritans repudiated any suggestion of lowered requirements or change in the Law, and argued that what God in His grace will accept through the merits of Christ is one thing, but what His Law lays down as a requirement is another.

D. OBEDIENCE TO LAW AS LAW

The continuance of moral obligation in men implies, not only that the substance of the Law is to be understood as permanent, but also its law-form. The meaning of this for believers is that they will do what is right, not merely because it conforms to their renewed ideas, but because it is commanded. Whatever good action the believer performs, he "must doe it as his command",¹²⁹ for "Gods will is his Reason."¹³⁰ This is because "a law is a commanding thing" and "doth not barely notify";¹³¹ it is "a binding rule, a rule with a strong obligation",¹³² without which the Law is not the Law.

The Puritans frequently distinguished the "matter" from the "manner" of the Law, but stressed that obedience to the Law must be rendered "both in respect of the matter, and also the manner" of it;¹³³ it must be performed "because he willeth and commands it."¹³⁴ The Puritan pages are full of such exhortations. "Do not therefore this or that, because this will agree with thy ends . . . but do it because God hath required it."¹³⁵ "Whatsoever thou doest, doe it, because God commandeth thee."¹³⁶

The Substance and Matter of Obedience may be good, while the Circumstance and Manner is nought: . . . We must not only do *Bonum*, that which is good; but we must do it *Bene*, Well. God

128. *Aphorismes*, pp. 156–8; John Crandon answers Richard Baxter in a sarcastic passage in *Aphorisms Exorized*, Part I. pp. 214, 215.

129. John Preston, *Breastplate of Faith and Love*, "Of Love", p. 153.

130. Richard Baxter, *Directions for Weak Christians*, "Confirmed Christian", 1669, p. 58.

131. Thomas Jacomb, *Romans*, p. 109.

132. Thomas Manton, *Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm*, III. 172.

133. John Downname, *Guide to Godlynesse*, p. 15.

134. Anthony Burgess, *Spiritual Refining*, "Of Grace and Assurance", p. 70.

135. Anthony Burgess, op. cit., p. 70; cf. "Of Sinne", p. 77; Thomas Manton, *Ephesians*, in *Works*, II. 399.

136. Richard Greenham, *Of Good Workes*, in *Works*, p. 450; Thomas Taylor, *Progresse of Saints*, pp. 252, 254.

delights to be served (as one saith) rather with Adverbs, then with Nouns or Verbs.¹³⁷

It must be made manifest "not only that you do obey, but that you love the Commandement that you do obey",¹³⁸ because "you will labour, not only to obey God in the matter, but also in the manner of the command. . . . Our obedience must be grounded . . . upon a command."¹³⁹ It is possible that "hypocrites may perform the same Works for the matter, with true Saints; but they are defective in the manner of performance, wherein the excellency of the Work doth chiefly consist."¹⁴⁰

This stress on the form of the Law as well as its matter led the Puritans to call for a complete abandonment of the believer to the authority of the commandment as such, and they affirmed it to be one of the marks of true believers that they perform, or refrain from, an action "when they see that it is the commandment of him who loveth them most dearly."¹⁴¹ Richard Sibbes says, "Our obedience must be . . . because he commands us",¹⁴² for a "good conscience respects God and his command."¹⁴³ In *The Marrow, Evangelista* tells *Neophytus*

You will do that which the Lord commandeth only because He commandeth it, and to the end that you may please Him; and you will forbear what He forbids only because He forbids it, to the end you may not displease Him. . . . The mind and will of Christ . . . is not only the rule of a believer's obedience, but also the reason of it, . . . so that he doth not only do that which is Christ's will, but he doth it because it is His will.¹⁴⁴

Obedience, therefore, is to be given not merely on the basis of its congruity with reason, but ultimately on the authority of God.¹⁴⁵ It is to be rendered, not because of an inclination to do so, but solely because the Law of God requires it.¹⁴⁶ True obedience is "absolute" and can "admit of no discourse of reason", but whatever the appear-

137. Francis Roberts, *God's Covenants*, p. 452.

138. Jeremiah Burroughs, *Gospel-Conversation*, p. 40.

139. Thomas Brooks, *Cabinet of Jewels*, 1669, in *Works*, III. 340, 341; cf. *Heaven on Earth*, 1654, in *Works*, II. 472; *Apples of Gold*, 1657, in *Works*, I. 271; *Glory of Christianity*, in *Works*, IV. 146; Stephen Charnock, *Necessity of Regeneration*, 1683, in *Works*, III. 79.

140. Walter Marshal, *Sanctification*, p. 212.

141. Richard Rogers, *Seven Treatises*, Preface, cf. p. 79.

142. *Meditations*, 1638, in *Works*, VII. 207; cf. Thomas Manton, *Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm*, I. 36.

143. Richard Sibbes, *Demand of a Good Conscience*, 1640, in *Works*, VII. 486.

144. Op. cit., pp. 195, 212.

145. Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 64; cf. John Ball, *Of Faith*, p. 67.

146. Samuel Bolton, *True Bounds*, p. 197.

ance of loss or gain "we are to doe the things that he injoyneeth."¹⁴⁷ All is performed "in reference to God, and not for by-respects"¹⁴⁸ and

Though our services may . . . meet with many discouragements and prejudices to us, yet so that by them God may receive glory, and I may expresse my obediencial respect to him; here is winde enough to fill my sailes; I dare not do it, because God forbids; I will do it because God commands. . . . This is simplicity of obedience.¹⁴⁹

Paul Baynes remarks that it is the Christian's "first vertue" when "wee love, desire, and doe any thing, especially because God comandeth and for that end."¹⁵⁰ Anything less than obedience because commanded is not holiness.¹⁵¹ John Ball opens his treatise on the *Power of Godliness* in a similar manner by saying that conformity to the Divine will "is not to be reputed godliness, except man therein hath reall reference unto God."¹⁵² "Many are damned for misdoing their good works, because they did them not in obedience to God,"¹⁵³ and Francis Roberts remarks epigrammatically, "Mis-Obedience offends God as well as Disobedience."¹⁵⁴ Some may do what they are told, but not because they are told; they "may have an eye to the command, when yet they obey not for the sake of the command", and there are those who obey "out of conscience so commanding, but not out of conscience of the command."¹⁵⁵

The requirement, therefore, remains and the *Confession of Faith*, which describes the enabling grace of God, draws attention to the fact that what the believer does "freely and cheerfully" is at the same time that which "the law requireth to be done."¹⁵⁶

To determine that Law is to be obeyed because it is Law is of primary importance, not only for a right understanding of Puritan "practical divinity", but for the establishing of an adequate Biblical doctrine of sanctification. The insistence on this truth carries the subject into the very heart of the believer and into the citadel of his will. Only the heart that can say, "I delight to do thy will, O my God",¹⁵⁷ can be adjudged to be truly converted and godly.¹⁵⁸

147. John Downname, *Guide to Godlynesse*, p. 113.

148. Obadiah Sedgwick, *Anatomy*, 1660, p. 182.

149. Obadiah Sedgwick, op. cit., p. 213.

150. *Directions*, 1618, p. 131.

151. John Owen, *Holy Spirit*, in *Works*, III. 605.

152. Op. cit., p. 2 (unnumbered).

153. Richard Sibbes, *Christian Work*, 1639, in *Works*, V. 7.

154. *God's Covenants*, p. 716.

155. Thomas Goodwin, *Work of the Holy Ghost*, in *Works*, VI. 302.

156. Op. cit., XIX. 7.

157. Psalm xl. 8.

158. Further discussion of this Puritan conviction is to be found in the Conclusion.

E. LAW "IN THE HANDS OF CHRIST"

Because of easily-recognizable differences between the relation of men to the Law before and after faith, it became customary to speak of the believer as related to the Law "in the hands of Christ".¹⁵⁹ This phrase stood for the double notion of identity and difference: the identity was in the Law, and the difference was in the administration.

(i) *Christ as Lawgiver*

Christ giveth not himselfe to any upon that condition, onely to save him, but we must take him as a Lord too, to be subject to him, to obey him, and to square our actions according to his will in everything. For . . . he will be a Saviour to none but those to whom he is a Master.¹⁶⁰

In His "Regall Office" Christ is appointed "to be the Law-giver to the Church",¹⁶¹ for, asks John Sedgwick, "Is not Christ as well a King and Lord as a Priest?"¹⁶² John Barret "cannot but wonder any should question, whether the Gospel have the Nature of a Law",¹⁶³ and William Strong says that the "yoke"¹⁶⁴ which Christ invites men to take upon them when they come to Him

is the obedience which in the Gospel the Lord requires, and that is nothing else but the obedience of the Law, for though Christ hath fulfilled it, yet it lies upon us still as a duty. . . . The Gospel requires obedience as well as the Law, and there is a Law of Christ to be kept, and there is a yoke of Christ to be born, (sic) and Christ that hath abolished the Law as a Covenant and a Curse, has established the Law as a rule of Gospel obedience.¹⁶⁵

He who takes Jesus Christ as his Saviour, takes Him "*ipso facto*, as his Lord and as his Master."¹⁶⁶ Richard Baxter's "political" views of salvation find plenty of room for expression here, and leaving aside his opinion that the Gospel is another kind of Law, it is possible to agree with him that those who deny that the Gospel is a Law "do deny all our Christianity at once: For Christ is not Christ, if he be not

159. A. R. Vidler, *Christ's Strange Work*, p. 50 finds this thought first expressed by Origen, "it is Jesus who reads it to us".

160. John Preston, *Breastplate of Faith and Love*, "Of Faith", p. 42.

161. Nicholas Byfield, *Patterne*, p. 294.

162. *Antinomianisme Anatomized*, p. 34.

163. *Treatise of the Covenants*, p. 121.

164. Matthew xi. 30.

165. *The Two Covenants*, pp. 104, 158.

166. Thomas Goodwin, *Justifying Faith*, in *Works*, VIII. 325.

the King of the Church; nor is he King if he be not a Lawgiver; nor doth he Rule and Judge, if he have no Law."¹⁶⁷ The Puritans were unanimous in speaking of "the Law of the Covenant of Grace."¹⁶⁸ They recognized that "by the Law of Creation man oweth all Obedience to God", but contended that this obligation to obedience was "confirmed by Christ, and in the hand of Christ."¹⁶⁹

(ii) "In the law to Christ"

The Puritan view of the relation of believers to the Law of God is well expressed by Thomas Taylor, who argues that the regenerate are never *sine lege*, nor are they *sub lege* in respect of justification, but they are nevertheless *in lege*, that is, within the compass of the Law for instruction, for subjection, and in so far as it is written within their hearts.¹⁷⁰ Anthony Burgess, too, compares the expressions, "of the law", "without the law", "under the law" and "in the law", and affirms that in 1 Corinthians ix. 21 the apostle "calletth himself excellently, *ἐννομος τῷ Χριστῷ*";¹⁷¹ and when Francis Roberts grapples with this expression of the apostle, he writes, "No Christian believer is said to be *ὑπὸ νόμον* under the Law, nor is he *ἄνομος*, without Law to God; but he is *ἐννομος* in the Law, or within the Law to Christ".¹⁷² The same interpretation is given also by Thomas Manton in his commentary on *James*:

The Gospel is a law. . . . So that they that are in Christ are not without a law, not *ἄνομοι*, but *ἐννομοι*. So the apostle, I Cor. ix. 21, "I am not without the law, but under the law to Christ"; that is, under the rule and direction of the moral law.¹⁷³

There is no doubt that the Puritans rightly grasped Paul's meaning here. *ἐννομος* is the positive way of stating what was negatively expressed by the phrase *μὴ ὦν ἄνομος*, but because of the ambiguity of *ἐννομος*, aggravated by the unfortunate A.V. mis-translation, it is

167. Richard Baxter, *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, p. 149.

168. John Howe, *Blessedness of the Righteous*, 1668, in *Works*, II. 21–22.

169. John Barret, *Treatise of the Covenants*, pp. 21, 22.

170. *Regula Vitae*, pp. 31, 32.

171. *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 226. *Χριστῷ* is the Stephens' text, but most MSS have *Χριστοῦ*. This does not materially affect the meaning, and G. G. Findlay renders the expression "though I am not out-of-law in respect of God, but in-law (*ἐννομος*) in respect of Christ." (The Expositor's Greek Testament, edited W. Robertson Nicoll, II. 854). Alford regards *θεοῦ* and *Χριστοῦ* as genitives of dependence, and paraphrases the expression "a subject-of-the-law of Christ." He considers that the words are inserted rather to put before the reader the true position of a Christian with regard to God's Law revealed by Christ, than merely with an apologetic view to keep his own character from suffering by the interpretation of *ἀνομία*. *The Greek Testament*, Fifth Edition, 1865, II. 548.

172. Francis Roberts, *God's Covenants*, p. 729; on 1 Corinthians ix. 21.

173. *James*, in *Works*, IV. 163.

better to state the concept in its negative form and understand Paul to mean that he and other believers are "not outside" God's Law.¹⁷⁴

(iii) *An abused concept*

The concept of the Law "in the hands of Christ" is open to misunderstanding, and it is because of the Antinomian readiness to employ it with a meaning that robs the Law of its commanding authority that Anthony Burgess is cautious in the use of it.¹⁷⁵ Against any such devaluation of the Law, he maintains that in the hands of Christ it is no less "law" than it was in the hands of Moses, for

disobedience to it is still a sin in the beleever. . . . As for their evasion, it is a sin against the Law as in the hand of Christ, and so against the love of Christ, and no otherwayes, this cannot hold; for then there should be no sinnes, but sinnes of unkindnesse, or unthankfulnesse.¹⁷⁶

John Barret attacks the author of *The Marrow*, but it seems also that he does not fully understand him, and regards it "intollerable" to oppose "the Moral Law, as in the hand of God-Creator to the same Law as in the hand of Christ."¹⁷⁷ Although the historical fact of *The Marrow* controversy suggests that many at that time thought that the author was an Antinomian, the perspective of later years acquits him of such a charge. In his dialogue, the author of *The Marrow* makes *Evangelista* say

Wherefore, neighbour Neophitus, sith that you are now in Christ, beware that you receive not the Ten Commandments at the hands of God out of Christ, nor yet at the hands of Moses, but only at the hands of Christ; so shall you be sure to receive them as the law of Christ.¹⁷⁸

He means by these words that the Law must be received by the believer only as part of the Covenant of Grace of which Christ is the Mediator. *Evangelista* thus replies to the legalism of *Nomologista*, not by throwing himself into the arms of the Antinomians, but by saying that the Ten Commandments "since Christ's coming in the flesh . . . are to be a rule of life to believing Jews and believing Gentiles unto the end of the world, not as they are delivered by Moses, but as they are delivered by Christ."¹⁷⁹ The mistaken pleasure of *Antinomista* at this is corrected by *Evangelista*, who points out not only that the Ten Commandments may most truly be called "the

174. Cf. a good discussion in F. Godet, *1 Corinthians*, 1893, vol. II. pp. 38, 39.

175. *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 167.

176. *Op. cit.*, pp. 221, 222.

177. *Treatise of the Covenants*, pp. 17, 22.

178. *Op. cit.*, pp. 145, 146.

179. *Op. cit.*, p. 147.

law of Christ", because Christ and the apostles employ them freely,¹⁸⁰ but that any release from those commandments which Christ brings is "only in the case of justification."¹⁸¹ The author of *The Marrow* would undoubtedly agree with John Barret when he says,

But I should think that believers as they are creatures, are bound to obey God in all things, and that Christ came not to take off the obligation to duty and obedience, but to take off the obligation to wrath and punishment.¹⁸²

Simon Ford insists on the preaching of the Law to believers, but says

Yet I must tell you, I would have the Law preached as it is in the hands of Christ, i.e. not as casting men under an irrecoverable condemnation for every offence, not as exacting rigorously every punctilio of a duty, under pain of being rejected by God, not as requiring obedience as a condition of a covenant of works to salvation.¹⁸³

This is all that the author of *The Marrow* contends for, and is in agreement with most of the Puritans. Simon Ford, however, goes on to say that he thinks there is danger in the phrase "in the hands of Christ" when "it is grounded on a principle of Socinianism."¹⁸⁴

Provided the pitfalls of Antinomianism on the one side and Neonomianism on the other be avoided, the conception of the Law "in the hands of Christ" is unexceptionable. It implies no change in the demands of the Law, nor in the obligation of the believer to recognize its binding authority, but signifies a different administration of it, with a different and deeper motive than is found outside of the experience of Christ. Robert Traill expresses this well when he says that, so far as the sanctification of believers is concerned, "the rule of their direction therein, is the holy spotless law of God in Christ's hand."¹⁸⁵

F. THREATENINGS AND PROMISES OF REWARD

"The tamed horse needeth a spur, as well as the unbroken colt."¹⁸⁶ This is how Anthony Burgess picturesquely states the Puritan belief in the spiritual purpose of threatenings and promises, and he adds that although there is nothing servile in the obedience

180. Op. cit., p. 148.

181. Op. cit., p. 150.

182. *Treatise of the Covenants*, p. 24.

183. *Spirit of Bondage and Adoption*, pp. 34, 35.

184. Ibid. It is something of a Socinian understanding of the phrase that underlies Richard Baxter's views about the new Law of Christ. See chapter VI.

185. *Justification Vindicated*, in *Works*, I. 256.

186. *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 14.

of the believer, yet in so far as "he hath much flesh and corruption in him", he needs "so many sharpe goads" to provoke him "in the waies of piety."¹⁸⁷ "The tartnesse of the threatning makes us best tast the sweetnesse of the promise: Sowre and sweet make the best sauce."¹⁸⁸ The moral Law is still applicable to the believer in "its Minatory part", for "the carnall and unregenerate part of the godly, needs this whip"; but it also still applies to the believer in "its Promissory part", so that the godly may have an "eye to the recompense of reward."¹⁸⁹

(i) *Threatnings*

One of the questions proposed for discussion by Samuel Bolton in *True Bounds*, is "Whether the freemen of Christ, may not sinne themselves into bondage again",¹⁹⁰ and he answers it in the affirmative, teaching that the believer can bring himself into bondage *by* sin, but not into the bondage *of* sin.¹⁹¹ Vavasor Powell states categorically:

There bee threatnings that doe belong to the Covenant of grace (or the Gospel) and these threatnings concerne those Beleevers that are under it; but yet they are not such threatnings as are the threatnings of the Law, viz. threatnings of damnation.¹⁹²

The existence of sanctions, however, does not make the Gospel a law of works,¹⁹³ for such threatnings as are made to believers are evangelical in purpose. "The righteous ought to be awed with divine threatnings", because they are the "means appointed and blessed by God, to prevent their total Apostacy", and although to act only from fear "is the property of a slavish spirit", yet "to cast off all fear is the property of a vain, secure, and wanton spirit."¹⁹⁴

As is to be expected, the Antinomians repudiated the idea of threatnings and scoffed at those who resorted to "the whippings of the law."¹⁹⁵

(ii) *Promises of reward*

"The promises of the Gospell are not made to the worke, but to the worker", says William Perkins,¹⁹⁶ and by means of this distinction

187. Anthony Burgess, op. cit., p. 219.

188. John Ball, *Of Faith*, p. 422.

189. John Sedgwick, *Antinomianisme Anatomized*, p. 11.

190. Op. cit., To the Christian Reader.

191. Cf. op. cit., p. 226.

192. *Christ and Moses*, pp. 171, 172; cf. William Strong, *The Two Covenants*, p. 164; Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies*, 1652, in *Works*, I. 61.

193. John Owen, *Justification*, in *Works*, V. 160.

194. John Barret, *Treatise of the Covenants*, pp. 53, 55, 56.

195. John Eaton, *Honey-combe*, pp. 136, 137.

196. *Galatians*, p. 274.

he endeavours both to avert the danger of a return to legal concepts of merit and at the same time to provide place for God's love of complacency towards His obedient child. "If we have respect to all the Commandements, and labour faithfully to keepe them . . . then shall wee constantly enjoy all those blessings and graces, which God hath promised to his righteous servants."¹⁹⁷ It is "expedient to look to the prize",¹⁹⁸ and "to have an eie to the reward", although "this ought not bee our chief respect."¹⁹⁹ When Samuel Bolton teaches that it "may consist with our Christian freedome, to do duties with a respect to the recompense of reward",²⁰⁰ he adds, "yet must wee not obey that we may have this promise: but rather having this promise, we must be quickened to obey."²⁰¹ Walter Marshal is bold enough to say that in this respect there is such a thing as "an holy Self-love."²⁰² To dismiss all love of reward as "mercenary love",²⁰³ is unjustifiable, for there is nothing unspiritual about hoping for a reward that God has promised.

If it were so, that men were not to obey with any respect to what God hath promised them . . . How great a part of Scripture is given to us in vain. . . . Shall we think that God hath made so many promises in vain. That those great and precious promises in Scripture are but Cyphers, and stand for nothing?²⁰⁴

It is therefore "not to be doubted but that the faithfull may encourage themselves in their well doing, by looking unto the reward set before them",²⁰⁵ for "whatsoever God propounds as a motive to Duty, and whatsoever God promiseth as an encouragement or reward, on that the soul may most lawfully fix the eye."²⁰⁶

Richard Baxter is at home in this aspect of the Law of God in the believer's life. His contention that justification is perfected by the believer's own good works lends itself completely to the idea of rewards, but in this he goes far beyond the orthodox Puritans. He holds that the believer's acceptance at the judgment is according to his works.²⁰⁷ "To deny the rewarding act, is to deny God's Law", for the believer's good works "have a moral Aptitude for that

197. John Dod and Robert Cleaver, *Ten Commaundements*, p. 374.

198. Richard Sibbes, *Philippians*, 1639, in *Works*, V. 111.

199. George Downame, *Justification*, p. 641.

200. *True Bounds*, To the Christian Reader.

201. *Op. cit.*, p. 270.

202. Walter Marshal, *Sanctification*, pp. 31, 34.

203. John Barret, *Treatise of the Covenants*, p. 27.

204. *Ibid.*

205. Andrew Willet, *Hexapla: Romanes*, p. 137; cf. Richard Rogers, *Seven Treatises*, Preface; Samuel Rutherford, *Survey*, Part II. p. 9.

206. Obadiah Sedgwick, *Anatomy*, pp. 245, 246; cf. Thomas Blake, *Covenant of God*, p. 21.

207. *Aphorismes*, p. 317.

Reward." This moral aptitude is "pleasing to God" and is called "Worthiness." He remarks that "the ancient Christians did use the word Merit without any scruple", but the word has been brought into distaste by Popery. All the orthodox (who avoid the term merit) "confess the Rewardableness of our Obedience", and this is what "the ancient Christians meant by Merit."²⁰⁸

Most of the Antinomians were unable to accept the doctrine of rewards. Tobias Crisp warned his hearers that they should not look "that that Duty should bring any thing",²⁰⁹ but Robert Towne did not mind speaking of the reward as of "meer grace" and "reckoned to the worker being in Christ."²¹⁰

(iii) *Rewards of grace*

Penalty and reward spring from the same root, but their reasons are different. The penalty is by due, but the reward is by bounty.²¹¹

We doe not all that is commanded but come short of our duty, and that which we doe is unperfect, and defective in respect of manner and measure; and therefore in justice deserveth punishment, rather than reward: and consequently the reward, when it is given, is to bee ascribed to Gods undeserved mercie and not to our merit.²¹²

The reward is bestowed "for the faithfulness of the promiser, not for the desert of the worke",²¹³ and thus it is that "the Lord will richly of his free grace reward these workes with glory and happinesse in his Kingdome", although "the strength of our title stand upon Gods free gift."²¹⁴

The general Puritan position on the use of the Law in this way is summarized in the words of the *Confession of Faith*:

The threatenings of it serve to shew what even their sins deserve, and what afflictions in this life they may expect for them, although freed from the curse thereof threatened in the Law. The promises of it, in like manner, shew them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof.²¹⁵

208. Richard Baxter, *End of Doctrinal Controversies*. pp. 291-4; cf. *Catholick Theologie*, Book II. pp. 226, 227.

209. *Christ Alone Exalted*, in *Works*, I. 73.

210. *Assertion of Grace*, p. 95.

211. Nehemiah Cox, *Of The Covenants*, p. 25.

212. George Downname, *Justification*, p. 470.

213. Thomas Taylor, *Regula Vitae*, p. 87.

214. John Downname, *Guide to Godlynesse*, p. 415; cf. Richard Baxter, *Aphorismes*, p. 137.

215. *Op. cit.*, XIX. 6.

G. CHASTISEMENT

It was the belief of the Puritans that the believer's disobedience to the Law of God received Divine chastisement.

(i) *Antinomian denial of chastisement*

In spite of the care with which the Puritans defined their position, they were opposed in this by the Antinomians. John Eaton, for example, argues that the doctrine of chastisement puts things back to the schoolmaster stage, destroys true sanctification, and degenerates into legal preaching.²¹⁶ John Saltmarsh denies that God can be provoked to wrath by His children, and asks, "Can he love and not love?" He contends that the word "anger" cannot be used of God in relation to His children except as an allegory.²¹⁷ Tobias Crisp, however, writes with more caution²¹⁸ and even concedes that the curses of the law are salutary to the believer.²¹⁹

These denials of the relation of chastisement to the sins of believers are based on the general Antinomian assumption that there are no such sins in God's eyes. When the Antinomians are confronted with the Biblical facts of the Divine chastisement of believers on this account, they deflect the force of this evidence by affirming that (a) such chastisements were confined to Old Covenant believers,²²⁰ or (b) they applied to New Covenant believers before they were converted,²²¹ or (c) in the New Covenant instances it was a "mixed"²²² company of believers and unbelievers to whom the warnings were given, and therefore the chastisements were related only to the unbelievers in the mixed community.

(ii) *Chastisement related to sin*

The Puritans maintained that "God doth not afflict any but where there is sinne in the subject."²²³ God's indignation against "the sins

216. *Honey-combe*, pp. 142-7.

217. *Reasons*, "Shadows Flying Away", p. 11; cf. *Sparkles of Glory*, p. 193.

218. *Christ Alone Exalted*, in *Works*, I. 18, 28-30.

219. *Op. cit.*, IV. 92-93.

220. John Eaton, *Honey-combe*, pp. 99, 117, 121. Note the replies to this opinion in Anthony Burgess, *Justification*, Part I. pp. 27, 36, 46, 49, *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 216; Henry Burton, *Law and Gospel Reconciled*, p. 68, and Stephen Gere, *Plaine Confutation*, p. 20.

221. John Eaton, *Honey-combe*, p. 123.

222. John Eaton, *op. cit.*, pp. 92, 93, 122, 133; Robert Towne, *Assertion of Grace*, p. 111. John Crandon, *Aphorisms Exorized*, Part I. p. 40 and Isaac Chauncy, *Neonomianism Unmask'd*, Part II. p. 68, both seem influenced by this view. Replies are found in Anthony Burgess, *Justification*, Part I. p. 34, and in the anonymous *Crispianism Unmask'd*, p. 43.

223. Anthony Burgess *Justification*, Part I. p. 30; William Ames, *Conscience*, Book II. p. 46.

even of his owne people" many times "enforces him" to raise up "adversaries" against them,²²⁴ and when new sins break forth God cannot fail to "take notice of them."²²⁵ The chastisement of God is the expression of His displeasure at sin, and His children "may contract a kinde of guiltiness unto them, so that they make their Father angry."²²⁶ Although Christ has made satisfaction for all the believer's sins, it does not follow "that God therefore cannot . . . be angry with any of those, for whose sins Christ hath satisfied."²²⁷

(iii) *No vindicatory element in chastisement*

Thomas Goodwin distinguishes between wrath and anger in God, and says "not God's wrath, but an anger arising from love, is it that chastiseth us."²²⁸ There are no "satisfactory" punishments,²²⁹ for "the corrections of God's children, they come not from vindictive justice."²³⁰ The Father sees sin in His children, but He does not see it "as a judge to punish."²³¹

To the objection that, in his teaching about chastisement, he is confounding Gospel and Law, Anthony Burgess replies, "The Gospel and the Law are to be mingled in all spiritual administrations, but for different ends," but the affliction of believers for their sins does not make their crosses legal.²³² The justified believer who falls into sin does not lose his justification, but is put in "a state of suspension from all the effects of Gods grace in Justification. . . . He is under sequestration, though not ejection."²³³ The believer's "wilfull oversights and defaults" provoke the Heavenly Father's "paternall indignation" against them,²³⁴ but the afflictions thus experienced must not be received "under the law", and the child of God must know that even in God's hiding of His face He loves the believer

224. Robert Bolton, *Afflicted Consciences*, p. 96.

225. Thomas Goodwin, *Christ Set Forth*, in *Works*, IV. 65; cf. *Relapsing*, in *Works*, III. 413.

226. John Preston, *Breastplate of Faith and Love*, "Of Faith", p. 179; cf. Stephen Gere, *Plaine Confutation*, p. 11. John Ball, *Of Faith*, pp. 65, 105; *The Marrow*, p. 348; Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena*, p. 25.

227. Thomas Gataker, *Shadows without Substance*, p. 61. Cf. Thomas Watson, *Body of Divinity*, p. 174.

228. *Mediator*, in *Works*, V. 189.

229. Thomas Taylor, *Regula Vitae*, p. 101.

230. Richard Sibbes, *Judgment's Reason*, 1629, in *Works*, IV. 107; cf. Vavasor Powell, *Christ and Moses*, pp. 173, 175; Thomas Goodwin, *Child of Light*, in *Works*, III. 293, 294.

231. Henry Burton, *Law and Gospel Reconciled*, p. 15; cf. Edward Elton, *Gods Holy Minde*, "Prayer", pp. 87, 88; Samuel Rutherford, *Triumph of Faith*, pp. 23, 28. See the opposite view in Richard Baxter, *Aphorismes*, pp. 68, 69; *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, p. 255; *Confession*, p. 121.

232. *Justification*, Part I. p. 43.

233. Anthony Burgess, op. cit., Part I. p. 262.

234. Thomas Gataker, *Shadows without Substance*, p. 61. Cf. Henry Scudder, *Daily Walke*, p. 556.

still.²³⁵ There is "a wide difference between a child *under* wrath, and a child *of* wrath."²³⁶ God sends afflictions to His children "that by them, as the body by physicke, they may be purged from their sinfull drosse and feare him."²³⁷ True believers receive whatever God sends, and "they murmure not against him, neither refuse to be chastised of him, but are thankfull."²³⁸

The continuance of the believer's moral obligation to fulfil the Law is thus one of the most established of the Puritan convictions, and to omit this from any appraisal of Puritan theology is to fail to do justice to the principles upon which the Puritans worked.

235. Walter Cradock, *Divine Drops Distilled*, p. 159.

236. Thomas Goodwin, *Child of Light*, in *Works*, III. 314.

237. Richard Rogers, *Seven Treatises*, p. 540.

238. Richard Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 542.

Chapter VI

CHRISTIAN LAW-KEEPING

Synopsis

- A. LAW AS A RULE
 - (i) *Insufficiency of the inclination of the heart*
 - (ii) *Need for an objective standard*
 - (iii) *The way to salvation*
- B. NEONOMIANISM
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- C. EVIDENTIAL VALUE OF GOOD WORKS
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- D. IMPERFECT WORKS
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 - (i) *The Law established*
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Chapter VI

CHRISTIAN LAW-KEEPING

THERE has always been a tendency among the spiritually immature to "fall from grace"¹ and to seek to be "justified by the law".² In the minds of some, the possibility of this kind of legalism has inhibited them from the advocacy of Christian Law-keeping. But if it be true that the Christian is still duty-bound to do the will of God, then there can be no alternative to the keeping of God's Law, for "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me".³

The Puritans firmly believed that faith must express itself in obedience, and this chapter exhibits their convictions in this respect. The chapter begins by observing two opposite tendencies, the Antinomian reliance on the promptings of Christian inclination, and the Neonomian excess of emphasis on obedience to the Law. The Puritan doctrine of the evidential value of good works is next examined, together with the Antinomian denial of this. It is then shown that there is an evangelical obedience to be performed by believers which in spite of its imperfections, is acceptable to God.

A. LAW AS A RULE

(i) *Insufficiency of the inclination of the heart*

The Antinomians had a great distaste for the use of the Law as a rule of life and held that the only rule for the believer was the impulse of the Spirit within him through the inclination of his own heart. The contrast between the Puritan view and the Antinomian is well expressed by the retort against *Formalist* and *Hypocrisy* which John Bunyan puts into the mouth of Christian: "I walk by the Rule of my Master, you walk by the rude working of your fancies".⁴ No small measure of contempt is discernible in Richard Byfield's reference to

this notional, high-flown, conceited age wherein nothing is esteemed, but that which goes under the name of Mysterious, of a more spiritual dispensation, and above Scriptural.⁵

1. Galatians v. 4.

2. Galatians v. 4.

3. John xiv. 21.

4. *Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 40.

5. *Gospels Glory*, The Epistle Dedicatory.

James Durham writes similarly of those in whom "there is a great itching after some new and meer notional and a loathing of old and more solid and substantial things in Religion", and

who someway disdain and account it below them to stay a while and talk with Moses at the foot of Mount Sinai, as if they could *per saltum*, or by one Falcon-flight come at the top of Mount Sion, and there converse with and make use of Jesus Christ.⁶

He rejects such proud subjectivism and affirms that "Obligation is not from our Vow, but from the Law."⁷ Thomas Taylor rebukes the advocates of a "new Divinity" who say that the Christian "must not live by any rules, but by a wilde and spacious pretence of immediate, and enthusiastically direction",⁸ and affirms that

To say, wee obey God by the spirit without a law or a commandement, is a meere non-sence: for is any obedience without a law? . . . What can bee more ridiculous than for a subject to professe obedience to his Prince, but yet hee will not bee under any law?⁹

Writing against the same "Antinomians" in 1646, Anthony Burgess says it is nothing but "falshood and arrogancy" for some to say "they are above Ordinances",¹⁰ and when they put forward the judgment of their own hearts in the place of the Law, "this were to have the Sun follow the Clock".¹¹ Law in the heart does not render written Law needless. "The outward letter is a good book in the hand of the Spirit, to teach and guide believers what to doe, and how to doe."¹² "Our own desires and inclinations are not our rule",¹³ and are insufficient as a guide to godliness.

There must be also another Law written in Tables, and to be read by the eye, to be heard by the ear: Else how shall it be known to the rest of the Congregation, whether this man doth not swerve from the Law written in the heart, yea or not: Nay how shall the believer himself be sure that he doth not swerve from the right way wherein he ought to walk? . . . The Spirit, I grant, is the Justified mans Guide and Teacher: . . . But he teacheth them . . . by the Law and Testimony.¹⁴

6. *Law Unsealed*, To the Christian Reader.

7. *Op. cit.*, p. 92.

8. *Regula Vitae*, pp. 139, 141. On his title page he describes those against whom he writes as "the pestiferous Sect of Libertines, Antinomians, and sonnes of Belial".

9. *Op. cit.*, 183, cf. pp. 225-9.

10. *Spiritual Refining*, "Of Grace and Assurance", p. 563.

11. *Op. cit.*, p. 363.

12. Vavasor Powell, *Christ and Moses*, p. 227.

13. Thomas Manton, *Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm*, I. 6.

14. Thomas Bedford, *An Examination*, pp. 15, 16.

"An outward authority" is needed "to quicken the Soul unto that unto which though by Grace it hath an inward affection, yet by reason of the powerful reliquies of Corruption, that inward affection is not strong enough".¹⁵ Thomas Bedford makes the important distinction that "To walk by Love, is the Duty of a Christian, not the Definition".¹⁶

The danger of being governed merely by the inclinations, however spiritual they may be, is pointed out by Samuel Rutherford, who says,

If the Law in the heart be the onely Rule that obligeth a Christian, it must oblige as it stirreth and moveth us, then when it stirres or works not, it is no Rule; and if so, in all the sinnes committed by Christians, be they never so heynous, the Christian sinnes not; for he goes against no Law, nor any obliging Commandement.¹⁷

That is a true faith which, trusting no longer in the works of the Law and resting in the imputed righteousness of Christ, "doth notwithstanding looke upon the Morall Law of God as a rule of Christian conversation, and sanctification, acknowledging the conformity thereunto as a duty which God requireth of every true beleever".¹⁸

(ii) *Need for an objective standard*

In his famous work, *Seven Treatises*, Richard Rogers proceeds on the assumption of an objective standard and direction for the Christian life. He recognizes that some, "having given themselves such libertie in their lives, will thinke it strange that every day care should be had over their hearts and waies", but insists nevertheless that Christian life is "not at adventure, as every man thinks best, before he have learned how to goe about it, but to be directed therein by some certaine rules in the word of God, without which, he shall faile exceedingly, whosoever he be".¹⁹

The Law, therefore, is to be regarded as "so very necessary to all men in common, and to every Regenerate and unregenerate man in particular",²⁰ because it defines duty in such a way "that none are left to an Arbitrariness therein, but that all are tyed to a Rule".²¹ The Law is that "perpetuall rule of Holinesse and Obedience whereby Man should walke and glorifie God",²² and constitutes "an holy boundary"²³ that serves as a rule of safety. The guidance of the

15. Thomas Bedford, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

16. *Op. cit.*, p. 23.

17. *Survey*, Part I., p. 225.

18. Henry Burton, *Law and Gospel Reconciled*, p. 23.

19. *Op. cit.*, pp. 295, 297; cf. pp. 311, 314.

20. James Durham, *Law Unsealed*, To the Christian Reader.

21. James Durham, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

22. William Pemble, *Vindiciae Fidei*, p. 142.

23. Francis Roberts, *God's Covenants*, p. 681.

Spirit, which it is the privilege of believers to receive, "shuts them not from the guidance of the Moral Law",²⁴ for without the newly-written Law believers are "but Alphabetarians in Knowledge".²⁵

"Such as are regenerate" find that one remedy against the assaults of sin is "to oppose the lawe . . . against the rebellion and loosenesse of the flesh . . . and to imbrace and keepe all his commaundements".²⁶ This keeps the conscience alert "so as it shal still accuse when occasion serveth; for the preventing of many dangerous sinnes which like wild beasts would make havocke of the soule".²⁷ It strengthens the believer to resist sin when he sees that "Gods Law runnes so straight against it".²⁸ The Law articulates the command in its forbidding and so "discovers the rebellion of the heart",²⁹ but the absence of the operations of the Law leaves men in ignorant presumption about themselves.³⁰

For if we know not the limits of Sin and Duty, what is required of us, and what is forbidden, it cannot be supposed, but that in this corrupted State of our Natures, we shall unavoidably run into many hainous Miscarriages. . . . That we might be informed what we ought to do, and what to avoid, it hath pleased God . . . to prescribe us Laws for the regulating of our Actions.³¹

God's covenant with Abraham required that he should be upright,³² and the Mosaic Law is but an amplification of that rule, being given as "a rule of direction to them that be in Covenant,"³³ so that they

might not thinke that God by making a gracious Promise, had utterly nullified the Law, and that now Men might live as they list; but that they might know these bounds prescribed them of God, within which compasse they were to keep themselves.³⁴

"Jewrie" was thus "a little schoole set up in a corner of the world"³⁵ to teach God's people how they must walk well-pleasing to Him.

It was the custom in many Puritan homes to display large sheets, which were frequently headed, "Rules for Self-Examination", and

24. Francis Roberts, op. cit., p. 732.

25. Francis Roberts, op. cit., p. 1407.

26. William Perkins, *Golden Chaine*, in *Works*, pp. 96, 97.

27. William Perkins, *Of Conscience*, in *Works*, p. 659.

28. Thomas Taylor, *Progresse of Saints*, p. 79; cf. Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies*, in *Works*, I. 55.

29. Edward Elton, *Treatises*: "Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner", pp. 74, 75; cf. Thomas Manton, *James*, in *Works*, IV. 210, 217.

30. Edward Elton, op. cit., p. 88.

31. Ezekiel Hopkins, *Ten Commandments*, in *Works*, p. 53; cf. p. 59.

32. John Preston, *New Covenant*, p. 38; Francis Roberts, *God's Covenants*, p. 436.

33. John Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, p. 71; cf. *The Marrow*, 61-67.

34. William Pemble, *Vindiciae Fidei*, p. 142.

35. William Perkins, *Galatians*, p. 313.

described as "Necessary to be set up in all Men's Houses, for the Spiritual Benefit of their Families". In just such a sheet Thomas Taylor gives the following instruction: "Before you take in hand any thing, counsel with God's word if it be lawful".³⁶ Edward Reynolds illustrates this by saying that the Law is "added to the Gospell, as the Rule is to the hand of the workeman".³⁷ So clear are the instructions of the Law that

it would guide aright every step which thou makest in the way which is called Holy, and is of that latitude for prohibition of sinne, and leading to purity and exact pleasing of God: That though we may see an end of all perfection, yet it is exceeding broad.³⁸

It is "the royal Law to guide into all well-doing",³⁹ and "must be observed of all that will leade a godly life".⁴⁰

You cannot write without looking on your coppie, the best Saint cannot write one line without viewing and looking on his coppie for every letter. . . . Eyther eye Jesus Christ, and his example . . . or secondly, think of the rules of Jesus Christ. . . . When any case comes, follow not your lusts . . . but consider what is your rule, you walke by another rule.⁴¹

The true believer will keep himself continually under the test of these high demands, and will examine himself "by the commandments of the Law, but specially by the tenth, which ransacketh the heart to the very quick".⁴² In this self-searching "it is very meete and convenient, that we passe through all the commandments of the morall law, laying them as most absolute rules to our hearts and lives".⁴³ Lest the believer should become falsely satisfied with his attainments, he must "compare, and examine, and measure himselfe, his wayes, and workes, by the Law of God; and hee shall there finde much matter of humiliation."⁴⁴ "This worke of humiliation" in the believer is effected "by the ministry of the law",⁴⁵ so that being

36. *Christian Practice*, 1688.

37. *Three Treatises*: "Sinfulnesse of Sinne", p. 388.

38. Robert Bolton, *Comfortable Walking*, p. 342.

39. Richard Byfield, *Gospels Glory*, p. 34. Cf. Paul Baynes, *Directions*, pp. 65, 71-83; *Ephesians*, p. 268; Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, pp. 22, 26; Samuel Slater: *The Two Covenants*, 1644, (pages unnumbered).

40. John Downname, *Guide to Godlynesse*, p. 94.

41. Walter Cradock, *Gospel-Holinesse*, "Priviledge and Practice of the Saints", pp. 242, 243. In this view of the use of the Law, the Puritans were close followers of Calvin, cf. *Inst.* II. vii. 13, 15.

42. William Perkins, *A Treatise*, in *Works*, p. 433.

43. William Perkins, *Two Treatises*, in *Works*, p. 543.

44. Robert Bolton, *Three-fold Treatise*, "Saints Guide", p. 140; cf. Richard Greenham, *Of Conscience*, in *Works*, p. 275.

45. George Downname, *Covenant of Grace*, p. 83.

sensitive to that Law, he will "make Conscience of small things, and never call anie sin little".⁴⁶ Christ died "not to blot out the sense of sin, but rather to quicken a Godly sense thereof",⁴⁷ and thus to strengthen holiness, for, says William Woodward, "where there is a golden Candlestick, there will be need of Snuffers, or clearer convictions of sin and righteousness".⁴⁸ Edward Reynolds alludes to this salutary ministry of the Law in the life of the believer and neatly says, "the same reason that compels men to come in, is requisite also to keepe them in."⁴⁹

The Puritans wrote much on what they—echoing the Scripture phrase⁵⁰—called "circumspect walking". John Preston entitles one of his sermons "Exact Walking", and teaches that "it is required of a Christian that hee walke with God exactly in all things".⁵¹ This obedience must be exact even in the least things, "for there must be preciseness in keeping Gods Commandements".⁵² "Every Christian man must walke warily. . . . The word ἀκριβῶς signifies, an accurate, and a strict walking".⁵³ It is the same word as used in Acts xxii. 3 where "Paul professeth he was brought up, κατὰ ἀκριβειαν τοῦ . . . νόμου, 'according to the exact manner of the Law'."⁵⁴

Exact walking requires the believer to exercise great care in learning his duty.

For how can a man acknowledge the breach of that Law which he knoweth not? Or how can he serve God in the endeavour of the performance of it, unlesse he understand his Masters will?⁵⁵

Ignorance does not absolve from responsibility, because

whether we know Gods lawes or know them not, they still bind us. And we are bound not onely to doe them, but when we know them not, we are further bound not to be ignorant of them, but to seeke to know them.⁵⁶

Care, first to know, and then to do the exact will of God lay at the

46. Jeremiah Burroughs, *Evil of Evils*, p. 449; John Owen, *Indwelling Sin*, in *Works*, VI. 197 f.

47. Samuel Rutherford, *Covenant of Life*, p. 221.

48. *Lord our Righteousness*, p. 59.

49. *Three Treatises: "Sinfulness of Sinne"*, p. 380.

50. "Walk circumspectly", Ephesians, v. 15.

51. *Sermons*, "Exact Walking", 1631, p. 104; cf. Henry Scudder, *Daily Walke*, p. 7.

52. John Ball, *Power of Godliness*, p. 65; cf. Samuel Rutherford, *Survey*, Part II. p. 1 and the title of a sermon by Anthony Burgess, "A Plea for strictness in Religion", in *Spiritual Refining*, "Of Grace and Assurance", pp. 637, 642.

53. Thomas Taylor, *Circumspect Walking*, p. 3.

54. Thomas Taylor, op. cit., p. 4.

55. James Ussher, *Body of Divinitie*, p. 205.

56. William Perkins, *Of Conscience*, in *Works*, p. 622.

basis of Puritanism which, says R. B. Perry, "springs from the very core of the personal conscience",⁵⁷ and the large number of Puritan works on casuistry gives impressive evidence of the sensitivity of the Puritans in this respect.

Richard Baxter defends the need for a Law,⁵⁸ and his particular views are studied below, but his opinion of Law-keeping for justification detracts from the value of his evidence on the present subject.

There is a semblance of orthodoxy in Tobias Crisp when he says, "Let that Mouth be for ever stoped, that . . . shall be a means to discourage People from walking in the Commandments of God blameless",⁵⁹ and in his description of those commandments as the "way that God hath chalked out unto us",⁶⁰ but he confines his advocacy of the Law to "the matter of Obedience."⁶¹ This same limitation of reference must likewise be understood when Robert Towne writes, "Let the Law then be still in full force and authoritie, and its very usefull to a Christian; I know none that teach otherwise",⁶² and also when John Saltmarsh is willing to say that the Law tells the believer he sins.⁶³

This use of the Law, both for instruction in righteousness and in heart-searching, produced in the Puritans those sterling qualities of character for which they have become renowned. They have sometimes been adversely criticized for their self-scrutiny in this way, but, as Edward Dowden says, "in a time of careless living and declining morals, the error of too scrupulous self-superintendence is not the most grievous error".⁶⁴

(iii) *The way to salvation*

Obedience to the Law was often referred to by the Puritans as the way to salvation, an expression which was wholesome when understood correctly, but which, because of its ambiguity, occasioned much controversy.

There was no doubt among the Puritans that Christ alone was "the way",⁶⁵ but as practical theologians they were concerned to give guidance to spiritual pilgrims who desired to walk in Him.⁶⁶ Their ministry was to give directions for walking in the way, and by a

57. *Puritanism and Democracy*, p. 627.

58. See *Catholick Theologie*, Book I. Part 2, p. 42 f; and Book II. p. 243.

59. *Christ Alone Exalted*, in *Works*, I. 136.

60. *Op. cit.*, I. 215; the phrase is also found in John Preston, *New Covenant*, p. 191.

61. *Op. cit.*, IV. 93.

62. *Assertion of Grace*, p. 145; cf. p. 37.

63. *Free-Grace*, p. 128.

64. *Puritan and Anglican*, p. 20.

65. John xiv. 6.

66. Colossians ii. 6.

figure of speech the walking was spoken of as the way. The believer's obedience to the commandments of God was thus the-way-of-the-way, that is the way of life which was demanded by being in Christ. Stephen Geree supports this interpretation of the Puritan use of the term when he argues that Christ and good works are both the way, the latter being contained in the former.⁶⁷

With this careful understanding of the words they were using, the majority of the Puritans spoke freely of obedience to the Law as the way to salvation. "Gods Commandements . . . are sayd to be the way; because they are the rules we ought to walke by. . . . This is the way, this is the path";⁶⁸ they serve "to teach us how to walke when wee are come to him";⁶⁹ and are thus "the high-way unto the kingdome",⁷⁰ and "Saints look upon Duties . . . as Bridges to give them a passage to God".⁷¹ "Works" are a way to heaven, in the sense that a man's actions are spoken of as his "ways",⁷² for "without observation in some measure to all the Commandments of God, we cannot enter into the kingdome of heaven".⁷³

The Puritans were not unaware of the possibility of being misunderstood in a legalistic sense, and this made some of them uneasy about speaking of obedience in this manner. The author of *The Marrow* endeavours to preserve the Gospel against legalism by insisting on the difference between "Do this and live" and "Live and do this".⁷⁴ He does not like to speak of good works as "the way", but prefers to say that they are the "believer's walking in the way".⁷⁵ This is nothing more than a hesitation on the part of the author, and it is a gross misrepresentation of his views to regard them as Antinomian on this account.

As is to be expected, the Antinomians found difficulty in this kind of expression. Tobias Crisp interjects a disparaging reference to it when he says, "It is a received conceit among many persons, that our obedience is the way to Heaven",⁷⁶ and he reveals his characteristic fear of legalism by adding, "All this Sanctification of life . . . is the business of a person that he hath to do in his Way, Christ; but it is not the Way it self to Heaven".⁷⁷ Robert Towne rejects the use of the

67. *Plaine Confutation*, pp. 50, 51, 60.

68. John Preston, *New Covenant*, pp. 190, 191. James Durham speaks rather picturesquely of the two tables of the Law as "the two legs that Piety in practice walketh upon". *Law Unsealed*, p. 183.

69. John Dod and Robert Cleaver, *Catechism*, p. 4.

70. James Ussher, *Body of Divinitie*, p. 202.

71. Isaac Ambrose, *Prima, Media, & Ultima*, "The Middle Things", p. 33.

72. Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 33.

73. John Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, p. 69.

74. *Op. cit.*, p. 145.

75. *Op. cit.*, p. 168.

76. *Christ Alone Exalted*, in *Works*, I. 45, 46.

77. *Op. cit.*, I. 46.

word "way" to express this, and argues that in such a phrase as "the way to London" the word is used in a different sense from that in such a phrase as the "way of London", namely, the manner of life of the citizens.⁷⁸

The Puritans, however, took pains to guard against misapprehension, and George Downname acknowledges that obedience "is not required unto justification and salvation as the condition"; and adds, "but the ability of performing obedience is the grace of the New Testament . . . and therefore our new obedience is required, as the fruit of our redemption, and as the way wherein wee being justified are to walke towards our glorification".⁷⁹ He deals with the legalistic misuse of the concept of the necessity of good works by showing that not all necessity is causal.

The Asse and her colt were needfull for Christ going to Jerusalem, Shooes or bootes are needfull for him that travaileth. And such is the relation of the way to the journies end. Hee therefore that would goe to heaven, had need to goe the way which leadeth to it, that is, the way of good workes, which God hath prepared for us to walke in them.⁸⁰

The good works of believers are necessary as a "consequent condition" of their justification,⁸¹ but they involve no merit.

A godly life, though it doe not merit everlasting happinesse . . . yet it is the way that leadeth us thereunto, in which, whoso travaile, shall at the end of their journey surely attaine to eternall blessednesse.⁸²

Christian duty is thus "a way, not to the right of salvation, but to the actual possession of it".⁸³

B. NEONOMIANISM

That the Puritans held the doctrine of justification by faith does not need any proof, and it is no part of the present work to expound that doctrine. But some attention must be given to it in view of its close relation to their doctrine of the Law and the opinions of those

78. Robert Towne, *Assertion of Grace*, pp. 14, 87.

79. *Justification*, p. 443; cf. *Covenant of Grace*, p. 28.

80. *Op. cit.*, p. 481.

81. Francis Roberts, *God's Covenants*, p. 788; cf. pp. 795, 1367; William Allen, *The Covenants*, pp. 56, 57; Richard Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, Book I. Part 3, p. 100; John Flavel, *Vindiciae Legis & Foederis*, p. 35; John Barret, *Treatise of the Covenants*, p. 322; the *Confession of Faith*, XIX. 2.

82. John Downname, *Guide to Godlynesse*, p. 4.

83. Samuel Rutherford, *Triumph of Faith*, p. 131; cf. David Clarkson, *Justification*, in *Works*, I. 277, 297.

who attempted to introduce a doctrine of justification by obedience to a new Law.

Controversy here moved away from the Antinomians and centred in the views of those whom their opponents called Neonomians.⁸⁴ So intense was the feeling on this subject that Robert Traill says of "Mr Burgess and Mr Rutherford" that "if these godly and sound divines were on the present stage, they would be as ready to draw their pens against two books lately printed against Dr Crisp, as ever they were to write against the Doctor's book".⁸⁵ In the outbreak of the Crispian, or rather Neonomian, controversy at the end of the century, Isaac Chauncy was willing to represent himself in the dialogues of *Neonomianism Unmask'd*, under the description "Antinomian", understanding Antinomianism to be "a denial of the Justification of a sinner by our own works of the law."⁸⁶

(i) *Views of Richard Baxter*

The chief apostle of Neonomianism was Richard Baxter, who put much stress on the distinction between God's "Preceptive Will" and God's "Will of purpose",⁸⁷ and used it to make room for a changing of the Law. On the assumption that the Law of God is of this rectoral and changeable kind, Richard Baxter evolves the following scheme of laws: (1) the Law of Nature, before man fell, and (2) the Law of Grace after the Fall. The Law of Nature is variously described by him as the Law of Creation, the Law of Innocency and the Covenant of Works, and he divides the Law of Grace into (a) the Law of lapsed Nature, (b) the Law of redeemed Nature, and (c) the "new law", or "law of Christ". He looks upon (b) and (c) as the first and second editions respectively of the "law of faith".⁸⁸

Richard Baxter acknowledges that the Law of Innocency was "perfectly fulfilled" by Christ, who in this way put Himself in a position to be man's Saviour, but he denies that believers are justified solely on this ground.⁸⁹ The concept of the "Law of Grace" is introduced by Richard Baxter in order to provide for the adjustment of relations between God and fallen man, and its difference from the Law of Innocency lies in the two-fold fact of (a) the possibility of pardon, and (b) the relaxation of penalty. The possibility of pardon depends on faith and repentance, and the relaxation of penalty

84. Cf. a useful discussion in James Buchanan, *Justification*, pp. 176, 177, 183, 202, 203, 211.

85. *Justification Vindicated*, in *Works*, I. 261, 262.

86. Isaac Chauncy, *Fresh Antidote*, p. 3.

87. *Aphorismes*, p. 1; cf. *Confession*, p. 290.

88. The New Covenant is "the Law of Grace in the Second Edition", the first being that given to Adam immediately after the Fall. *Catholic Theologie*, Book I. Part 2, p. 42.

89. *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, pp. 243, 244.

depends partly on the death of Christ⁹⁰ and partly on the flexibility of Law. "When Threatnings are merely parts of the Law, and not also predictions . . . of Gods purpose thereabouts, then they may be dispensed with without any breach of Truth".⁹¹

This new "Law of Grace" is universal in its scope: it was given to the entire race at the time of the Fall, it rests upon the universal redemption of mankind, and contains "positive Additions" to the Covenant of Innocency.⁹²

God brought all Mankind in Adam under a Law and Covenant of Grace . . . And this Law made to Mankind in Adam and Noahr was never repealed to the World, but perfected by a perfecte, Edition to those that have the Gospel.⁹³

Because fallen man is unable to keep the first Law, "some alteration in the obligation" became necessary in order to bring the Divine requirements down to the level of what fallen man is "naturally capable of performing".⁹⁴ It is by this "Law of Grace" that sinners are at the last to be judged, for "it is not the same Law which condemneth us and justifieth us".⁹⁵ The result of all this is that righteousness is no longer eternal and unchangeable, but becomes merely relative.⁹⁶

(ii) *Justification by evangelical works*

On the principles expounded by Richard Baxter, the ultimate justification of the believer is achieved by a combination of the merit of Christ and the believer's own good works in obedience to the new Law. He says there are two forms of righteousness: one is in freedom from penalty, and the other is in action. The believer receives only the former in Christ, but must achieve the other for himself.⁹⁷

To affirm therefore that our Evangelical or New Covenant-Righteousness is in Christ, and not in ourselves, or performed by Christ, and not by ourselves, is . . . a monstrous piece of Antinomian doctrine.⁹⁸

90. He maintains that the death of Christ must not on any account be thought of as the bearing of the very same punishment which the sinner would have borne, but only such punishment as makes it consistent with God's rectoral purposes. *Catholick Theologie*, Book I. Part 2, pp. 38, 39. See above, pp. 141 f.

91. Richard Baxter, *Aphorismes*, p. 38.

92. Richard Baxter, *Confession*, p. 107; *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, pp. 131, 132.

93. Richard Baxter, *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, pp. 193, 194.

94. Richard Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, Book I. Part 2, p. 29, and *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, p. 151. See Chapter IV.

95. *Catholick Theologie*, Book I. Part 2, p. 62; *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, pp. 151, 152, 154.

96. *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, p. 240.

97. *Aphorismes*, pp. 98-101.

98. Op. cit., p. 111; cf. Appendix, p. 76 ff.

There is no justification for the sinner "who hath not some ground in himself of personal and particular right and claim thereto":⁹⁹ he must have "a legal title" under the terms of the new Law.¹⁰⁰

In all these opinions, however, Richard Baxter has no desire to do dishonour to the work of Christ. He acknowledges that the death of Christ is the sole ground of God's acceptance of the believer's good works, and it is for this reason that he insists that the believer's works must be understood to justify him evangelically, and not in any legalistic manner.¹⁰¹ He contends that obedience to Christ's Law must never be misrepresented as "our own Righteousness",¹⁰² because its acceptance by God is solely on the ground of "Christ's Righteousness" as "the meritorious cause".¹⁰³ In view of his mixture of grace and works, it is possible that Richard Baxter deserves the retort which Isaac Chauncy makes to Daniel Williams, "I grant you deny Merit; . . . but this I tell you, it signifies not much to deny a Name to a thing whose Nature requires that Name if it be named aright".¹⁰⁴

(iii) Puritan rejection of Neonomianism

The Puritans concur with Richard Baxter in the necessity for "Law-keeping" by the believer, but they reject his Neonomianism. They answer by saying,

Call to minde that Christ is made unto thee holines, not as a new Moses to follow, but as a Messias to beleeve in, as the author and finisher of thy holines.¹⁰⁵

They consider that "it is frivolous . . . to conceive the Gospel a new Law",¹⁰⁶ and they hold that Christ's new Commandment is none other than the old.¹⁰⁷ In so far as the commandment of Christ is "new", it may be so described, says Samuel Slater, "in regard of the principles, in the strength of which it is performed" and "in regard of the motives whereby it is urged."¹⁰⁸ Unmitigated censure of Richard

99. Richard Baxter, *Aphorismes*, p. 92.

100. *Op. cit.*, pp. 95, 96, 102-108, 118, 119, 122, 123, 184, 196, 204, 230, 290, 312, 332; *Justification*, pp. 69-255, 259; *Catholick Theologie*, Book I. Part 2, pp. 68, 72; *Scripture Gospel Defended*, "Breviate of Justification", pp. 44, 46; *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, pp. 253, 290.

101. *Catholick Theologie*, Book I. Part 2, p. 23.

102. *Op. cit.*, Book I. Part 3, p. 100.

103. *Catholick Theologie*, Book II. p. 252; cf. *End of Doctrinal Controversies*, p. 249.

104. *Rejoinder*, p. 6.

105. Richard Greenham, *Grave Counsels*, in *Works*, p. 32.

106. Thomas Taylor, *Regula Vitae*, p. 186; cf. James Ussher, *Body of Divinitie*, p. 203.

107. Francis Roberts, *God's Covenants*, pp. 721, 1365; cf. Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, pp. 184-92.

108. *The Two Covenants* (pages unnumbered).

Baxter is found in Thomas Edwards, who cannot tolerate his unfounded assertions about a "new Law" for justification of sinners.

Do but observe the Apostle, Rom. 5. 19, who speaking of the Disobedience of one, and the Obedience of another, mentions not in the least any two distinct Laws . . . whence that by a Disobedience unto one of them many were made Sinners, and that by an Obedience to another of them, or some peculiar mediatorial Law, a remote meritorious Righteousness must come forth to make many righteous by a third Law; or that a former Law was vacated by Obedience to a middle Law, and all to bring in Justification by a third Law. . . . It is an Antinomianism of the worst sort, and most derogatory unto the Law of God, which affirms it to be divested of its Power, to oblige us unto perfect Obedience. . . . There is no Medium.¹⁰⁹

To advocate justification by imperfect works of evangelical righteousness is to make "the starres shine when the Sunne is in its full lustre",¹¹⁰ for "that cannot be a Condition of Justification which it self needeth Justification".¹¹¹ "Let the Law of Moses", therefore, "keep its own place, and be the rule of our sanctification; but in our justification, it hath no room at all."¹¹²

Both the appeal and the weakness of Neonomianism lie in its endeavour to cut the knot rather than patiently untie it. Throughout the centuries of Christian thought, it has been recognized by the wisest and deepest thinkers that the right holding together of the requirements of the Law and the liberty of the Spirit is one of the harder tasks in theology.¹¹³ In this aspect of his thought Richard Baxter follows the same theological pattern as he does in his acceptance of Amyraldian ideas on the plan of salvation: his solution of the problem is too easy. As with Amyraldianism, so with Neonomianism, there is a philosophical attractiveness about it, but it is not easy to find support for it in Scripture. Neonomianism fastens on the occurrence of the word "law" in the New Testament, and then proceeds to identify "law" and "gospel" without sufficient reason. After this, it is not a long step to a legalistic concept of salvation by human effort.

109. *Baxterianism Barefac'd*, The Introduction, vii. and p. 73. By "Medium" he means middle path.

110. Anthony Burgess, *Justification*, Part II. p. 232.

111. Anthony Burgess, *ibid.*

112. Robert Traill, *Galatians*, in *Works*, IV. 200; *Justification Vindicated*, in *Works*, I. 293.

113. Cf. Luther, *Galatians*, p. 24.

C. EVIDENTIAL VALUE OF GOOD WORKS

Although the believer's good works have no justifying efficacy, they are not without their value as evidence of justification.

(i) *Justification to be evidenced by sanctification*

It was the common dictum of the Puritans that godly life was the evidence of faith. "It is vaine to thinke we have faith without a new life",¹¹⁴ because good works are "The Markes of a Righteous Man".¹¹⁵ It is consistently expressed throughout the Puritan writings, that "our new obedience or practice of good works is the fruite and end of our redemption."¹¹⁶ By walking in perfection Abraham showed that he was God's,¹¹⁷ for "when a Man beleeves, workes will follow".¹¹⁸ "A disposition to good workes is necessary to justification, being the qualification of an active and lively faith",¹¹⁹ and they "testifie or give prooffe that faith is lively."¹²⁰ The assurance of "no condemnation"¹²¹ is given not merely to those "who believe", but "to those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."¹²² Good works are the "Signs" of grace,¹²³ for "as the Sun can never be without light; so neither can this righteousnesse be without true holinesse."¹²⁴

Tho' we are not saved by good Works as procuring Causes, yet we are saved to good Works as Fruits and Effects of Saving Grace, which God hath prepared that we should walk in them, Eph. 2. 10.¹²⁵

"The garments of Christs righteousness must not be made a cloak for sin",¹²⁶ and Christians must "prove their Mystical Union with Christ by their Moral Union."¹²⁷ Robert Traill says with keen insight, "When the law is written in the heart, it is copied out in the life."¹²⁸

114. Richard Rogers, *Seven Treatises*, p. 78.

115. Richard Greenham, Title of a sermon, in *Works*, p. 148.

116. George Downname, *Covenant of Grace*, p. 67; cf. *Justification*, pp. 78, 79, 331, 372, 373.

117. John Preston, *New Covenant*, p. 4.

118. John Preston, *New Covenant*, p. 363; cf. *Breastplate of Faith and Love*, "Of Love", p. 212; William Ames, *Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, p. 200.

119. John Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, p. 20; William Allen, *The Covenants*, pp. 52, 136; Richard Allen, *Antidote against Heresy*, pp. 77, 78.

120. John Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, p. 73.

121. Romans viii. 1.

122. Cf. Richard Byfield, *Gospels Glory*, p. 10.

123. Anthony Burgess, *Spiritual Refining*, "Of Grace and Assurance", p. 43; cf. pp. 61-66, 304, 386.

124. Anthony Burgess, *Justification*, Part II. p. 122a; cf. Question 29 of *The A, B, C, or Catechisme for Yong Children*, quoted by A. F. Mitchell, *Catechisms*, p. 272.

125. Walter Marshal, *Sanctification*, p. 148.

126. William Woodward, *Lord our Righteousness*, p. 76.

127. Thomas Gouge, *Principles of Christian Religion*, p. 110.

128. *Justification Vindicated*, in *Works*, I. 278.

You may know there is life by the beating of the pulses: a living faith will be active, and bewray itself in some gracious effects. . . . New obedience is an inseparable companion of justification.¹²⁹

(ii) *The believer's evidences to himself*

Good works have meaning to the believer as a testimony within himself. Without an upright heart, says Richard Greenham, "We cannot assure our selves to be justified and sanctified in Christ Jesus",¹³⁰ and so he urges, "Make your election sure by good workes, 2 Pet. 1. 10 as by a signe consequent, not as by a cause antecedent".¹³¹

No man can have assurance, that he is justified, unlesse he be in some measure sanctified. . . . Dost thou . . . endeavour to keepe a good conscience and to walke uprightly before God; then it is certaine, that thou art justified.¹³²

Among the provisions of the Lord for His people against an evil day are "a sincere respect to all Gods Commandements, a carefull performance of all spirituall Duties", and "a conscionable partaking of all Gods Ordinances".¹³³ Therefore, says Richard Sibbes,

Labour to grow in faith and obedience, that we may read our evidence clearly; that it be not overgrown with the dust of the world.¹³⁴

Works of evangelical obedience have the power to "justify faith to a mans own conscience",¹³⁵ but the Christian is to beware of "forcing" himself to obedience to the commandments in order to produce "evidence" to himself.¹³⁶ It would be fair to say that the Antinomian objection to the evidential value of the believer's works—to be noticed below—is largely directed against this "forcing". Nevertheless, "a constant delight in the law of God"¹³⁷ is one of those evidences

129. Thomas Manton, *James*, in *Works*, IV. 237, 264; Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, pp. 90, 108, 159, 171; John Owen, *Justification*, in *Works*, V. 73; David Clarkson, *Justification*, in *Works*, I. 277; *Truths Victory*, p. 132; Obadiah Grew, *Sinner's Justification*, pp. 113, 188, 211 and the summary in the *Confession of Faith*, XVI. 2. E. Brunner maintains that the view of "good works" as proofs of election does not go back to Calvin, but belongs to "Reformed thinkers after Calvin", *Divine Imperative*, p. 594.

130. *Notes of Salvation*, in *Works*, 202.

131. *Good Workes*, in *Works*, 451. Cf. Richard Rogers, *Seven Treatises*, p. 205.

132. George Downname, *Covenant of Grace*, pp. 35, 38.

133. Robert Bolton, *Afflicted Consciences*, pp. 44, 45.

134. *Precious Promises*, in *Works*, IV. 138.

135. John Sedgwick, *Antinomianisme Anatomized*, p. 24.

136. *The Marrow*, p. 205.

137. Thomas Taylor, *Progresse of Saints*, p. 13.

without which "we cannot solidly perswade our selves that we are actually and effectually Christs New-Covenant-people".¹³⁸ The believer must look for the "fruits of the Spirit" in his life, because "though the Spirit testifie immediately, yet it submits the trial of his own testimony to his works."¹³⁹ The evidence of sanctification is less exposed to the questionings of "a mans own cavilling heart" than the "immediate" testimony of the Spirit, and so the believer should direct his attention to the former as well as to the latter, because "this is certain, the more holinesse, the more assurance".¹⁴⁰ Thomas Goodwin charmingly says that the believer's graces and duties are the "daughters of faith", who "may in time of need indeed nourish their mother".¹⁴¹ "Faith and obedience once proved to be true and genuine, are good evidences of our interest in Christ",¹⁴² "for our Fruit will shew upon what Root we grow".¹⁴³ Robert Traill uses another metaphor and says, "The evidences of a Christian are not his charters for heaven, (the covenant of grace contains them); but they are as light, by which a Christian reads his charters."¹⁴⁴

(iii) *Antinomian teaching about assurance*

The Antinomians denied the evidential value of good works and regarded "all notes and signes of a Christians estate" as "legall and unlawfull".¹⁴⁵ The believer must therefore obtain his assurance from the testimony of the Spirit who "giveth such full and cleare evidence" of his good estate, that he has "no need to be tried by the fruits of sanctification".¹⁴⁶

John Saltmarsh says that Paul's phrase, "such were some of you" in 1 Corinthians "is not a method of personal assurance, but merely an expression to describe the outward state of the Church. It is a false basis of spiritual comfort and an occasion of distress".¹⁴⁷ Tobias Crisp likewise affirms that "Inherent Qualifications are doubtful Evidences for Heaven",¹⁴⁸ and although he acknowledges that the Christian walks by the rule of the commandments for his conversa-

138. Francis Roberts, *God's Covenants*, p. 725.

139. Simon Ford, *Spirit of Bondage and Adoption*, p. 223.

140. Simon Ford, op. cit., p. 233, 234, 320; cf. Thomas Gouge, *Principles of Christian Religion*, p. 116; Thomas Wilson, *Romanes*, p. 253; Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies*, in *Works*, I. 79; Isaac Ambrose, *Prima, Media, & Ultima*, "The Middle Things", pp. 11. 12.

141. Thomas Goodwin, *Christ Set Forth*, in *Works*, IV. 13.

142. Thomas Cole, *Faith*, 1689, p. 44.

143. *Crispianism Unmask'd*, p. 56.

144. *Throne of Grace*, 1696, in *Works*, I. 228; cf. *Justification Vindicated*, in *Works*, I. 255, 278, and *Galatians*, in *Works*, IV. 162.

145. Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena*, p. 24.

146. Thomas Welde, *Rise, reigne, and ruine*, p. 14.

147. John Saltmarsh, *Free-Grace*, p. 55.

148. *Christ Alone Exalted*, in *Works*, II. p. 444.

tion, he denies that he "walks by such a rule for his Peace".¹⁴⁹ Robert Towne reverses the normal way of expressing the subject of evidences and declares that the believer must first have assurance about his faith before ever he can hope to find any from his works.

I must first know that I have faith . . . else all such signs will leave me uncertain. . . . For, as this Argument holdeth not, Here is light, therefore the Sun is up: for all light is not from the Sun; the Moon, and the Candle have proper lights also: so all that we call graces . . . come not from faith, nor are not only found to be in him, who is in a justified estate, and therefore cannot convincingly argue such an estate.¹⁵⁰

In his *Conference*, Henry Denne tells the "sick man" that "workes indeed are an evidence of Faith among men. . . . But Faith is an evidence of our works in the Court of Conscience, and judgement of certainty". He explains that sorrow for sin, zeal, and love to God's people are but tokens "whereby we know one another to be the children of God".¹⁵¹

The utmost that the Antinomians would concede about the believer's good works was that they supplied evidence only "to manward". They argued that (a) God does not need any evidence, for the believer is accepted as clothed with the wedding garment of Christ's righteousness; (b) the believer is not in a position to interpret the evidence, because he can be so easily deceived; and therefore, (c) good works are of evidential value only to others. "Wee cleanse, and mortifie, and purifie ourselves only Declaratively to the sight of men", and the Holy Spirit "enables us by walking holily and righteously, to avoyd and purifie out of our own sight, sense, and feeling, and out of the sight of other men, that sin which the wedding-garment hath purified and abolished before, out of the sight of God".¹⁵² The phrase "declaratively to manward" occurs with monotonous frequency in the *Honey-combe*,¹⁵³ and, on James ii. 14, John Eaton makes the comment,

He saith not, shew God thy faith by thy works, nor shew thy selfe thy faith by thy works; but shew me, that am thy Christian minister . . . or thy Christian neighbours.¹⁵⁴

The Antinomian motive was the praiseworthy one of desiring to exclude all "confidence in the flesh" and at the same time to comfort

149. Op. cit., II. 465; cf. John Gill on these passages, in Tobias Crisp, *Works*, (ed. Gill) II. 82, 97, 110.

150. *Re-assertion*, pp. 26, 27; cf. John Eaton, *Honey-combe*, p. 115.

151. Op. cit., pp. 8-14.

152. John Eaton, *Honey-combe*, pp. 164, 165; cf. 30, 91, 307, 308.

153. Cf. *Abraham's Steps of Faith*, p. 192; *Dangerous Dead Faith*, p. 160.

154. John Eaton, *Dangerous Dead Faith*, pp. 162, 163.

the trembling believer against the fears arising from "a legalistic pre-occupation with sins".¹⁵⁵ A rigid morality sometimes results in "anxious introversion" and it was the Antinomian attempt to avoid this "troubled mind" complex which led eventually to Quakerism.¹⁵⁶

The orthodox Puritans followed a middle course between Neonomianism on the one side and Antinomianism on the other. They had the support of Calvin in their views both against Antinomianism¹⁵⁷ and against Neonomianism.¹⁵⁸ Subsequently, however, the Neonomianism of Richard Baxter gained ascendancy and became part of the teaching of Methodism.¹⁵⁹

Considerable sympathy can be extended to the Antinomian distrust of the evidence of good works, but although assurance may not be built on this ground alone, it is, nevertheless, necessary to insist that the evidence of good works shall at least be regarded as a *sine qua non*. It would not appear to be an over-simplification to say that this is fundamentally all that the Puritans were concerned to maintain. The truth is that without good works there is no evidence of new life, but that with this external evidence there must be also the witnessing of the Spirit of God "with our spirit, that we are the children of God".¹⁶⁰ Assurance is something deeper than the collecting of evidence, and this is the important spiritual reality to which the Antinomians direct attention.

D. IMPERFECT WORKS

It was the view of the Puritans that though the demands of the Law were not diminished in the least, yet, for Christ's sake, "God will accept of our imperfect obedience, if it be sincere".¹⁶¹

(i) *Spiritual infirmity*

The Puritans were keenly aware that the requirements of God's Law still called for a perfection which the believer could not reach,¹⁶² and, therefore, that his best works fell far short of legal perfection.

The matter of our sanctification is . . . a righteousness which is but begun in us, and that new obedience, which though it be sincere and unfained, is with great infirmity performed by us.¹⁶³

155. J. I. Packer, op. cit., p. 405.

156. G. F. Nuttall, "Law and Liberty in Puritanism", *Congregational Quarterly*, XXIX. 1. p. 26.

157. *Inst.*, II. vii. 4-12. 158. *Inst.*, II. viii. 7.

159. Cf. J. Fletcher, *Check to Antinomianism* in *Works*, I. 202, 239, 293-320, 356-8; II. 31, 32, 417, 439, 442, 453, 466.

160. Romans viii. 16. 161. William Perkins, *Of Conscience*, in *Works*, 646.

162. John Crandon, *Aphorisms Exorized*, Part I. p. 209; and Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 218.

163. George Downname, *Justification*, p. 77.

The utmost that believers do is "imperfect",¹⁶⁴ and "the most holy faile alwaies in their best duties".¹⁶⁵ Their obedience is "weak",¹⁶⁶ and is but a "measure of obedience".¹⁶⁷ The godly fulfil all the commands of God in the main substance, but their deeds are defective on account of the "stubs and reliques" of original corruption.¹⁶⁸ "Sin hath so lamed and crippled us, that we shall never perfectly recover our legs while we live; but shall go lame to our graves."¹⁶⁹

(ii) *The covering of the imperfections*

Such is the compassion of God that "our unperfect obedience is accepted of God in Christ".¹⁷⁰ It is "for his sake" alone¹⁷¹ and "through Christ his intercession",¹⁷² that the believer's works are "accepted through grace".¹⁷³ It would be folly, however, says Jeremiah Burroughs, to think that God's mercy is "added" in order to "eke out what we are wanting in for our justification",¹⁷⁴ for God does not look upon the obedience of believers as merely theirs, but sees it as "his owne worke in them".¹⁷⁵ The studied words of the *Confession of Faith* state the Puritan conviction unambiguously.

Yet notwithstanding, the persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted in him; not as though they were in this life wholly unblameable and unproveable in God's sight; but that he, looking upon them in his Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections.¹⁷⁶

164. John Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, p. 135; Anthony Burgess, *Spiritual Refining*, "Of Grace and Assurance", pp. 62, 63; Edward Elton, *Treatises*: "Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner", p. 176; *Treatises*: "Triumph of a True Christian", pp. 32, 51; *The Marrow*, pp. 342-5; Richard Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, Book I. Part 2, p. 5; Francis Roberts, *God's Covenants*, p. 874.
165. John Ball, *Catechism*, p. 36, cf. *Grounds of Christian Religion*, p. 237.
166. John Ball, *Of Faith*, p. 368.
167. Edward Elton, *Treatises*: "Triumph of a True Christian", p. 33.
168. Anthony Burgess, *Spiritual Refining*, "Of Grace and Assurance", pp. 638, 639; John Downname, *Guide to Godlynesse*, p. 78.
169. Thomas Gouge, *Principles of Christian Religion*, p. 228.
170. George Downname, *Justification*, p. 495; James Durham, *Law Unsealed*, p. 3; Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 218; William Ames, *Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, p. 196; *Conscience*, Book III, pp. 61, 62; John Dod and Robert Cleaver, *Ten Commandments*, p. 374; Tobias Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, in *Works*, IV. 94.
171. John Barret, *Treatise of the Covenants*, p. 77.
172. Ezekiel Rogers, *Chief Grounds*, quoted in A. F. Mitchell, *Catechisms*, p. 62.
173. John Ball, *Power of Godliness*, p. 63.
174. Jeremiah Burroughs, *Saints Treasury*, p. 44.
175. Thomas Taylor, *Regula Vitae*, p. 11.
176. Op. cit., XVI. 6. A. F. Mitchell and J. Struthers in *Minutes*, p. 278, give an earlier form of this paragraph in which any ambiguity in the word "they" is removed by the phrase "their works".

The mistake must not be made of confusing God's acceptance of the believer's sincere obedience with the Antinomian idea of "all our works, vocations, affaires and businesses" being "made perfectly holy and righteous",¹⁷⁷ for the sin in these things can only be condemned.¹⁷⁸ "Whatever is of self, flesh, unbelief (that is, hay and stubble)—that he consumes, wastes, takes away"; but in the time of reckoning and reward "the saints' good works", being of the Spirit, "shall meet them one day with a changed countenance, that they shall scarce know them."¹⁷⁹

(iii) *Evangelical perfection*

Thomas Blake acknowledges the mercy of God who condescends "through rich grace to crowne weak obedience", and then adds the striking sentence, "in this sense our imperfection hath its perfectnesse."¹⁸⁰ This "perfectnesse" led to the concept of "evangelical perfection", the constitutive quality of which is sincerity.¹⁸¹

Evangelical perfection, says Thomas Gouge, is the "sincere desire" and "earnest endeavour" to obey, "with godly sorrow and grief of heart for our failings" and "trusting upon Christ for acceptance of our imperfect performances".¹⁸² There may be much failure,

yet if God can spy out but the least good thing in thee, he will take notice of that, and cast away all the evil: if God sees but anything of his own spirit in thee, he will be sure to take notice of that. If there be but one dust of Gold . . . God will not loose it, but will finde it out. . . . If there be but a will, a desire in thee, God accepts that will for the deed.¹⁸³

The "perfection" of the child of God in this life is "a perfection of parts", not "of degrees"¹⁸⁴ and although not sinless it is "blamelesse".¹⁸⁵ The Puritans recognized a kind of perfection of the way, and although no believer can reach "an absolute unspottednes", yet "to that perfection which the Scripture taketh for soundnes, trueth, and sinceritie of heart, which is voide of carelesse remisnes, wee may come."¹⁸⁶

177. John Eaton, *Honey-combe*, p. 321. See above, pp. 97, 98.

178. See above, pp. 97, 98.

179. John Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, II. 171.

180. *Covenant of God*, p. 111.

181. Cf. John Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, pp. 134, 135.

182. *Principles of Christian Religion*, p. 228; cf. Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, p. 110; John Calvin, *Inst.*, II. vii. 4; III. xix. 5.

183. Jeremiah Burroughs, *Saints Treasury*, pp. 101, 102. It is a little strange to find Henry Denne using this last sentence in *Conference*, p. 6.

184. Williams Perkins, *Galatians*, p. 271; cf. John Preston, *New Covenant*, pp. 215, 216.

185. Anthony Burgess, *Spiritual Refining*, "Of Grace and Assurance", p. 64.

186. Richard Greenham, *Sweete Comfort*, in *Works*, p. 134.

God will passe by the imperfections which he espieth in the best service of his Children, when once he seeth their hearts to be intire and perfect towards him. . . . The Widowes Mite was little in worth, had not her good heart raised its price.¹⁸⁷

The acceptability of sincerity is taught by Richard Sibbes,¹⁸⁸ Edward Elton,¹⁸⁹ John Preston,¹⁹⁰ Thomas Goodwin,¹⁹¹ Francis Roberts,¹⁹² William Perkins¹⁹³ and a great many others. Richard Baxter, however, goes beyond most of the Puritans, and affirms that sincerity is perfection, "not as it is accepted instead of perfection, but as it is truly so."¹⁹⁴

Sincerity reveals itself in a number of ways and is described as "without hypocrisie", "soundnes", "simplicitie", "singleness of heart",¹⁹⁵ "integrity",¹⁹⁶ and as "loving God above all; or as the chiefe Good".¹⁹⁷ The believer's new obedience "is not to be measured by the perfect performance, but by the sincere and upright desire and purpose of the heart. For this uprightnesse goeth under the name of perfection".¹⁹⁸

The chief feature of sincerity is that of the general direction of the believer's desire and purpose.

A man hath a pure heart, though there be corruption there, when . . . the very streame of the heart is pure, and holy: . . . There is somthing in a pure heart that opposeth sinne, and opposeth temptation; there is some *non ultra* in the heart of a godly man: Sinne gets the advantage over his eyes, and over his hand, and over his tongue; but there is a baracado in his heart that it can goe no farther.¹⁹⁹

This direction of spiritual desire is seen in the fixity of "uniforme constant obedience".²⁰⁰ John Preston says, "we are not to be judged by a few actions, and a few paces, but by the constant tenor of our life",²⁰¹ and he gives the following illustration of what is often the

187. John Ball, *Power of Godliness*, pp. 41, 42.

188. *Bruised Reed*, in *Works*, I. 69.

189. *Treatises*: "Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner", p. 176.

190. *New Covenant*, pp. 236, 241-4, 345.

191. *Ephesians*, 1681, in *Works*, I. 81.

192. *God's Covenants*, pp. 176, 475 f., 888 f.

193. *Reformed Catholike*, in *Works*, 719.

194. *Aphorismes*, p. 133.

195. John Preston, *New Covenant*, pp. 2, 223-5.

196. Francis Roberts, *God's Covenants*, p. 489.

197. Richard Baxter, *Aphorismes*, p. 286.

198. George Downname, *Justification*, p. 235; cf. John Downname, *Guide to Godlynesse*, p. 405; Henry Scudder, *Daily Walke*, pp. 319, 320.

199. Walter Cradock, *Gospel-Holinesse*, p. 52; Thomas Taylor, *Regula Vitae*, p. 130.

200. John Ball, *Of Faith*, p. 367.

201. *New Covenant*, p. 210.

experience of the believer. "As if a man be sailing into France, a tempest driveth him into Spaine, so the Saints face is towards heaven but a suddaine passion may drive them another way."²⁰²

E. EVANGELICAL OBEDIENCE

(i) *The Law established*

The obedience of the believer, that is to say, "the righteousness by which wee are sanctified, is prescribed in the Law",²⁰³ and so "we establish the law".²⁰⁴

In that legall perfection which God requireth: this godly life is an absolute conformitie of all our actions . . . unto the will of God . . . as it is revealed . . . in the Decalogue.²⁰⁵

The believer gives himself to that love for God which is "the keeping and fulfilling of all the Commandements of God",²⁰⁶ in a "new obedience".²⁰⁷ "Evangelical Grace directs a man to no other obedience than that of which the Law is the Rule",²⁰⁸ and bestows on believers a "new and inchoat obedience to the Law, which is a kinde of fulfilling it".²⁰⁹ Although from certain points of view this obedience may be called "new", it must be understood that

The righteousness of the Law, and of the Gospell, are not two severall kindes of righteousness; but the same in regard of the matter and substance thereof.²¹⁰

In his great work on *Justification by Faith*, John Owen takes particular care to point out that the alleged distinction between personal righteousness "of the law" and personal righteousness "evangelical" cannot be sustained, for "that righteousness which is evangelical in respect of its efficient cause . . . is legal in respect of the formal reason of it and our obligation unto it".²¹¹ What John Goodwin affirms about Christ's obedience may be said with equal truth about the evangelical obedience of the believer. With special reference to Christ he argues that "The greatnesse or holinesse of the person working

202. John Preston, *Law out lawed*, p. 6.

203. George Downname, *Justification*, p. 78; cf. Thomas Taylor, *Progresse of Saints*, p. 192; James Ussher, *Body of Divinitie*, p. 203.

204. Romans iii. 31.

205. John Downname, *Guide to Godlynesse*, p. 5, cf. p. 205.

206. William Ames, *Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, p. 234.

207. Robert Bolton, *Three-fold Treatise*, "Saints Guide", p. 67; John Ball, *Of Faith*, pp. 41, 42.

208. Edward Reynolds, *Three Treatises: "Sinfulnesse of Sinne"*, p. 388; cf. Robert Traill, *Justification Vindicated*, in *Works*, I. 287.

209. Thomas Taylor, *Regula Vitae*, p. 11; cf. 171; *The Marrow*, p. 175.

210. William Pemble, *Vindiciae Fidei*, p. 3.

211. Op. cit., in *Works*, V. 158.

according to the Law, doth not alter or change the nature or property of the works, but they are the works of the Law, whosoever doeth them, Christs being Christ, doth not make the Law, not to be the Law."²¹² By the same reasoning, the obedience of the regenerate man is still obedience to Law, whatever change may have taken place in his ability and motive. The Law does not cease to be the Law now that the Christian has come to love it. Thomas Goodwin boldly affirms that the Law is "the original copy of all the grace which the saints have", and that "all grace is but the copy of the law",²¹³ and thus Christian obedience is truly a "righteousness of the Law".²¹⁴

Believers "still keep the Law",²¹⁵ and this is important in the eyes of the Lawgiver, for it is not

all one to the Law, whether the debt of obedience, or the debt of punishment were paid; for certainly its the debt of obedience the Law doth principally aim at, and when the debt of punishment is paid, the debt of obedience is not thereby abrogated.²¹⁶

"Our doing his Commandments tends to the full accomplishment of his design of reconciling God and us, and so of making us happy. . . . If we . . . keep his Commandments, then he has the end of his Mediatorial undertaking, which is the reconciling God to us and us to God."²¹⁷ Sanctification, therefore, is "that Practice and Manner of Life, which we call Holiness . . . and which God requireth of us in the Law;"²¹⁸ it is the "Performance of the Law".²¹⁹ Positive Law—in so far as it is still applicable under the Gospel—is no less established by evangelical obedience than moral Law, for the majesty of God is involved in both.

(ii) *The acceptability of good works*

The believer "must get good works" after he has been justified,²²⁰ because "this Righteousness in the Saints pleaseth God".²²¹

This holy frame of a compleat and active will . . . is a most sweet

212. *Imputatio Fidei*, p. 71.

213. *Mediator*, in *Works*, V. 85, 86.

214. Thomas Goodwin, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

215. Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 210.

216. Anthony Burgess, *Justification*, Part II. p. 451; cf. William Strong, *The Two Covenants*, p. 54.

217. William Allen, *Christians Justification*, pp. 266, 267.

218. Walter Marshal, *Sanctification*, pp. 1, 2.

219. Walter Marshal, *op. cit.*, pp. 236, 237.

220. Walter Cradock, *Gospel-Holiness*, "Priviledge and Practice of the Saints", p. 231.

221. Obadiah Grew, *Sinner's Justification*, pp. 59–61; Andrew Willet, *Hexapla: Romanes*, p. 143.

smelling sacrifice, and mounts into the most gracious acceptance of God in Christ.²²²

Paul Baynes says that "we honour and glorifie God in, by, and with our graces".²²³ Although the believer's good works are, from one point of view, nothing but "filthy rags",²²⁴ yet in so far as they are evidence of sanctification "they are jewels and ornaments".²²⁵ They are "such as our Gracious Merciful God will certainly delight in, and be pleas'd with, during our State of Imperfection."²²⁶

The Antinomians denied the acceptability of the believer's obedience and declared that "all the workes of the regenerate are sinne",²²⁷ and Thomas Welde reports them as saying, "If I be holy I am never the better accepted of God".²²⁸ John Saltmarsh rejects the idea that "God loves us for his own graces in us",²²⁹ and so does John Eaton, who adds that "all our righteousnesse, even of sanctification, is as foule, stained, filthy rags".²³⁰ Tobias Crisp likewise teaches that the believer's "own blameless works" are but "loss and Dung",²³¹ and to offer them to God is "to throw dirt anew in the face of God".²³²

The Divine Acceptance of the believer's good works constitutes something of a paradox to which both the Puritans and the Antinomians endeavoured to be true, namely, that the believer's works are both unacceptable and acceptable, their acceptability being solely due to the merits of Christ. At the basis of the Antinomian objection to the believer's works was their recurring confusion of justification and sanctification, with the result that they thought of sanctification in terms of imputation. They were right in recognizing Christ as the source and power of the believer's sanctification, but mistaken in their view of the method by which the grace of Christ was made real to the believer. They were unable to distinguish between legal categories which belonged to justification and experimental categories which belonged to sanctification, and so applied the method of imputation to both.

The Puritans never tired of explaining that

There is a Righteousnesse imputed, and there is a Righteousnesse

222. Obadiah Sedgwick, *Anatomy*, p. 221, cf. 250.

223. *Ephesians*, p. 266.

224. Richard Sibbes, *Church's Complaint*, in *Works*, VI. 191, 192.

225. Richard Sibbes, *Philippians*, in *Works*, V. 85.

226. Walter Marshal, *Sanctification*, p. 3.

227. Such a saying is repudiated by Andrew Willet, *Hexapla: Romanes*, p. 136.

228. Thomas Welde, *Rise, reigne, and ruine*, p. 18.

229. *Reasons*, "Shadows flying away", p. 12.

230. *Dangerous Dead Faiih*, p. 81; John Eaton, *Honey-combe*, pp. 322, 323; cf. Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena*, p. 24; Thomas Welde, *Rise, reigne, and ruine*, p. 3.

231. *Christ Alone Exalted*, in *Works*, II. 227.

232. Op. cit., II. 322.

imparted; the one inherent in Christ, and imputed to us; the other imparted by Christ, and inherent in us.²³³

This imparted righteousness is called "the Righteousnesse of God", not because the believer has nothing to do with it, but because "it is conformable to the Law of God".²³⁴ It consists

in the inherent holinesse of Mans whole person, when such gracious Qualities are fixed and planted in every faculty of soule and Body: as doe dispose and incline the Motions of both onely unto that which is conformable to the Righteousnesse of the Law.²³⁵

It is, therefore, "Unsavoury" to say "If Christ be my Sanctification, what neede I looke to any thing in my selfe, to evidence my justification?"²³⁶

There is nothing of surprise in finding that Richard Baxter opposes the Antinomians here, and, although the context and object of his reasoning cannot be upheld, what he has to say on this is pertinent.

I abhor the opinion, that Christ's Righteousness given us, is all without us, and none within us, when Christ dwelleth in us; as if 600 Texts of Scripture were all false, that speak of the necessity of an inherent and active Righteousness.²³⁷

(iii) *Activity in obedience*

The Antinomians believed that no spiritual good in the believer could bear any relation to his will and action. They held that anything truly commendable in the believer had to be regarded as the direct work of the Holy Spirit, in the doing of which the believer himself took no part at all. Further, given the premise of sanctification by imputation, the conclusion of the believer's passivity became inescapable.

Some say there is a sanctification in us; but wherein doth it consist? Not in any habitual holiness, or graces in us, but in the immediate actings of Christ in us; and so the Lord makes his music without any strings, and reveals things to us without eyes, and makes us live without any power of life. And so after justification they put a Christian in such an estate of sanctification as that he is . . . like a weathercock which hath not power at all to move, but as the wind blows it, good or bad.²³⁸

233. Thomas Gataker, *Christian Mans Care*, 1624, p. 24; cf. *Truths Victory*, pp. 88, 89.

234. Thomas Gataker, *op. cit.*, pp. 27, 33.

235. William Pemble, *Vindiciae Fidei*, p. 66.

236. Thomas Welde, *Rise, reigne, and ruine*, p. 20.

237. *Scripture Gospel Defended*, "Defence of Christ and Free Grace", To the Reader.

238. Thomas Shepard, *Parable of the Ten Virgins*, 1660, *Works*, II. 332.

It was the Antinomian belief that "in the conversion of a sinner . . . the faculties of the soule . . . in things pertaining to God, are destroyed and made to cease", and "in stead of them, the Holy Ghost doth come and take place, and doth all the works".²³⁹ John Eaton says that by the power of his imputation God

doth so truly cloath us both within and without with this his Sons doing and fulfilling of the Law perfectly, that we also continue in all things to doe them in the sight of God, not inherently and actively, by our own doing, but because his Sonnes perfect doing all things is objectively and passively so truly in us, that we are made perfectly holy.²⁴⁰

It is something of a question how believers can "doe" something not "actively", but this does not deter Robert Towne from saying that "as their obedience is the work of the Spirit in them; so its passive to them",²⁴¹ and he asks, "But what is caused and accomplished by Christ simply and alone, . . . must that be sought and laboured for by the Ministerie and urging of the Law?"²⁴² The grotesqueness of the thorough Antinomian position is exposed by Isaac Ambrose.

Might we still lie in our Ivory Beds, under no Law, under no Obligation of doing, no danger of sinning, no broken bones, no terrors, no sense of sorrow for sin, no progress in personal Repentance, Mortification, Sanctification, no care of watchful walking to perfect holiness in the fear of God, no abstaining from worldly lusts, no strictness of Conversation, but only believe that Christ hath suffered, and Christ hath done all Duties for us, Repented for us, Mortified lusts for us, walked strictly and holily for us, this were an easie work indeed.²⁴³

The common Puritan view is that the believer's sanctification in the eyes of God is both active and progressive. "In the duties of sanctification wee are also agents, who being acted by the holy Ghost, doe cooperate with him."²⁴⁴ Gospel righteousness is that which "you must perform yourselves" and it must be "your own personal and inherent obedience."²⁴⁵ The believer "must not be

239. Thomas Welde, *Rise, reigne, and ruine*, p. 1.

240. *Honey-combe*, p. 288.

241. Robert Towne, *Assertion of Grace*, p. 23; cf. pp. 47 ff.

242. *Op. cit.*, p. 119.

243. *Prima, Media, & Ultima*, "The Middle Things", To the Reader.

244. George Downname, *Justification*, p. 79; Richard Greenham, *Of Good Works*, in *Works*, p. 450.

245. Thomas Jacomb, *Romans*, p. 370.

lazier and luskish,²⁴⁶ idle and slothfull; but exceeding industrious, painfull, and diligent.”²⁴⁷ Walter Marshal makes the comment

That though all Holiness be effectually attained by the life of Faith in Christ, yet the use of any Means appointed in the Word for attaining and promoting Holiness is not hereby made void, but rather established. This is needful to be observed against the Pride and Ignorance of some carnal Gospellers, who being puft up with a Conceit of their feigned Faith, imagine themselves to be in such a state of Perfection, that they are above all Ordinances, except singing Halelujahs.²⁴⁸

It is a “counterfeit Faith” when a man thinks he has it “but yet hee finds no life, no motion . . . no worke proceeding from his Faith. . . . For, if it be a right Faith, it will worke.”²⁴⁹ It was a Puritan maxim that “so much working as you find in any man, so much faith there is.”²⁵⁰ Anthony Burgess emphasizes the believer’s own activity in sanctification when he draws attention to the word “ye” in “ye through the Spirit”²⁵¹ and says it denotes

that we also are to work and act . . . and not as some do now dangerously maintain, give up all, expecting the operation of the Spirit only.²⁵²

The Puritans pointed out that one of the dangers of inactivity was that “he that endeavours not to be better, will by little and little grow worse,”²⁵³ and they regularly reminded their hearers that there were not only “*Credenda*”, but also “*Agenda*, things to be done”,²⁵⁴ for justification by faith gives no slight to good works.²⁵⁵ “Supernatural graces” must be exercised “in holy walking”.²⁵⁶ It is no contradiction of this when Andrew Willet says, “It is grace onely that worketh, the nature of man is wrought upon.”²⁵⁷ He does not deny the activity of the believing man, but simply rejects the synergistic principle by which “the lawe of nature is made a joynt worker with grace.”²⁵⁸ It is not the unregenerate man who is active in good works, but the

246. “luskish” is an obsolete word meaning “lazy”.

247. John Downname, *Guide to Godlynesse*, p. 23.

248. *Sanctification*, p. 274.

249. John Preston, *New Covenant*, p. 391.

250. John Preston, *Breastplate of Faith and Love*, “Of Faith”, p. 176.

251. Romans viii. 13.

252. *Justification*, Part I. p. 63; Thomas Taylor, *Progresse of Saints*, p. 191.

253. Robert Bolton, *Three-fold Treatise*, “Saints Guide”, p. 40; cf. “Selfe-enriching Examination”, p. 53.

254. Thomas Goodwin, *Ephesians*, in *Works*, I. p. 132.

255. Thomas Goodwin, *Justifying Faith*, in *Works*, VIII. p. 476.

256. Thomas Brooks, *Glory of Christianity*, in *Works*, IV. p. 46.

257. *Hexapla: Romanes*, p. 140.

258. Andrew Willet, *ibid.*

spiritually-renewed man, and these good works are to be defined as "the graces of Gods Spirit in us, and the actions flowing from them."²⁵⁹

The false conclusions to which the principle of entire passivity in holiness must lead is well expressed by Samuel Rutherford when he calls upon believers to a life of activity in the things of God. "If we by Grace were no agents in these, but meer Patients, and Christ and the holy Ghost the onely immediate agents", then in the doing of what is forbidden in the Law, "we should not sin, all these wicked acts were to be imputed to the Grace of Christ and the holy Ghost, which is blasphemy."²⁶⁰ Richard Baxter rightly says that it is an excessive view of grace that lifts the expression of it out of the moral realm,²⁶¹ and he warns his readers to "take heed of those Preachers that stifle practice",²⁶² because "the Spirit worketh not on man as a dead thing, which hath no principle of activity in it self."²⁶³

The concurrence of the Divine and human in the realm of spiritual activity is another of the paradoxes of Christian experience. It receives classic expression in the words of the New Testament itself. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."²⁶⁴ Thomas Watson says on these words, "As the teacher guides the child's hand, and helps him to form his letters, so that it is not so much the child's writing as the master's, so our obedience is not so much our working as the Spirit's co-working."²⁶⁵ The truth of sanctification is found in both the passive and the active aspects of it, and Puritans and Antinomians alike do their best, each in their own way, to conserve the element of the truth which they regard as important.

There is thus a kind of passive-activity or active-passivity in the believer's acts of godliness, and the paradox appears sharply in Walter Cradock who, with an understanding of both aspects, says, "Consider . . . in all the good works that you do, how wonderful passive you are in the doing of them."²⁶⁶ The truth enunciated by Walter Cradock is confirmed by such a different writer as Samuel Rutherford.

Gospel-obedience . . . hath lesse of the nature of obedience, then that of Adam. . . . We are more (as it were) patients, in obeying Gospel-Commands, not that we are meer patients, as Libertines teach, for grace makes us willing, . . . and so in Gospel-obedience

259. Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 39.

260. *Triumph of Faith*, pp. 276, 277; cf. *Survey*, Part II. pp. 58, 65.

261. *Catholick Theologie*, Book I. Part I, p. 41.

262. *Poor Man's Family Book*, 1674, p. 335.

263. *Life of Faith*, p. 226.

264. Philippians ii. 12-13.

265. *A Body of Divinity*, p. 90.

266. *Divine Drops Distilled*, p. 172 f. Not to be understood in the Antinomian sense.

we offer more of the Lords own, and lesse of our own, because he both commands, and gives us grace to obey.²⁶⁷

There are times when an intellectual problem resolves itself in the realm of the experimental, and John Downname points the way to just such a practical synthesis when he writes,

If we respect our owne strength, it will plainly appeare to be utterly impossible to goe forward in the course of godlinesse . . . whereas contrariwise, if wee renounce our selves, and our owne strength, and by a lively fayth rest upon the power and promises of God, for the beginning, continuung and perfecting of this worke, then neede we not to be discouraged by our wants and weaknesses, from undertaking or proceeding in it.²⁶⁸

The Antinomian disinclination to activity was plainly an excrescence on Puritanism proper, and produced fanatical extremists whom John Fletcher aptly calls "Laodicean loiterers",²⁶⁹ but, at the same time, among those who stood at the other extreme there was the danger of an activism that bordered on Socinianism. The Puritans endeavoured to walk a middle path, but, as John Eusden says, being indwelt by the Spirit of God they "could do no other than lead an activist life."²⁷⁰

The Puritan insistence upon Christian Law-keeping preserved their piety from evaporating into sentiment and fostered that moral virility which must ever be the mark of the redeemed and restored sinner.

267. *Covenant of Life*, pp. 198, 199.

268. John Downname, *Guide to Godlynesse*, p. 50.

269. *Third Check*, in *Works*, I. p. 391.

270. *Puritans, Lawyers, and Politics*, p. 22.

Chapter VII

PERFECT FREEDOM

Synopsis

- A. LAW IN THE HEART
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Chapter VII

PERFECT FREEDOM

IN a sermon on the believer's freedom in Christ, Jeremiah Burroughs says he intends to give his hearers a view of "the bondage that we are all in, under the law" and to reveal "wherein the liberty of the Gospell doth consist." He then adds, "These two things (brethren) have in them the chiefe doctrine of divinity, and except you be well instructed and settled in these two, you cannot know aright any point of religion."¹ This chapter inquires into the Puritan doctrine of Christian liberty, and begins by observing the attention given by the Puritans to the terms of the New Covenant, which state God's promise to write His Law within the hearts of His people. The Puritan conception of this as outworked in enabling grace is next exhibited, together with the transformed attitude to Law which such grace brings. The chapter then shows how widely the believer's new relation to the Law differs from the harsh features of legalism and concludes with an exposition of the Puritan doctrine of the "law of liberty".

A. LAW IN THE HEART

The Puritans held fast to the promise of the "new covenant" given by God through Jeremiah, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."² In accordance with the teaching of Hebrews,³ they believed that this promise was fulfilled in the Gospel.

(i) *The original Law*

The inscription wrought within the heart of the regenerate is truly to be called a writing of "the Law". The result of the Divine action is not merely the purging of the volitions, but the giving of a specific direction to them in the form of an awareness and acceptance of the Law of God. "The heart of the righteous" becomes "a rich . . . store-house, wherein the Law of God is safely laid up."⁴ "The Law of God written, and the Law of their hearts is all one in substance":⁵ it is the very same Law, "my Law", not another of a different or easier

1. *Saints Treasury*, p. 90.

2. Jeremiah xxxi. 33; cf. Ezekiel xxxvi. 26, 27.

3. Hebrews viii. 7-13.

4. John Ball, *Power of Godliness*, p. 63.

5. Edward Elton, *Treatises*: "Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner", p. 205.

kind.⁶ The Law of God which was “at first inbred and natural unto man” and subsequently written “in tables of stone” is “turned to an internal law again” as God “implants it on the heart as it was at first.”⁷ The fact of identity between the original Law and the newly-written Law is in John Flavel’s mind when he speaks of God’s action as a reviving of the knowledge of the Law in the heart of man and a trimming of the lamp of reason.⁸

(ii) *Spiritual acceptance of the Law*

From the terms of the New Covenant promise it is clear that a distinction must be made between the way the Law was written in man’s heart at the creation, and the manner of that special inscribing promised in Jeremiah. The former is the inwritten Law in the knowledge of it: the latter is the inwritten Law in the power of it and relates to God’s saving act of grace.⁹

Francis Roberts devotes twenty-nine pages to the exposition of these Old Testament passages in terms of Christian experience,¹⁰ and William Ames understands them to refer to the grace of God as “it applies our will to fulfill the Will of God” and “makes the will ready to commit the command of God to execution”, bringing about “a conformity betwixt the Will of God and ours” in such a way that obedience becomes holiness.¹¹ The experience of the Law of God written in the heart is one of the “meanes of knowing whether we be in the Covenant”¹² and this is because, as Tobias Crisp concurs, the Law in the heart is a “consequence” of grace, not an “antecedence.”¹³ On the psalmist’s prayer, “Grant me thy law”,¹⁴ Thomas Manton remarks, “David had the book of the law already, . . . but he understandeth it not of the law written in a book, but of the law written upon his heart”.¹⁵ Indeed, “what is holiness”, asks Thomas Goodwin, “but the law of God written in the heart, the real living law?”¹⁶

(iii) *A “Correspondency”*

The Puritans held together the two truths of (a) the identity of the Law under the two covenants and (b) the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart by saying that for believers the promise means “there shall

6. Francis Roberts, *God’s Covenants*, p. 1365, who observes that Calvin draws attention to this.

7. John Owen, *Indwelling Sin*, in *Works*, VI. 165, 166.

8. John Flavel, *Personal Reformation*, p. 3; and see above pp. 52 ff.

9. Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 60.

10. *God’s Covenants*, pp. 1369–98.

11. William Ames, *Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, pp. 191, 192.

12. John Preston, *New Covenant*, p. 426.

13. Tobias Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, in *Works*, I. 81, 82.

14. Psalm cxix. 29.

15. *Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm*, I. 265.

16. *Unregenerate Man’s Guiltiness*, in *Works*, X. 57.

be a Law within them, answerable and conform to the Law without them."¹⁷ "Before this writing, there was an universal Contrariety: but since, theres an universal Correspondency, betwixt Gods Laws and their Hearts. Now theres a Spiritual Law within, called The Law of the Mind, answering in every point to the Literal Law without."¹⁸ "The law of the minde" is that "obedience and conformitie, which the mind regenerate hath with the law of God."¹⁹

The heart within echoes and answers to the commandments without. . . . An obedient soul is like a crystal glass with a light in the midst, which shines forth through every part thereof. So that royal law that is written upon his heart shines forth into every parcel of his life; his outward works do echo to a law within.²⁰

In this work of the Holy Spirit there is "a form of grace introduced into the soul, that suits with every point of the law",²¹ because where

Christ doth rule the heart, his Lawes have a marvellous sutable-nesse with the spirit of that man: his Law is written in the heart, there is a powerful and answerable inclination stamped in the heart. which gives way to the command.²²

Man "can never look upon the law as the perfect law of liberty, until his nature answers the law, and it is written in his heart."²³

Adam had the Law written in his heart, not only a Law without, but inward dispositions conformable to it within: and when man had blotted it out, God wrote it in tables of stone; but now he will put it into the hearts of men, so that they shall have an inward principle answerable to the Law-rule without, and whatever he does require in the Law, something within shall answer to it, but this Law is put in by the hand of God.²⁴

B. THE ANTITHESIS OF LEGALISM

Christian experience in keeping the Law of God is the antithesis of legalism: it has in it neither irksome servility nor legalistic morality.

17. Francis Roberts, *God's Covenants*, p. 167.

18. Francis Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 1378.

19. Andrew Willet, *Hexapla: Romanes*, p. 331, on Romans vii. 22, 23.

20. Thomas Brooks, *Heaven on Earth*, in *Works*, II. 469.

21. Thomas Manton, *Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm*, I. 49.

22. Obadiah Sedgwick, *Anatomy*, p. 140.

23. William Strong, *The Two Covenants*, p. 57.

24. William Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 103. It has been observed in an earlier chapter that William Strong thinks that the writing referred to in Romans ii. 15 is not the original act of creation but a first act of recovering grace, "not the dross of the old Adam, but the foundation of the new". (*ibid.*)

(i) *No irksome servility*

Walter Cradock told his hearers that a test of their true humbling before God could be seen in "the carriage" of their souls, "in respect of the injunctions, or commands of God that are layd upon" them. "The nature and property of a heart truly humbled by seeing of God in Jesus Christ is this: to be willing to obey God in any thing that God layes upon him."²⁵ That is not godly life "which counteth it preciseness to be abridged of any libertie that he hath been wont to use",²⁶ and such as speak like this are but "carnall Professours"²⁷ who weary of the Law. In his defence of the *Morality of the Fourth Commandement*, William Twisse cannot see how the observance of the Sabbath "as a morall and perpetuall duty, should seeme distastfull to any"²⁸ and considers it a mark of unregeneracy to say, "When will the Sabbath be gone?"²⁹ Jeremiah Burroughs writes of the servile spirit revealed in

the Speech of one that cried out, Oh that God had never made the seventh Commandement: He had an inlightened conscience, but a filthy heart; but conscience now stood in his way, he hates therefore the Command that forbid that sin.³⁰

This is slavish Law-keeping in the "oldnesse of the letter", it is "the idle, fruitlesse, and bare knowledge of the Law in externall Discipline, that reigns in an unrenewed man."³¹ William Strong deprecates the "legal spirit" of those who keep the commandment, "performing it as a task, and are glad it is over."³² He contends that the Law was never made for the godly "as the only principle upon which they should act",³³ and that the "coaction" of the Law has ceased for the believer, that is to say, he is not under the Law "forcibly compelling."³⁴ He gives tests for true inwardness of obedience, in contrast to legalism, and says, "If you are led by the spirit you are not under the Law; that is, not under the Law as a slave under a Tyrant, . . . but you have a spirit of Sonship."³⁵ The change, however, is in the manner of doing, not in the Law itself.

25. *Gospel-Holinesse*, pp. 116, 117.

26. Richard Rogers, *Seven Treatises*, p. 205.

27. Robert Bolton, *Afflicted Consciences*, p. 322.

28. *Op. cit.*, p. 235.

29. William Twisse, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

30. *Evil of Evils*, p. 524.

31. Samuel Rutherford, *Covenant of Life*, p. 213.

32. *The Two Covenants*, p. 28; cf. Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, pp. 164, 165, 169.

33. Note the force of "only": it is this which makes it legalism. Cf. Thomas Goodwin, *Gospel Holiness*, 1703, in *Works*, VII. 215; *Work of the Holy Ghost*, in *Works*, VI. 302; and Jeremiah Burroughs, *Saints Treasury*, p. 101.

34. *The Two Covenants*, pp. 37, 50. "Coaction" is an obsolete word standing for the exercise of force in compulsion or restraint.

35. William Strong, *The Two Covenants*, p. 84.

The Puritans insisted again and again that it was far from the purpose of the Law to keep servile, or to exact rigour;³⁶ and taught that the believer has been liberated from the doing of duty as a task or in the manner of a slave.³⁷ The believer is moved by a deep reverence for God, without any trace of a servile spirit, or of being driven to obedience "with terrors."³⁸ He keeps the Law, not "Legally" but "Evangelically",³⁹ and finds nothing irksome in any of the commandments. Thomas Goodwin, as a true pastor, expresses a warning to the excessively scrupulous about the way in which an active conscience still tries to "keep a man under the law" and teaches that the work of God in the soul is to "subdue conscience unto faith."⁴⁰

The liberty of the Gospel takes all baseness and servility out of Law-keeping. Believers "are not servants, but sonnes."⁴¹ For the metaphor of sonship, John Preston substitutes that of marriage.

You must respect him as a Wife doth her Husband, not as a servant doth a hard Master: you must not looke on his Commandements as a hard Taske, whereof you could willingly be excused, but as one that hath his heart inflamed to walk in them: as a loving Wife, that needs not to be bidden⁴² to doe this, or that; but if the doing of it may advantage her Husband, it wil be a greater grief to her to let it lye undone, then labour to doe it. . . . They that be humble, that have their hearts wounded with the sense of sinne, are willing to take him on his owne tearmes; to keepe his Commandements, and not thinke them grievous. . . . Therefore, be not thou shie in taking of him, for you have free libertie.⁴³

The expression of covenanted grace in the preface to the Decalogue "serveth to teach us to keepe the law spirituallly, because it is spirituall".⁴⁴ For a good man, the Law is not made "as a Bar, but as a defence; not to restrain but to secure them."⁴⁵ "Obedience is no dull service, no dead piece of worke, but the way to blessedness and the crowne of glory."⁴⁶ It is not servitude but friendship,⁴⁷ and will be

36. Francis Roberts, *God's Covenants*, p. 708; cf. Thomas Manton, *James*, in *Works*, IV, 228.

37. Samuel Bolton, *True Bounds*, p. 209; John Owen, *Holy Spirit*, in *Works*, III, 606, 607.

38. John Preston, *New Covenant*, p. 431.

39. John Preston, *Sermons*, "Exact Walking", p. III.

40. *Ephesians*, in *Works*, II, 347.

41. William Perkins, *Galatians*, pp. 311 f.; cf. John Preston, *New Covenant*, pp. 321, 322.

42. I.e., servilely.

43. John Preston, *Breastplate of Faith and Love*, "Of Faith", pp. 20, 27.

44. John Dod and Robert Cleaver, *Ten Commaundements*, p. 8.

45. Anonymous author, *Liberty of Conscience*, p. 3, on I Timothy i. 9.

46. John Ball, *Of Faith*, p. 385; cf. John Sedgwick, *Antinomianisme Anatomized*, p. 10.

47. Ezekiel Hopkins, *Practical Christianity*, 1701, in *Works*, p. 677.

rendered "without repining, fretting, grudging at any Duty, as if it were a grievous Yoke and Burden."⁴⁸ The child of God offers the response of a new heart, and not "a violent and constrained obedience, as doe the divels",⁴⁹ therefore, says Richard Baxter in his autobiography,

I advise all Men to take heed of placing Religion too much in Fears, and Tears, and Scruples; or in any other kind of Sorrow, but such as tendeth to raise us to a high Estimation of Christ, and to the magnifying of Grace.⁵⁰

(ii) *No legalistic morality*

The Puritans had a great fear of what they called "morality", by which they meant a mere legalism in the doing of good works for no other reason than that they were expected to do so. Outward conformity of this kind, without any true delight in the commandment or love for the Lawgiver is the kind of Law-keeping that Robert Bolton has in mind when he describes the unregenerate man's efforts in virtue as bringing him only to the "manhood of a meere morall Puritane."⁵¹ Zealous conformity to Law is not sanctification, says the Antinomian Robert Towne,⁵² and all the Puritans say the same.

Believers are committed to an obedience which is not "meerly Legal";⁵³ it is neither "a mere scrupulosity",⁵⁴ nor is it a performance of the Law in an external manner.⁵⁵ "It may fall out that a mans religious duties be the stage upon which all a mans lusts do eminently act, as the Pharisees who did all things to be seen of men."⁵⁶ One may keep many commandments, yet not exalt God.⁵⁷ "The great Characteristical difference betwixt morality and piety", says John Ball, "lyeth in this particular, that the one determineth in man, and the other relateth unto God."⁵⁸ This same contrast between "morality and piety" is drawn by George Downname who says that "the meere civill honest man" does not perform duties "in obedience to God, or

48. Walter Marshal, *Sanctification*, p. 2.

49. Richard Greenham, *Divine Aphorismes*, in *Works*, p. 491.

50. *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Part III. pp. 85, 86.

51. *Afflicted Consciences*, p. 70. See discussion above in Chapter I.

52. *Assertion of Grace*, p. 4. Paul Hobson is against this "pharisaicall boldnesse" of mere "external conformity to the Law", *Practical Divinity*, 1646, p. 20.

53. Jeremiah Burroughs, *Gospel-Conversation*, pp. 41, 42.

54. Anthony Burgess, *Spiritual Refining*, "Of Sinne", p. 337.

55. Andrew Willet, *Hexapla: Romanes*, p. 318.

56. Anthony Burgess, *Spiritual Refining*, "Of Grace and Assurance", p. 16.

57. John Preston, *New Covenant*, p. 283.

58. *Power of Godliness*, p. 2 (unnumbered) cf. John Sedgwick, *Antinomianisme Anatomized*, p. 42; Henry Burton, *Law and Gospel Reconciled*, p. 32; and James Durham, *Law Unsealed*, p. 185.

for Gods sake.”⁶⁰ The outward acts of religion may be punctiliously performed, yet the heart may still be under the dominion of sin, “as a man may be a Traitor, while he yet doth seeme to do something of the service to a Prince”,⁶⁰ for “though a man were a morall Saint . . . yet without the inward power of grace . . . hee is but a spectacle of commiseration.”⁶¹

1. We call not these good Works that are extorted by the terrours of the Law: as a captive keepeth the high way, because his Keeper leadeth him in an iron chaine. Nor 2. these which flow from the sole authority of God as Lawgiver. Or 3. which issue from meere morall principles, without saving grace: but these we call good works in an Evangelicall sense, that not onely are done from the authority of the Law-giver, but also from a mediatory and Evangelike obligation, from the sweet attractions and drawing coards of the secrets of Christs love.⁶²

John Owen says that careful distinction must be made between “law-works” and Gospel holiness,⁶³ and by this statement he directs attention to the fact that the “practice of moral virtue” may easily fall short of holiness.⁶⁴

Though this holiness be legal, in respect of the materials and pattern of it, the law of God, yet it is not legal in respect of the subject or state of the person that hath it begun, or in respect of the tenure of the covenant, or of the virtue efficient that wrought it.⁶⁵

As the believer will not be a “libertine” in his practice so will he not be a “legalist”, for his obedience will run in another channel. The works of love “which are the end of the commandment, must flow from a good spring, from a gracious Principle, or a Principle of Grace”, and therefore, no works which do not proceed from such a gracious principle can be understood truly to fulfil the Law, but “were call’d by some of the godly learned Antients ‘shining sins’.”⁶⁶

Distinguishing the regenerate man’s delight in God’s Law from external “morality”, Thomas Edwards writes,

Morality is not this new Creature Change. . . . We cannot speak too much against it, it being a soft Pillow from whence many slide insensibly into Destruction. How many upon this account

59. *Covenant of Grace*, p. 62.

60. Obadiah Sedgwick, *Anatomy*, p. 139.

61. Robert Bolton, *True Happiness*, pp. 67, 141.

62. Samuel Rutherford, *Survey*, Part II. pp. 36, 37.

63. *Holy Spirit*, in *Works*, III. 374, 376.

64. *Op. cit.*, p. 524; cf. John Owen, *Justification*, in *Works*, V. 363-71.

65. Thomas Goodwin, *Work of the Holy Ghost*, in *Works*, VI. 391; Thomas Manton, *Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm*, I. 15.

66. Joseph Caryl, *Nature of Love*, pp. 16, 25.

think themselves new Creatures, who are yet deeply under the Image of Satan; and tho they have blown off some dust from the Law of Nature, yet never had a Syllable of the Law of Grace writ in their Hearts? . . . Water heated to the highest pitch is but Water still; and Morality in the greatest elevation of it, is but refined Flesh; an old Nature in an higher form. . . . Moral Virtue colours the Skin, renewing Grace enlivens the Heart. . . . 'Tis an Habit, a Law writ in the Heart; not a transient Pang, or a sudden Affection; . . . but a new Creature, a divine Frame spreading it self over every Faculty: . . . a serious Humility, a constant Grief under the Remainder of Corruption yet unextirpated; a perpetual Recourse to God, and Delight in him through Jesus Christ.⁶⁷

The pastoral spirit of William Strong compels him to express his anxiety that "men have been prest to duty without a through discovery of a mans Union with Christ as the ground of his assistance and acceptance . . . and so men have been put upon duties in a Moral or Legal way."⁶⁸ This is the inevitable result of a Pelagian or humanistic attitude to Law-keeping, and John Owen expresses the conviction that "the separation of the Duties of the Law from the Grace of the Gospel . . . will quickly issue in a pretence of Morality, set up in opposition unto true Evangelical Obedience."⁶⁹

It was the Puritan view that nothing could be more barren than this legalistic morality. In this they shared the concern of the Antinomians and were opposed to all the nomistic tendencies of their day.⁷⁰

C. EVANGELICAL ABILITY

There is an identity and a difference between man's first reception of the Law and the second. The difference is in the supernatural grace which enables the believer to fulfil the Law. This evangelical ability is generally described by the Puritans in a four-fold manner.

(i) *The new life*

"There can be no vitall actions brought forth, unlesse a principle of life be first begotten within."⁷¹ Francis Roberts remarks that the

67. *Baxterianism Barefac'd*, pp. 153-8. (There is great confusion in the page enumeration here, and the above quotations are found in the second occurrence of these page numbers, following the first occurrence of p. 184, which is also repeated.)

68. *The Two Covenants*, p. 109.

69. John Owen, *To the Christian Reader* in James Durham, *Law Unsealed*; cf. Edward Elton, *Treatises*: "Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner", p. 63.

70. The Puritans were supported by the best of the Caroline moral theologians, as H. R. McAdoo points out in *Caroline Moral Theology*, pp. 16, 17, 46.

71. William Ames, *Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, p. 4; cf. Stephen Charnock, *Necessity of Regeneration*, in *Works*, III. 30, 34; Walter Marshal, *Sanctification*, p. 82.

Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Faith are similar in that in both a response is required of man: (a) Adam had the ability for this by the Law written naturally in his heart, (b) believers have the Law written supernaturally.⁷² The principles of obedience in the regenerate “do in reality differ from those in Adam”,⁷³ because they arise from inward knowledge, approval, propensity, affection and ability.⁷⁴ Believers are made good in order that they may do good;⁷⁵ as God’s “workmanship” they then perform good works.⁷⁶ The Holy Spirit “will quicken us in the life of grace”,⁷⁷ because “we must first by him be made righteous, before wee can doe the workes of righteousness; wee must first become good trees, before we can yeeld good fruits.”⁷⁸ This is what is meant by the repeatedly-emphasized and much controverted statement that the believer works not “for life”, but “from life.”⁷⁹

The believer is able to keep the Law of God because of the power that comes to him by God’s enabling grace. Faith is a necessary prerequisite to spiritual obedience, and Christians must believe “that they shall receive grace from God to bring foorth fruites of amendment of life” and that “God will make them able to obey his will.”⁸⁰ “Faith obtaines grace, by which the Law is fulfilled”;⁸¹ it is “the first wheele in the clock that moveth all the rest.”⁸² Jeremiah Burroughs quaintly remarks that saints have “as it were a pipe layd into that Cistern that hath all fulness”⁸³ and explains this elsewhere by saying, “The Gospel . . . brings the spirit of power and life along with it; there goes a vertue together with the commands of the Gospel to strengthen the soul to obedience.”⁸⁴ The grace of God is sufficient to enable the believer to keep the Law and to fix it in the heart,⁸⁵ and it is for this reason that the godly pray for quickening and inclining grace in order to do the things commanded.⁸⁶ God’s Covenant, says John Preston, “is to keepe thy heart in his feare”,⁸⁷ and to give all needful strength to walk in the way of His command-

72. *God’s Covenants*, pp. 174, 175.

73. Thomas Goodwin, *Of the Creatures*, in *Works*, VII. 47.

74. Stephen Charnock, *Nature of Regeneration*, 1683, in *Works*, III. 118–24.

75. Anthony Burgess, *Spiritual Refining*, “Of Grace and Assurance”, p. 303.

76. Anthony Burgess, *op. cit.*, p. 538.

77. John Downname, *Guide to Godlynesse*, p. 7.

78. John Downname, *op. cit.*, p. 10; cf. p. 40.

79. Cf. Walter Marshal, *Sanctification*, p. 256.

80. Richard Rogers, *Seven Treatises*, pp. 80, 82.

81. Thomas Taylor, *Regula Vitae*, p. 52, quoting Augustine.

82. John Ball, *Of Faith*, p. 44; cf. p. 376.

83. *Gospel-Conversation*, p. 45.

84. Jeremiah Burroughs, *Saints Treasury*, p. 103.

85. Anthony Burgess, *Spiritual Refining*, “Of Grace and Assurance”, p. 63.

86. Anthony Burgess, *op. cit.*, p. 550.

87. *New Covenant*, p. 91.

ments.⁸⁸ Evidence to this effect can be quoted almost indefinitely.⁸⁹

In the New Covenant, empowering grace is associated with the command.⁹⁰ There is life in the Word. "You may shew me much that I ought to do", says Robert Towne, pleading against the use of the Law, "but what is this, if you cannot sweetly incline, and freely enlarge my heart hereunto?"⁹¹ The Puritans gave the answer, "With Gods Word of command there usually goeth forth a secret energy and vertue from him; enabling us to do what he commandeth."⁹² So close is the relation between regeneration and sanctification that "if you have no regard to make the law of Christ your rule by endeavouring to do what is required in the Ten Commandments and to avoid what is there forbidden, it is a very evil sign."⁹³

(ii) *The forgiveness of sins*

The Puritans did not leave their teaching about enabling grace in the form of a merely general statement. They traced it to the new motives springing from the awareness of the forgiveness of sins and taught that sanctification arose from justification.⁹⁴ They frequently drew attention to the Prologue to the Ten Commandments as providing the sufficient motive for the keeping of them. John Dod and Robert Cleaver, in their famous work on the Decalogue, say that God "encourageth us by this, That he is our God, and gives us these commandements for our own benefit, and because he loves us. . . . If ever wee will obey God in soundnes, then we must know him to be our God."⁹⁵ Obedience is not to "God abstractly considered", says James Durham, "but to God as our God."⁹⁶ The experience of God's saving mercy impels to obedience.

Thy justification tells thee, that Christ dwells in thee by faith, and that thy heart is built up to be an habitation of God by the Spirit.⁹⁷

Although Henry Burton refutes the conclusions of the Antinomians, their tenet which he quotes serves to demonstrate the living power of

88. John Preston, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

89. Cf. Thomas Goodwin, *Ephesians*, in *Works*, II. 318; Ezekiel Hopkins, *Practical Christianity*, in *Works*, 678; Francis Roberts, *God's Covenants*, p. 867; Thomas Brooks, *Heaven on Earth*, in *Works*, II. 470; Thomas Blake, *Covenant of God*, p. 15; Constantine Jessop, *Nature of the Covenant of Grace*, 1655, p. 3; Richard Baxter, *Aphorismes*, p. 115.

90. John Owen, *Holy Spirit*, in *Works*, III. 617.

91. *Assertion of Grace*, p. 39.

92. Thomas Gouge, *Principles of Christian Religion*, p. 228.

93. *The Marrow*, p. 157.

94. John Preston, *New Covenant*, p. 350.

95. John Dod and Robert Cleaver, *Ten Commaundements*, p. 17.

96. *Law Unsealed*, p. 16.

97. Thomas Taylor, *Progresse of Saints*, p. 225.

personal faith in Christ, namely, that faith “infallibly inflames the heart with true love, making the true beleever to breake off his former corrupt conversation.”⁹⁸ Richard Sibbes considers that “obedience from a broken heart is the best sacrifice.”⁹⁹ Obedience springs from justification,¹⁰⁰ and it is by virtue of the imputed active obedience of Christ that “we are enabled by him dayly to dye unto sinne, and more and more to live unto righteousnesse of life.”¹⁰¹ Faith emancipates the soul for works, because “liberty from justification by the Law, doth not destroy, but increase and stir up the obligation of, and obedience to the Law.”¹⁰² “We must be reconciled to God, and justified by the Remission of our Sins, and Imputation of Righteousness, before any sincere Obedience to the Law, that we may be enabled for the Practice of it.”¹⁰³

At this place in the discussion of Christian experience the Antinomians come into their own. John Eaton writes of “Gods pardon or forgiveness . . . the joyfull faith whereof sanctifieth us, and makes us . . . to walk to the glory of God in the spirituall meaning of all Gods tenne Commandements zealously.”¹⁰⁴ “The lessening of the glory of our justification extinguisheth the vigour of our sanctification; both hindering our joy, lessening our love, and quenching our zeale. . . . Obedience is not worth a butten, except it be willing and cheerfull for joy of Free Justification, and then it is true sanctification indeed.”¹⁰⁵ The knowledge of justification leads the believer to a sincere hating of sin,¹⁰⁶ and it is the peace and joy of justification which “encreaseth and enflameth the heart” to obedience.¹⁰⁷ Because the believer is justified, he is constrained “to break off from, and to mortifie all sinne, and ungodly conversation; and to walke freely, cheerfully, sincerely, and zealously in all Gods will and commandements . . . which is true sanctification.”¹⁰⁸

Tobias Crisp repels the objection that licentiousness must arise from free justification by showing that grace is an effectual power in the heart.¹⁰⁹ He holds that the knowledge of Christ “oyls the Wheels of our Spirits, and puts them into a nimble frame”,¹¹⁰ in other words, justification gives strength and motive to sanctification. Henry

98. *Law and Gospel Reconciled*, p. 18.

99. *Bowels Opened*, 1639, in *Works*, II. 12.

100. Samuel Bolton, *True Bounds*, p. 96.

101. James Ussher, *Body of Divinitie*, p. 175.

102. John Sedgwick, *Antinomianisme Anatomized*, p. 26.

103. Walter Marshal, *Sanctification*, p. 22.

104. John Eaton, *Honey-combe*, p. 7.

105. John Eaton, op. cit., pp. 142, 145.

106. John Eaton, op. cit., p. 457.

107. John Eaton, *Dangerous Dead Faith*, p. 78.

108. John Eaton, op. cit., pp. 156, 157.

109. *Christ Alone Exalted*, in *Works*, I. 21.

110. Tobias Crisp, op. cit., I. 47.

Denne, similarly, exclaims "we call heaven and earth to record, whether the Gospel do not draw us unto an holy obedience, with as forcible . . . and effectuall cords, than any doctrine whatsoever."¹¹¹

(iii) *The indwelling of Christ*

The power for keeping the Law is Christ Himself, who is the life of every believer.

There is the fulnesse of Christ conveyed into the soul: so that our sanctification is not only from him meritoriously, but efficiently, yea, and in a kinde materially too, for . . . through our union with him there is a kinde of flowing of sanctification from him into us, as the principle of our life. . . . From him as from a fountaine, sanctification flowes into the souls of the Saints: there sanctification comes not so much from their struggling, and endeavours, and vowes, and resolutions, as it comes flowing to them from . . . their union with him.¹¹²

This, of course, is the view of the Antinomians as well as of the Puritans, and there is no greater truth about the Christian life than this. John Saltmarsh says that the "power wherein wee are perfectly mortified, is our union with Christ",¹¹³ and in this view he is supported by his fellow-Antinomian, Henry Denne, who writes, "Christ entring into the soule, shall drive out whatsoever is prophane, and draw up the soule by the cords of love unto new obedience."¹¹⁴

The moral Law is fulfilled by Christ in a two-fold way, "partly in himselfe by perfect obedience thereunto, and making satisfaction for our disobedience; and partly in us, by giving us more power to performe obedience thereunto through faith in him."¹¹⁵ This is brought about by "the work of Godis Spirit by the Word, putting in us the lif of Christ",¹¹⁶ for "Christ coming into the believer, breaks down sinnes dominion, and sets up his own government in the soul, the authority of the Law-giver, the spiritualnesse of the Law."¹¹⁷ Edward Elton interprets the "law of the spirit of life"¹¹⁸ as meaning the power of the life of Christ in the believer,¹¹⁹ and he works out the implication of the marriage relation used by Paul in Romans vii to say that the believer's good works are "child-bearing" to Christ by

111. *Man of Sin Discovered*, p. 5.

112. Jeremiah Burroughs, *Saints Treasury*, p. 46.

113. *Free-Grace*, p. 67.

114. *Grace, Mercy, and Peace*, "Mans Reconciliation to God", 1640, p. 21.

115. William Twisse, *Morality of the Fourth Commandment*, p. 216.

116. Samuel Rutherford, *Catechisme*, Cap. 19, quoted by A. F. Mitchell, *Catechisms*, p. 201.

117. Richard Byfield, *Gospels Glory*, p. 131.

118. Romans viii. 2.

119. *Treatises*: "Triumph of a True Christian", p. 20.

His life in us.¹²⁰ John Crandon writes an Epistle Dedicatory to *Aphorisms Exorized* in which he says,

I hold not forth a maimed Christ to the people, but Christ with all his benefits, in particular to Sanctification no lesse then to Justification. If it be Antinomianism so to reduce all to Christ, and derive all from him, I must undergo the worlds condemnation for Christ's sake.¹²¹

As justification follows from the "Merit" of the "Death and Life of Christ", so sanctification follows from its "Efficacy".¹²² This is the doctrine of the "mystical union" of Christ and believers and is contained within the important Pauline phrase "in Christ."

Walter Marshal entitles his work *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*, because this "great Mystery" lies at its root.

As we are justified by a Righteousness wrought out in Christ, and imputed to us, so we are sanctified by such an holy Frame and Qualifications, as are first wrought out, and compleated in Christ for us, and then imparted to us: And as our natural Corruption was produced originally in the first Adam, and propagated from him to us; so our new Nature and Holiness is first produced in Christ, and derived from him to us, or as it were propagated. . . . Another great Mystery in the Way of Sanctification, is the glorious Manner of our Fellowship with Christ in receiving an holy Frame of Heart from him; it is by our being in Christ, and having Christ himself in us; and that not merely by his universal Presence as he is God, but by such a close Union as that we are one Spirit, and one Flesh with him, which is a Privilege peculiar to those that are truly sanctified. I may well call this a mystical Union, because the Apostle calleth it a great Mystery.¹²³

(iv) *The work of the Holy Spirit*

The renewing of the spiritual powers of the believer is effected by the Holy Spirit Himself.¹²⁴ "The Spirit works in us a principle of spiritual life. . . . From this Fountain springs all those habits of Spiritual grace, which are severally distinguished by the names of Faith, Hope, Love", and "from these habits of grace abiding in us,

120. Edward Elton, *Treatises*: "Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner", p. 36.

121. Op. cit., the epithet "Antinomian" is such a relative term, that Richard Baxter used it of almost all the Puritans who did not echo his Neonomianism.

122. Thomas Edwards, *Baxterianism Barefac'd*, p. 143.

123. Walter Marshal, *Sanctification*, pp. 42-44.

124. Francis Roberts, *God's Covenants*, pp. 1129, 1347; Thomas Taylor, *Regula Vitae*, p. 11.

ordinarily proceed Spiritual motions and operations according to those habits."¹²⁵ The obedience of the Christian follows from holy principles of understanding, which are within the heart.¹²⁶ The Covenant of Grace is "accompanied with the law of the spirit," but this "law of the Spirit" is said by the apostle to be "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus",¹²⁷ because "it works from the spirit of Christ, and conforms us to the life of Christ as our original pattern."¹²⁸ True sanctification is thus "a holie walking in the creature according to the law flowing from that inward principle of puritie stirred up and blowne upon by the Spirit of God",¹²⁹ or as brought about "by a secret and yet sacred blast of the Spirit of God breaking in and blowing where he listeth."¹³⁰ Samuel Slater says that the difference between Law-obedience and Gospel-obedience is that the former is attempted by natural abilities, but the latter is performed in the "strength of a renewing Spirit".¹³¹

D. LOVE FOR THE LAW

It is impossible to read the Psalms and other devotional literature of the Bible without observing the great delight of the saints in the will and Law of God. The Puritans perceived this and saw the connection between it and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit within the heart of the believer. They recognized that it was this inward work of the Holy Spirit which accounted for the believer's new relation to the Law.

(i) *Made "friends"*

It is part of the reconciling work of Christ that believers are made "friends" with the Law,¹³² for "after Christ hes maid agreement betwixt us and the law, we delight to walk in it for the love of Christ."¹³³

Love is "joynd with a care to obey the commandements",¹³⁴ and "in the hearts of believers is the principle ground, motive, and agent that puts them a doing."¹³⁵ The Gospel calls for obedience "in such a sweet and loving way that it would make any heart in the world in

125. Isaac Ambrose, *Prima, Media, & Ultima*, "The Middle Things", pp. 10, 11.

126. Thomas Goodwin, *Gospel Holiness*, in *Works*, VII. 139.

127. Romans viii. 2.

128. Thomas Manton, *Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm*, I. 301.

129. Thomas Wyllie, quoted by A. F. Mitchell, *Catechisms*, p. 259.

130. William Strong, *The Two Covenants*, p. 102.

131. *The Two Covenants* (pages unnumbered).

132. Samuel Rutherford, *Triumph of Faith*, p. 102.

133. Samuel Rutherford, *Catechisme*, quoted by A. F. Mitchell, *Catechisms*, p. 226.

134. Richard Greenham *Grave Counsels*, in *Works*, p. 36.

135. Vavasor Powell, *Christ and Moses*, p. 226; cf. Joseph Caryl, *Nature of Love*, p. 10.

love with it, it draws by the cords of love."¹³⁶ The Puritan writers almost vie with one another in extolling the power of love in the keeping of the commandments. John Preston writes,

Love makes me to do it in that manner as a man that is compelled. . . . So it hath the same effect that compulsion hath, though there be nothing more different from compulsion than love. . . . It is such a change as draws one to serve the Lord out of an inward attractive, . . . so that there is no other spur, no other attractive, but the amiableness of the object.¹³⁷

Love, in turn, is to be measured by obedience, "for indeed love cannot be otherwise judged of than in obeying. . . . Therefore so much diligence in keeping his commands, so much love."¹³⁸

Believers are "more willing and desirous to do what the Lord commands" than before,¹³⁹ and with the gift of faith there comes a "loathing of sin and love to the law."¹⁴⁰ "The doing of Gods Commandments doth follow the Circumcision of the heart."¹⁴¹ The Christian finds that obedience to the Law of God is "sweeter"¹⁴² than in his unregenerate days, because a changed heart makes the ways of God easy;¹⁴³ and, therefore, although the child of God finds some of the commandments difficult, through the weakness of the flesh, "yet he resolveth, and striveth to do what he can, and is much displeas'd and griev'd, if he do not as he should."¹⁴⁴

One of the blessed effects of grace in the heart is the destruction of the power of the Law in its provocation to sin. This implies no change in the Law, but arises from the new attitude of the believer towards it. A sweet ease of soul comes with the writing of the Law within the heart, in that it is not able any longer to provoke to sin.¹⁴⁵ "Our Saviour hath delivered us . . . from the irritation of the lawe, in regard whereof especially it is called the strength of sinne", and being made dead to sin, "we are mortified to the lawe, and the lawe to us in respect of this irritation accidentally caused by our corruption."¹⁴⁶ A caution is expressed by William Strong to the effect that

136. Jeremiah Burroughs, *Saints Treasury*, p. 102.

137. John Preston, *Breastplate of Faith and Love*, "Of Love", p. 29; cf. *Breastplate of Faith and Love*, "Of Faith", p. 180.

138. John Preston, *Breastplate of Faith and Love*, "Of Love", p. 200.

139. *The Marrow*, p. 160.

140. Op. cit., p. 177. Joseph Caryl's Recommendation, 1648, of Part II of *The Marrow* says that "The Commandments of God are Marrow to the Saints".

141. Paul Baynes, *Ephesians*, p. 265.

142. Thomas Goodwin, *Gospel Holiness*, in *Works*, VII. 213.

143. John Preston, *New Covenant*, p. 119.

144. Isaac Ambrose, *Prima, Media, & Ultima*, "The First Things", pp. 44, 45; cf. John Dod and Robert Cleaver, *Ten Commandments*, p. 1.

145. Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 219.

146. George Downname, *Covenant of Grace*, pp. 49, 50, 51.

“so far as there are remainders of sin in the Saints, they are lyable to an Irritation . . . but yet in a far different manner from that which is in unregenerate men.”¹⁴⁷

(ii) *Spontaneous obedience*

Love for God and His Law produces a new naturalness in obedience that amounts almost to spontaneity.

When a mans nature is changed, it must needs be active: for that which is naturall to a man, hee doth without unevennesse . . . he doth it constantly, where there are naturall principles of actions, the actions flow like water from a spring: . . . a man doth it with facility and with desire; it is his meat and drink to doe the will of God.¹⁴⁸

“You have the grace of sanctification to change your hearts, and enable you to every good word and worke, so that you delight in the Law.”¹⁴⁹ “Faith makes the soule active . . . to run in the way of Gods Commandements . . . and . . . cannot run too fast.”¹⁵⁰ Richard Sibbes says that a son does duties “out of nature” and like “water out of a spring”: they are not forced, but they have “a blessed freedom to all duties, an enlargement of heart to duties. God’s people are a voluntary people.”¹⁵¹ He uses the same imagery in *Meditations*, “Good duties come from unsound Christians as fire out of the flint; but they flow from the child of God, as water out of a spring.”¹⁵² The believer discovers that “the Law of God is his Element”;¹⁵³ Christian obedience becomes natural, and is like “fruit brought forth.”¹⁵⁴ It is “cordial and hearty”,¹⁵⁵ being “pleasant”,¹⁵⁶ “delightful”¹⁵⁷ and “sweetest liberty.”¹⁵⁸ “Love makes Law easy”,¹⁵⁹ and “is . . . the spring of sound obedience to Gods Law.”¹⁶⁰ It constrains the child

147. *The Two Covenants*, p. 38.

148. John Preston, *Breastplate of Faith and Love*, “Of Love”, pp. 216, 217.

149. John Preston, *Law out lawed*, p. 1.

150. George Hughes, *Dry Rod Blooming*, p. 103; cf. Jeremiah Burroughs, *Gospel-Conversion*, p. 50; Richard Allen, *Antidote against Heresy*, p. 85.

151. *Excellency of the Gospel*, in *Works*, IV. 221, 231.

152. Richard Sibbes, *Meditations*, in *Works*, VII. p. 190.

153. Francis Roberts, *God’s Covenants*, p. 1381; cf. p. 795.

154. Thomas Goodwin, *Gospel Holiness*, in *Works*, VII. 162, 170 f.

155. Thomas Brooks, *Heaven on Earth*, in *Works*, II. 468; cf. *Glory of Christianity*, in *Works*, IV. 147; Ezekiel Hopkins, *Lord’s Prayer*, 1692, in *Works*, p. 285.

156. John Owen, *Holy Spirit*, in *Works*, III. 621.

157. John Owen, *Gospel Vindicated*, in *Works*, XII. 566; cf. Isaac Ambrose, *Prima, Media, & Ultima*, “The Middle Things”, p. 32; Thomas Manton, *Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm*, I. 313; William Strong, *The Two Covenants*, p. 52.

158. Samuel Rutherford, *Survey*, Part II. p. 122.

159. Samuel Bolton, *True Bounds*, p. 53; cf. p. 93; cf. Walter Cradock, *Gospel-Holiness*, pp. 67–68.

160. John Sedgwick, *Antinomianisme Anatomized*, p. 24.

of God to a joyous and free keeping of the commandments in the "sweet necessity of the new nature."¹⁶¹

The easinesse . . . and lightnesse of the Law of God is not in the proportion of it to our strength: but in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God together with the Communication of the Holy Spirit: which is with all those that love the Law of God.¹⁶²

Through grace the soul is "prepared unto every good worke",¹⁶³ and "the duties both of piety towards God, and charity to our brethren", are "performed with willing mindes and cheerfull hearts."¹⁶⁴ Knowledge with affection makes for understanding in spiritual duties,¹⁶⁵ and the believer finds that they are no more "a tiresome task", but rather that "the yoke of Christ is easie to him, and his burthen light."¹⁶⁶

You have such lively fixed intentions of God, that you can perceive that you do all, even common things, of purpose for his pleasure, will and glory; and that the love of God doth carry you about from duty to duty, and constrain you to it.¹⁶⁷

Obadiah Sedgwick has a wise comment on this spontaneity of the believer's obedience and relates it to the realities of the changes of mood which sometimes characterize the believer's experience.

Cheerfulness or uncheerfulness in the performance of duties, are not infallible symptoms either way. By Cheerfulness I mean the liberty or freedom of the spirits; and by uncheerfulness the sadness, heaviness or dulness of them. . . . There is a difference twixt Affections in Duties, and Cheerfulness in Duties; as much difference as twixt life and lively-hood,¹⁶⁸ twixt burning and flaming. A brand may be red hot, and burn to purpose, and yet not flame at all: so a man may bring living affections to his services, he may present them, and offer them out of the dearest love to God, and truest respect to his honour, who yet may not feel any such sparkling and flaming enlargements of his spirits in the times of disgrace of such services.¹⁶⁹

In no aspect of their religious life have the Puritans been more maligned or misunderstood than in this. It has become popular to

161. Stephen Charnock, *Nature of Regeneration*, in *Works*, III. 111.

162. William Ames, *Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, p. 338.

163. Richard Rogers, *Seven Treatises*, p. 503, on 2 Timothy ii. 21.

164. George Downname, *Covenant of Grace*, pp. 114, 115.

165. Richard Baxter, *Christian Directory*, p. 307.

166. Richard Baxter, *Directions for Weak Christians*, "Confirmed Christian", p. 60.

167. Richard Baxter, *Directions for Weak Christians*, 1669, p. 112.

168. I.e. liveliness.

169. *Anatomy*, p. 243.

describe Puritan sainthood as "sombre and gloomy",¹⁷⁰ and there is no doubt that heart-searching and devout desire for the mortification of sin imparted a seriousness and gravity to life, but these qualities are not to be identified with gloom. The Puritans found, as the Psalmist did, that in keeping of the commandments of God "there is great reward."¹⁷¹

Such spontaneity makes it appear that believers are a law to themselves, and this is what many of the Puritans say, but not in the Antinomian manner.

Hee that is got from under the Law is now a Law to himselfe, that is, he willingly submitteth himselfe to the rule and obedience of the Law: the way to escape the yoake and coercion of the Law is to become a free and cheerfull observer of the Law.¹⁷²

In these words Thomas Taylor carefully shows in what way the phrase "Law to himselfe" is to be understood. Those who are led by the Spirit are not under the Law "as if they needed thereby to be forced to obedience, but they are, as it were, a law unto themselves, willingly performing obedience to that which the law prescribeth."¹⁷³ They respond to the Law "as if there were no law."¹⁷⁴

In this new obedience, the Spirit so oyleth the wheelles of free-will as obedience, in its kinde, is as free, con-naturall, delightfull, being sweetned with the love of God, as if there were not an awing Law, but a sweetly alluring and heart-drawing free love, so that the beleever obeyes with an Angell-like obedience; then the Spirit seemes to exhaust all the commanding awsonnesse of the Law, and supplyes the Lawes imperious power with the strength and power of love; if we suppose there had been no Law commanding Christ absolute obedience, yet if we suppose a meer directing light, without any compelling, to shew him what is good and agreeable to Gods commanding will, so did Christ obey perfectly from a principle of love, and so doth the justified beleever give obedience, though imperfect, yet sincere to what is Gods will.¹⁷⁵

In *Saints Treasury* Jeremiah Burroughs describes his sermon on John viii. 36 as "holding forth . . . The Naturall Mans bondage to the Law, and the Christians liberty by the Gospel",¹⁷⁶ and in the course

170. H. G. Wood, Article "Puritanism", 1918, *ERE*, p. 513.

171. Psalm xix. 11.

172. Thomas Taylor, *Regula Vitae*, p. 14.

173. George Downname, *Justification*, p. 524.

174. William Perkins, *Galatians*, p. 293; cf. Edward Elton, *Treatises: "Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner"*, p. 205.

175. Samuel Rutherford, *Survey*, Part I. p. 318; cf. *Covenant of Life*, p. 62.

176. Jeremiah Burroughs, *Saints Treasury*, p. 87, and title page.

of the sermon he says that as God is now "thy husband", the rigour of the Law is not the same.

Being delivered from the bondage of the law, this is now thy liberty, that thou art made a law to thyself. I meane thus: there is nothing now required of thee but it is written in thy own heart: God writes his law in the tables of stone: and all that is required of thee in obedience to it, is written in thy heart: so that thou doest not now so much yield obedience to the law; because of the condemning power of it, and punishment due unto it, as from a principle of love to it: For we must know, that we are not set free by Christ from obedience to the law, we are bound to obey the law still; but here is the difference, we are not servile to the law, we keep it freely: thou keepest the law now, by being a law to thyself, and having all that God requires of thee in his law written in thy heart, by the law of sanctity that he hath given thee.¹⁷⁷

G. F. Nuttall makes the observation that

Outwardly, the first Quakers were . . . at one with the earlier Puritans in observing, as Baxter admits, "a Life of extream Austerity." But inwardly, the spring is different. . . . Inwardly . . . the early Quakers walked at liberty, as those for whom the law was no longer law, because they loved it.¹⁷⁸

In view of the evidence brought forward in the preceding paragraphs it might, perhaps, be not wrong to ask whether the inward spring really was so "different" and to suggest that the spiritually-minded Puritan and the devout Quaker were much closer to each other than the contrast between the legalistic caricature¹⁷⁹ of the Puritan and the wild extravagances of the Ranters might seem to suggest.¹⁸⁰

The Antinomians agreed with the Puritans on the power of love to sanctify the heart, and Henry Denne adequately represents them when he asks, "What motive to obedience so strong as love? . . . What greater feare then that which proceedeth from love? . . . What greater aggravation of sinne, then to sin against love?"¹⁸¹

A believer walketh according to the rule of the Law; yet it is not by vertue from the Law regulating him, but from another power

177. Op. cit., pp. 100, 101.

178. "Law and Liberty in Puritanism", *Congregational Quarterly*, XXIX, 1, pp. 27, 28.

179. It cannot be denied that there were some legalistically-minded Puritans whose ways justified the Quaker recoil.

180. The *Memoirs*, 1715, of Thomas Halyburton give the experimental illustration of this great Puritan truth; cf. pp. 75-7, 158-62.

181. Henry Denne, *Grace, Mercy, and Peace*, "Gods Reconciliation to Man", 1640, p. 52.

within, renewing and disposing the heart thereunto. He is like the honest Traveller, who keepeth the high way freely of his own accord, and taketh pleasure in so doing.¹⁸²

When Tobias Crisp expounds John viii. 36, he says, "To be called a Libertine, is the gloriousest Title under Heaven; take a Libertine for one that is truly free by Christ."¹⁸³ This may not be the wisest of language, but if correctly understood it is not out of harmony with the Puritan view. John Eaton uses an extravagant expression when he writes, "Christ living in me, I am now dead to the Law, that is He abolisheth the law to me"¹⁸⁴ but a charitable construction of his words leaves no mistake about the idea of freedom which he wishes to convey.

E. LIBERTY IN THE LAW

Believers are freed from the Law in its condemnation,

but from the Commandement, as a rule of life, we are not freed, but contrariwise enclined and disposed, by his free spirit, to the willing obedience thereof. Thus to the regenerate the Law becometh as it were Gospell, even a law of libertie.¹⁸⁵

The liberty of the Christian man is thus a liberty "in the Law" carrying with it subjection to authority and obedience to command. Law is still Law, and the discernment of this truth is crucial to the entire Antinomian controversy.

"Law" is a constant factor in the life of godliness. When Thomas Goodwin comments on Romans viii. 4, he asks why "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" is called a "law". He finds one of the reasons in Psalm xl. 8, where "the inherent holiness of Christ's nature is called a law", from which he says it may be inferred that "His delight to do God's will flowed from the writing of the law in his heart."¹⁸⁶ He means that as the Law was in Christ, so it is in the believer.¹⁸⁷ In a similar manner Richard Sibbes understands "the law of the Spirit of life",¹⁸⁸ to be "the commanding power of the Spirit of Christ, that commands as a law in the hearts of God's people."¹⁸⁹ Edward Elton explains the apostle's phrase "the law of my mind"¹⁹⁰ as a figurative expression for the commanding aspect of

182. Robert Towne, *Re-assertion*, p. 139.

183. *Christ Alone Exalted*, in *Works*, I. 114.

184. *Honey-combe*, p. 443.

185. Samuel Croke, *True Blessednesse*, p. 85.

186. *Mediator*, in *Works*, V. 350.

187. Cf. Thomas Goodwin, *Ephesians*, in *Works*, I. 134.

188. Romans viii. 2.

189. *Excellency of the Gospel*, in *Works*, IV. 222.

190. Romans vii. 23.

sanctifying grace, showing at the same time how truly integrated it is with the mind of the apostle.¹⁹¹ Although the conduct of believers is characterized by the willing sweetness of love, it is “not as if the Law were not a rule to them”,¹⁹² for it is the privilege of believers always to be “subject to the head.”¹⁹³

(i) *Antinomian denial of liberty in the Law*

In their deep-seated antipathy to the Law, the Antinomians denied that the commandment of the Law and the liberty of grace can exist together.

John Eaton contends that if commandments are put before the believer

Wee confound the Old Testament with the new: we bring back the full grown heir to Schoole again to be whipped of his School-master, contrary to the expresse doctrine and direction of the holy Ghost, saying, that after faith is come, wee are no longer under a School-master, Gal. 3. 25. And if wee doe not pull off the wedding-garment over the Brides head; yet wee bring forth rods to whip the Queen, standing at the right hand of the King, in the Vesture of the gold of Ophir, Psalm 45. 9. We doe hinder true Sanctification; and either with legall threats or rewards doe cause but a constrained hireling sanctitie, which is hypocriticall legall holinesse, or else doe cause people to run, though more cautiously, yet the faster, into the iniquities and sinnes so vehemently with legall terrors forbidden.¹⁹⁴

He declares that Law destroys the filial motive and makes sanctification servile, and not from “loving inclination.”¹⁹⁵ In *Dangerous Dead Faith* he complains against “legal arguments” for “a preposterous sanctification, repentance, mortification, . . . holy and righteous walking, universall obedience to all Gods commandements,” with “hope of rewards” and “feare of punishments”, which are “legally extorted, so much the more under termes and titles of the Gospell,”¹⁹⁶ and he holds the “blind zeale of the good workes of the Law to be meer superstitious hypocrisie.”¹⁹⁷

Robert Towne, with his customary inability to follow the straight course of an argument, concedes that the moral Law instructs the

191. *Treatises*: “Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner”, p. 194.

192. Anthony Burgess, *Spiritual Refining*, “Of Grace and Assurance”, p. 239.

193. Thomas Brooks, *Heaven on Earth*, in *Works*, II. 427.

194. *Honey-combe*, pp. 114, 115.

195. *Op. cit.*, p. 143.

196. John Eaton, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-29.

197. *Op. cit.*, p. 48.

believer, but rejects the idea of commandment as inconsistent with his personal liberty.

It cannot be said, that my spirit doth that voluntarily, which the command of the Law bindeth and forceth unto; its one thing for a man at his own free libertie to keep the Kings high way of the Law; and another to be kept in by pales and ditches.¹⁹⁸

(ii) *No infringement of liberty by commandment*

Any suggestion that liberty implies no Law or that Law implies bondage is answered by the Puritans in the spirit of the psalmist who said, "I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts."¹⁹⁹ The liberty of the Christian man suffers no limitation on account of the commandment. There is nothing inconsistent in the doing of a work by commandment and the doing of it freely. An action can be the expression of obedience and also of desire: and the one does not destroy the other. Samuel Bolton asks, "Whether this may consist with our Christian freedom, to be tyed to do dutie because God hath commanded". He answers,

It is no infringement to our Liberty in Christ to be tyed to the performance of dutie: It was the great end of our freedom and redemption that we might serve him. . . . He hath redeemed us from a slavish spirit in service, to a son-like; from a spirit of bondage, to a spirit of liberty.²⁰⁰

John Sedgwick remarks that it is sometimes "a trouble to Christians, that they are not more obedient to the Law, but it never troubled them that they have been obedient to it."²⁰¹

The Spirits joy, and the power of the Law to command, are so farre from opposing one the other, that the Spirit gives testimony of Gods abode in no other but such as confesse and yeeld to this power.²⁰²

So little does Samuel Rutherford think that there is any incongruity between the doing of an action by commandment and the performance of it by love, that he even says, "Law-threatning (when Faith assureth the conscience, of freedom from the wrath to come) and love-perswading are most consistent."²⁰³ The "obliging rule, and govern-

198. Robert Towne, *Assertion of Grace*, p. 137.

199. Psalm cxix. 45.

200. *True Bounds*, pp. 195, 196.

201. *Antinomianisme Anatomized*, p. 33.

202. Thomas Blake, *Covenant of God*, p. 54.

203. *Survey*, Part II. p. 13.

ment of the Law" is in no way "contrary to the sweet cords of Gospel-love, by which the Spirit kindly draweth, and gently leadeth the Saints in the way of Sanctification."²⁰⁴ These two things, he says, are joined together in Christ, "and jarre not as contraries."²⁰⁵ "Grace and condemnation are opposite, but not Grace and the commanding power of the Law."²⁰⁶ The doing of good works "from the principle of the love of Christ constraining us", and "from the Law commanding, or directing us", he says, "are no way contrary, the Regenerate from both Principles are to walke in love and holinesse as Christ did; the Law directing is not abolished by Grace, or by love to Christ."²⁰⁷ "The Law of God, honeyed with the love of Christ, hath a Majestie and power to keep from sin."²⁰⁸ He clinches his argument by means of a comparison with the relation between human freedom and Divine sovereignty.

Looke how wee say the willing free obedience of men consisteth well with the necessity of Gods absolute decree, so sweet delightful freeness of a Gospel-spirit led by God, does well consist with the necessity of an obliging and strongly commanding Law, though the sting of the cursing, and threatening be removed.²⁰⁹

The New Covenant writing of the Law within the believer's heart, creates "a connaturalnesse to the wayes of his Commandements",²¹⁰ by which the believer discovers within himself a "great pronenesse and aptnesse . . . and willingnesse to keepe the Law."²¹¹ God "sets a new Byas upon the soule" so that good works are not done as of necessity or as a task.²¹² The experience of God's saving grace fastens "the power and authority of the Law" upon the believer "together with a disposition to obedience upon the heart, so that the heart shall be no more contrary to it, but sweetly concurring with it."²¹³ By reason of this, the believer "does duty from an ingenuous and free spirit" and not by "legal principles",²¹⁴ and is like the willing slave with a bored ear,²¹⁵ whose obedience is not merely by command, but from love.²¹⁶ William Perkins seems to invite the commandment of the Law and declares, "The more we are bound to obedience, the

204. Samuel Rutherford, op. cit., Part II. p. 68.

205. Ibid.

206. Samuel Rutherford, *Triumph of Faith*, p. 105.

207. Op. cit., p. 104.

208. Op. cit., p. 122.

209. Samuel Rutherford, *Survey*, Part I. p. 319. "Looke how" means "just as".

210. John Preston, *New Covenant*, p. 119.

211. John Preston, op. cit., pp. 430, 431.

212. John Preston, op. cit., p. 432.

213. John Sedgwick, *Antinomianisme Anatomized*, pp. 17, 18.

214. William Strong, *The Two Covenants*, p. 57.

215. Thomas Goodwin, *Mediator*, in *Works*, V. 145.

216. Thomas Goodwin, op. cit., p. 221.

freer we are: because the service of God is not bondage, but perfect libertie."²¹⁷

The Law is kept "evangelically", in a spiritual way and by "Gospel motives",²¹⁸ all of which terms are congruous with the true nature of Law, and "Legal duties" are done "in a Gospel manner."²¹⁹

The precepts of Grace are so sublime, and spiritual, that they must be understood spiritually. . . . That is the reason why a man under Grace is brought into fuller obedience to a freer service than a man under the Law.²²⁰

There is a real liberty in duty, says Thomas Manton, for "why should we account that a bondage which is part of our happiness?"²²¹ "The law in the hands of Christ is a law of liberty",²²² and although the believer's "warrant is the command" his "poise and weight should be love."²²³ John Owen draws many strands of argument together when he equates the "law of the mind" with the "law of grace" and these, in turn, with the "law of God."²²⁴

One of the frequent illustrations used by the Puritans is the comparison with the angels whose subjection to Law is their very liberty.²²⁵ Anthony Burgess quotes the Antinomian saying that "a Beleever is carried by love, he needs no law", and refutes it by means of the examples of the angels, of Adam, of the mother of Moses, and of Christ Himself. He argues that "if it was not a commandement" that was laid upon Christ, it would not be possible to speak of the "obedience of Christ", and infers from this that "to doe a thing out of obedience to a command, because a command, doth not inferre want of love."²²⁶ The author of *The Marrow* suggests that obedience to the Law of Christ is "the middle path" of truth between Legalism and Antinomianism.²²⁷ He maintains that the believer does good works without "compulsion", that is to say, not being slavishly driven to do them by threat or fear. The binding authority of the Law is not destroyed, even when the believer does right "freely of his own accord."²²⁸

217. *Galatians*, p. 357.

218. Francis Roberts, *God's Covenants*, pp. 716, 719, 721.

219. James Durham, *Law Unsealed*, pp. 4, 10.

220. Walter Cradock, *Divine Drops Distilled*, p. 162.

221. *Lord's Prayer*, in *Works*, I. 131.

222. Thomas Manton, *James*, in *Works*, IV. 219; cf. 164, 165; *Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm*, I. 445.

223. Thomas Manton, op. cit., 166.

224. *Indwelling Sin*, in *Works*, VI. 195.

225. Cf. William Perkins, *Galatians*, p. 319; Samuel Rutherford, *Triumph of Faith*, p. 289, and Edward Elton, *Treatises*: "Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner", p. 21.

226. *Vindiciae Legis*, pp. 13, 14.

227. Op. cit., To the Reader, p. 9.

228. *The Marrow*, p. 164.

The Puritans believed that the highest spirituality was to be seen in a life that rejoices to be commanded. They held that, far from involving the believer in legalistic bondage, it gave expression to his desire to please God, from which, as a subjective motive such an obedient life sprang. The spiritual man has such "a true love and liking of the Law of God"²²⁹ that "absence of a delight is a sign of unspirituality."²³⁰ John Preston holds it to be one of the tokens of perfection in a believer "that the principall motive, that which sets him aworke upon all occasions, is some Commandement from God."²³¹ So true is this, that not until a believer is deeply spiritual is he able to "perform his Christian duties aright."²³²

In their 699th session on 4 September, 1646, the Westminster Divines recorded that, it is no "evidence that a man is under the law, and not under grace, when he refrains from evil and doeth good, because the law encourageth to the one and deters from the other", but, rather, it is one of the highest expressions of spirituality, and anything short of this kind of obedience is carnal.²³³

The Puritans needed to defend their position on two sides. On the one hand, they found that the Law was being so abused that sanctification was reduced to morality, or even legalism; and on the other, they met with fellow-Puritans whose attitude to the Law was such as to make it "void" and to dissolve sanctification into emotionalism. Their considered definition is found in the *Confession of Faith*, "The liberty which Christ hath purchased for believers under the gospel, consists in . . . their yielding obedience unto him, not out of slavish fear, but a child-like love, and willing mind."²³⁴ The authors of the *Confession of Faith* indicate that this liberty was "common also to believers under the law", but under the Gospel there are "fuller communications of the free Spirit of God, than believers under the law did ordinarily partake of."²³⁵

The spiritual freedom for which the Puritans contended, and in which so many of them lived, was the great reality of their salvation in Christ. It was at the same time fully consistent with their acknowledgment of the sovereignty of the Law of God.

229. Edward Elton, *Treatises*: "Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner", p. 157.

230. Edward Elton, op. cit., p. 189; cf. Thomas Wilson, *Romanes*, p. 234.

231. *New Covenant*, pp. 290-94; cf. *Breastplate of Faith and Love*, "Of Love", p. 113.

232. *The Marrow*, p. 169.

233. Quoted by A. F. Mitchell and J. Struthers, *Minutes*, p. 274; cf. *Confession of Faith*, XIX. 6.

234. Op. cit., XX. 1.

235. Ibid.

Conclusion

THE PURITAN DOCTRINE: AN ASSESSMENT IN
THE LIGHT OF RECENT CRITICAL STUDIES

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THE PURITAN DOCTRINE: AN ASSESSMENT IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT CRITICAL STUDIES

IN A great many places the present writer's own convictions are so clearly expressed by the Puritans that this concluding chapter wears something of the character of an *Apologia pro Puritanis* and takes the form of a presentation of their views in the context of present-day thinking. It begins with a summary of the material that has been surveyed in the preceding chapters, and then, after a brief glance at the evidence of the re-awakened interest in the subject of the Law of God, attention is drawn to the method of Biblical interpretation which underlies the Puritan doctrine—a method to which, in one of its aspects, modern scholarship is again turning. This is followed by an examination of the ethical principles accepted by the Puritans and it is shown that they were neither Legalists nor Antinomians. The next section brings under review the essentially theological aspect of the Puritan concern for the moral Law, with its theocentric interpretation of life; and the chapter is concluded by an exposition of the soteriological interest which lies at the heart of the Puritan teaching.

Summary of the Puritan doctrine

The material presented in the preceding chapters may be summarized as follows. The Law is the Law of God and is the expression of the Divine majesty. It is based on the Creator-creature relation, for "He that said what we should Be, to him it certainly belongeth to say what we should Do."¹ The Creator exercises His authority over man consistently with the rational and moral nature with which He has endowed him, and expresses His sovereignty in the form of Law. In obedience to this Law man may both glorify his Maker and find his own proper blessedness. Sin is the breaking of the Law of God and is to be estimated not merely by the intrinsic wrongness of the action but "by the offence it containeth against Gods majestie."² The entry of sin into the world brought a dimming of man's knowledge of God's Law and, more significantly still, a complete inability

1. John Barret. See above, p. 48.

2. William Perkins. See above, p. 48.

to fulfil it. One of the uses of the Law in a sinful world is to restrain sin, but on account of man's corrupted nature it frequently has the opposite effect of provoking it. Supremely, and in spite of this "accidental"³ contradiction, the function of the Law of God in relation to sin is to condemn it and to convict the sinner. It is by means of the Law that the Holy Spirit creates in the sinner an awareness of the bondage into which he has been brought by sin and so prepares him for the freedom of the Gospel. The relation of Law to sin makes it impossible to think of the imperfections of the believer as anything other than sin, and the Antinomian opinion that God sees no sin in the believer is to be rejected. Further, the sin which man sees in himself, which is brought to his notice by the Law of God, and which must not be explained away as mere infirmity, is to be acknowledged and confessed, for "when we do that which is . . . forbidden by God, this is more than an Infirmity; . . . 'tis not a weak action, but a wicked one".⁴ The function of the Law of God in relation to sin has a place in the saving purpose of God. In the historical unfolding of the Divine plan of salvation, the Law is given to man a second time, through the ministry of Moses, but this formal promulgation of the Law was not made until God had first declared His purpose of grace. The Law was thus designed by God, not to provide the sinner with a means of self-justification, but to be a means of grace. Any legalistic attitude to Law-keeping, therefore, is utterly incompatible with the Divine purpose in the giving of the Law and is itself an offence against the Law. If there is any contrariety between the Law and the Gospel, it is "not in themselves, but in the ignorance, pride and hardnesse of heart of them, who . . . did pervert the right end of the Law."⁵ The Covenant of Grace began to be revealed in the Garden of Eden at the moment of man's fall, and it is one and the same throughout both the old and the new dispensations. This continuity of grace requires that the Bible shall be expounded as one book, and, therefore, "a proof out of the old Testament is as much Gospel if rightly applied, as any in the New-Testament."⁶ The saving purpose of the Law has found its fulfilment in Christ who, by His work of redemption, has become "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth".⁷ This relation between the work of Christ and the Law of God, however, does not mean the abrogation of the Law. Given to man at his creation, the Law lies at the basis of all God's relations with him, but is itself to be distinguished from them. For this reason the concepts of "law" and "covenant" are not to be confounded.

3. Samuel Rutherford. See above, p. 81.

4. Thomas Cole. See above, p. 103.

5. John Ball. See above, p. 131.

6. Richard Byfield. See above, p. 121.

7. Romans x. 4.

God's covenants may change, but the same constant Law is to be honoured throughout. That there should be any abrogation of the Law on account of the Fall is inconceivable. "We are no more discharged of our duties, because we have no strength to doe it: then a debtor is quitted of his Bands because he wants money to make payment."⁸ It is likewise unthinkable that the Law should be abrogated by grace, for "when God became a Saviour to the Elect of mankind, he did not cease to be a Sovereign."⁹ This being so, the continuance of moral obligation follows as a necessary corollary, and, far from being reduced by God's grace, the obligation to obey the Law of God is increased. Furthermore, the Law is to be obeyed, not merely by the performance of the things laid down by it, but by the doing of them because they are so laid down. "Our obedience must be . . . because he commands us",¹⁰ and no amount of doing of what is commanded is "to be reputed godliness, except man therein hath reall reference unto God."¹¹ Believers are still "in the law to Christ",¹² and their obedience or disobedience to the Law provides the basis of God's approval or disapproval of them as His children. Obedience to Law, however, does not mean that the believer is justified by his evangelical works. The Neonomian doctrine of justification by obedience of this kind is but a refined form of legalism and is contrary both to the glory of Christ and the grace of the Gospel. Nevertheless, the believer should be able to give evidence of his justification, and this is to be found in his good works, for without these he is not fulfilling the purpose of his salvation. Neonomianism on the one hand and Antinomianism on the other must be equally firmly rejected. The obedience of the believer establishes the Law in respect of its Divine purpose, for it is not "all one to the Law, whether the debt of obedience, or the debt of punishment were paid";¹³ and despite the imperfections which mar even his best obedience, this is acceptable to God through the merits of Christ. There is no loss of spiritual liberty in Law-keeping. The obedience of the Christian man is the result of the Law in the heart and is the very antithesis of legalism. By the effectual working of the Holy Spirit the believer is emancipated from the tyranny of sin and made truly free for the keeping of the Law. He has become "friends"¹⁴ with the Law in such a way that in keeping the commandments he finds his widest liberty.

These Puritan convictions, couched in seventeenth-century

8. William Pemble. See above, p. 152.

9. Thomas Blake. See above, p. 156.

10. Richard Sibbes. See above, p. 182.

11. John Ball. See above, p. 183.

12. 1 Corinthians ix. 21.

13. Anthony Burgess. See above, p. 217.

14. Samuel Rutherford. See above, p. 238.

language as they were, and formulated in the theological patterns of their day, are remarkably relevant to modern thinking. It is significant, for example, that the World Council of Churches decided that the third of its Ecumenical Biblical Studies held at Treysa (Germany) in August 1950, should be directed to an examination of *The Biblical Doctrine of Justice and Law*,¹⁵ and they described their studies as an attempt to contribute to the solution of "one of the most pressing modern problems".¹⁶ Previous to the World Council Study Group at Treysa, a similar but less formal conference was held, extending over several years, at St Deiniol's Library, Hawarden. The results of this conference were published in a booklet entitled, *Natural Law, a Christian Reconsideration*.¹⁷ Contemporary with this earlier conference there appeared an outstanding, though small, book on the subject by A. R. Vidler, bearing the title, *Christ's Strange Work*, a volume which was chosen as the Bishop of London's Lent Book for 1944. The renewed interest in the study of the Law of God is also reflected in the considerable number of books which have appeared in recent times.¹⁸

One important result of these studies has been the emancipation of the concept of natural Law from its captivity to the empirical sciences¹⁹ and its reinstatement within the realm of moral studies. Such a reinstatement, however, opens up questions that have been long silenced, and makes it necessary once again to endeavour to press behind ethical phenomena to their source in God the Creator.²⁰ This, in turn, provokes the further inquiry into the relation of natural Law to revealed Law, and, in particular, to the Law of the Ten Commandments. Questions of this kind thus carry the inquiry directly into the area of thought occupied by the Puritans and justify a renewed study of their writings.

A critical assessment of the Puritan doctrine may be made from

15. This is the title of the 200-page report edited by H. H. Schrey, H. H. Walz and W. A. Whitehouse.

16. Op. cit., Preface.

17. Edited by A. R. Vidler and W. A. Whitehouse, 1946.

18. Noteworthy among these are *The Ten Commandments in the 20th century*, J. Drewett, 1941; *The Catholic Conception of the Law of Nature*, J. Dalby, 1943; *Justice and the Social Order*, E. Brunner, Eng. trans. 1945; *Natural Law in the Bible*, and *Gospel and Law*, C. H. Dodd, 1946 and 1950; *The New Testament Basis of Moral Theology*, F. D. Coggan, 1948; *The Ten Words*, S. Myers, 1956, written "to re-assert the unchanging worth of this part of the Biblical revelation as the Great Charter of human well-being"; *The Revelation of Law in Scripture*, P. Fairbairn, reprinted in 1957; *The Ten Commandments and Modern Man*, H. G. G. Herklots, 1958; *The Theological Foundation of Law*, J. Ellul, 1946, Eng. trans. 1961; *Creation and Law*, G. Wingren, Eng. trans., 1961; and *Law and Gospel*, W. Andersen, 1961.

See A. R. Vidler and W. A. Whitehouse, *Natural Law*, p. 15.

But see W. G. Maclagan, *The Theological Frontier of Ethics*, 1961.

four points of view: its Biblical method; its ethical principles; its theological foundation; and its soteriological interest.

A. ITS BIBLICAL METHOD

It would be tedious and unnecessary to attempt to give Scripture proof for the *minutiae* of Puritan doctrine, partly because the Puritans do this themselves, and partly because any passages of disputed meaning have been discussed already in their appropriate place. There is no little significance, however, in the principles of interpretation by which the Puritan exegesis was governed, and these are worthy of examination.

The Puritans regarded the Bible as a whole and taught the fundamental unity of the Old and New Testaments. It is true, as many have pointed out, that some of their detailed expositions suffered from a defect in historical perspective and were based upon a kind of mathematical unity rather than a teleological one. It is also true that proof-texts were frequently cited by them as if every verse of Scripture were of universal validity irrespective of considerations of time and place. But these familiar criticisms of the expository methods of the Puritans leave their main principle of Biblical unity unaffected. Governed by this principle, they were able to give full value to the concept of fulfilment, and, being perfectly at home with what W. J. Phythian-Adams calls the principle of "homology",²¹ they found no difficulty in understanding the New Testament statements which spoke of the blessings of the second Covenant in terms of the first.

This conviction about the Bible put the Puritans in a strong theological position, and they convincingly developed the doctrinal implications of their view.²²

They worked out the conception of Biblical unity in a number of important theological directions. Of these, one of the most significant was that of the unity of the covenants,²³ and from this truth two others emerged as corollaries. They were not unaware of the difference between the covenants, and taught that underlying this diversity of administration there was the unity of grace. What were known in Scripture as the old and new covenants were in reality the first and second dispensations of the one Covenant of Grace. Absence of sufficient attention to the differences of administration in the two dispensations led the Puritans into a difference of judgment among themselves about the doctrine of the Church and Sacraments, but

21. *The Way of At-one-ment*, 1944, p. 11.

22. Cf. J. I. Packer, "The Puritans as Interpreters of Scripture", in *A Goodly Heritage*, 1958, pp. 18-26.

23. See above, Chapter III.

their clear understanding of the principle of grace that bound the dispensations into a unity provided them with strong foundations for the construction of their doctrinal system. Two important corollaries followed upon the unity of the covenants, the first of which was the unity of the covenant people. The Puritans saw the people of God—God's elect—as one holy community throughout both the dispensations of the Covenant of Grace. The second corollary was the perpetual validity of the moral Law, with all the theological implications of this which the Puritans expounded.

During the nineteenth century, and in the early part of the twentieth, the prevailing method of Biblical interpretation tended to be analytical in style. There were some exceptions to this, and appreciation of the theological unity of the Old and New Testaments is found in such Old Testament scholars as E. W. Hengstenberg,²⁴ J. H. Kurtz,²⁵ G. F. Oehler,²⁶ H. Schultz,²⁷ A. B. Davidson,²⁸ and others.²⁹ The two Testaments were kept widely apart, and the individual books were studied almost as isolated productions. The analysis was carried even farther by some scholars and penetrated to the dividing up of the books themselves. But this analytical habit of the past hundred years has steadily given place to a method which seeks again to interpret the Bible in its wholeness and to stress the essential unity that underlies all the parts of Divine revelation.³⁰ It is now one of the generally agreed principles that "the two testaments are to be interpreted in relation to one another".³¹ This recovered concept of the unity of the Bible, however, is not a mere return to a static view of revelation, nor does it throw away the valuable insights gained by a historical approach to the Scripture.³² It conserves the gains of recent

24. *Christology of the Old Testament*, 1829, Eng. trans. 1858; *History of the Kingdom of God under the Old Testament*, 1869, Eng. trans. 1871, especially I. 10-21.

25. *History of the Old Covenant*, 1853, Eng. trans. 1859, pp. 1-16.

26. *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1873, Eng. trans. 1892, I. 37-67.

27. *Old Testament Theology*, 1892, Eng. trans. 1909, I. 51-60.

28. *The Theology of the Old Testament*, pp. 1-11.

29. See the survey made by J. C. J. Waite, *The Activity of the Holy Spirit within the Old Testament Period*, 1961, pp. 4-8.

30. Cf. A. Richardson, *Preface to Bible Study*, 1943, pp. 63-74; A. R. Vidler, *Christ's Strange Work*, pp. 1, 5, 58; W. J. Phythian-Adams, *The Way of At-one-ment*, pp. 9-26; R. V. G. Tasker, *The Old Testament in the New Testament*, 1946, pp. 9-13; W. Vischer, *The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ*, 1936, Eng. trans. 1949; pp. 7-34; H. H. Rowley, *The Unity of the Bible*, 1953, pp. 1-29; H. H. Schrey, H. H. Walz, W. A. Whitehouse, *The Biblical Doctrine of Justice and Law*, pp. 46, 47; G. Wingren, *Creation and Law*, pp. 7, 9, 15, 17, 28, 29, 84n, 128; E. Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1955, Eng. trans. 1958, pp. 11-26; Th. G. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, 1949, Eng. trans. 1958, pp. 2-126; G. A. F. Knight, *A Christian Theology of the Old Testament*, 1959. Apart from the striking title, see also pp. 7-11, 349-58.

31. J. D. Wood, *The Interpretation of the Bible*, 1958, p. 169.

32. Cf. A. G. Hebert, *The Throne of David*, 1941, p. 32.

Biblical study, but at the same time it retrieves the losses and recovers the message of the Bible as a theological whole.³³ That there have been serious losses during some of the periods of Old Testament study there can be no doubt. The excessive analysis undertaken by some schools of thought, and the "dispensationalism" of others,³⁴ have led not only to a general fragmentation of Christian doctrine, but more particularly to the depreciation of the Law of God and the denial of its place in Christian life.

A healthier theological situation is now being restored, however, and the thinking of the present day reveals an approximation to each other of the hermeneutical principles of the seventeenth century and the twentieth. This new circumstance provides the Puritans and the moderns with a meeting place for mutual understanding, and calls for a respectful attitude to the theological views of the Puritans.

B. ITS ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

"What is the chief end of man?" This is the first question which the Puritans put to their young catechumens, and the answer to it determines the ethical principles of Puritanism. "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever."³⁵ This immediately disqualifies such concepts of ethics as hedonism, self-realization and other similar naturalistic theories. The Puritans did not regard man as an end in himself, and rejected all views of the moral life that detracted from the majesty of the Law of God. Their conception of the moral life was far removed from that which sees it merely as "a harmonious development of natural powers guided by the idea of happiness": instead, it was a conception that saw it to be "a life of discipline and subordination to an authoritative law."³⁶

With the passing of the centuries, the Puritan doctrine has become increasingly neglected, and modern trends in ethical thought reveal a drift towards a point of view totally different from that of authoritative command. T. C. Hall speaks of the "sense of inner compulsion" which is everywhere "becoming the regulative principle of human society, displacing in the moral man outward law, and giving the sense of new freedom."³⁷

(i) Legalism

One of the most fashionable misrepresentations of Puritanism has been to identify it with legalism—a term which is seldom used

33. It is for this reason that J. D. Wood calls it a "theological interpretation", *op. cit.*, p. 166.

34. Cf. O. T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*, 1945, pp. 16-54.

35. *Shorter Catechism*, Q. 1.

36. N. Wilde, Article "Moral Law", *ERE*, VIII. p. 833.

37. T. C. Hall, Article "Moral Obligation", *ERE*, VIII. p. 835.

accurately. The Oxford Dictionary defines its theological meaning as "adherence to the Law as opposed to the Gospel; the doctrine of justification by works, or teaching which savours of it." The Puritans sometimes described this attitude of mind as being "of the Works of the Law". Thomas Bedford uses this phrase and asks the question:

But what is it to be of the Works of the Law? Is it to take directions from the Law for our ways and walking? Is it to yield obedience to the Law? No: It is to seek Justification and Salvation by the merits of works done in obedience to the Law.³⁸

The essence of the current controversy about the alleged legalism of the Puritans is found in this distinction which Thomas Bedford draws and which so many modern writers seem not to perceive.

A perusal of recent books on Christian ethics reveals no little evidence of an inability to distinguish between Law and legalism, between what is "legal" and what is "legalistic". Why must obedience always be deprecated as "blind"?³⁹ Why must T. W. Manson speak of "cast-iron Law" when describing the Law of the Old Testament?⁴⁰ Why must the phrase "Law and Legalism"⁴¹ meet the reader everywhere he turns, as if Law could not exist without legalism? Christ undoubtedly "undermined legalism", as S. Cave affirms,⁴² but He did not thereby undermine the Law. This author seems to think that to use such a phrase as "a legal conception of God"⁴³ is sufficient to silence all further argument, but the expression needs definition before it can be effectually employed. It is easy enough to become indignant about "the tyranny of legalism"⁴⁴ and to proclaim Paul's "radical breach with legalism",⁴⁵ about which nobody disagrees, but what support does this give to the opinion that the Law is no longer a valid expression of man's relation to God?⁴⁶ It requires a great amount of reading of alien ideas into Paul's words to believe that he ever thought of the Law as among the "antagonists" of man and "severed from God".⁴⁷ This is an outstanding example of the contemporary confusion between the concepts of law and legalism.⁴⁸ "Legalism" is an "antagonist" and a "tyrant", but not Law. J. Fletcher makes a pungent remark exposing this superficial identifica-

38. *An Examination*, p. 13.

39. Cf. W. Lillie, *The Law of Christ*, p. 25.

40. *Ethics and the Gospel*, 1960, p. 66. In this expression he is not merely alluding to the pharisaical abuse of the Law but reflects back on the law itself.

41. S. Cave, *The Gospel of St. Paul*, 1928, p. 132.

42. *The Doctrines of the Christian Faith*, 1931, p. 66n.

43. *Op. cit.*, p. 75.

44. *Op. cit.*, p. 131.

45. *Op. cit.*, p. 133.

46. *Op. cit.*, p. 129.

47. Cf. *The Gospel of St. Paul*, p. 130, The "hypostasization" seems to be overdone.

48. Cf. J. S. Stewart, *A Man in Christ*, 1935, pp. 113, 291, 292.

tion of "legal" and "legalistic" when he says, "Pharisees are no more truly legal than antinomians are truly evangelical."⁴⁹

Once "legalism" is distinguished from "law", it can be seen for what it really is. It is the abuse of the Law as a means of obtaining a meritorious standing before God; it is the use of the Law "as pharisaically conceived",⁵⁰ and an employment of it in its outward form without regard to its inward demands.⁵¹ That the natural man has an inclination to legalism no one can doubt. He "is always prone to conceive his relation to God in terms of law" and to "turn his obedience into a yoke of bondage".⁵² He thinks that the Law can "be tamed and used as a means to self-justification",⁵³ and, having adopted a legalistic attitude, he defends himself in it by an appeal to the negative form of the Decalogue.⁵⁴

The temptation to take a legalistic view of life is an ever-present danger and may not be ignored in any assessment of the present situation within the Christian Church. It is impossible, however, to charge the Puritans with legalism. Such a way of thinking does not enter at all into their system of doctrine, and it was as firmly deprecated by the Puritans in the seventeenth century as by other writers in the twentieth. Any criticism of Puritanism which is based upon its alleged "legalism" must, therefore, be dismissed as uninformed. The "legalism" of Puritanism is a "bogey" constructed by prejudiced imagination from the popular caricature of the God-fearing Puritan and from ignorance of what he taught.⁵⁵ The words of E. Brunner, "We are not Antinomians because we do not wish to be legalists",⁵⁶ could be equally well reversed and put into the lips of the Puritans who would say, "We are not legalists because we do not wish to be Antinomians."

The Puritans were not legalists.

49. *Second Check*, in *Works*, I. 338.

50. A. B. Bruce, *St Paul's Conception of Christianity*, 1894, p. 300; cf. 296-298.

51. P. Fairbairn, *Law in Scripture*, pp. 370-76; cf. G. S. Hendry, *The Westminster Confession for Today*, p. 139; C. A. A. Scott, *Christianity according to St. Paul*, p. 38 f.; A. R. Vidler, *Christ's Strange Work*, p. 39; J. S. Stewart, *A Man in Christ*, pp. 84, 85, 88.

52. C. A. A. Scott, *op. cit.*, pp. 41, 45.

53. H. H. Schrey, H. H. Walz, W. A. Whitehouse, *The Biblical Doctrine of Justice and Law*, p. 89.

54. L. H. Marshall, *The Challenge of New Testament Ethics*, 1946, p. 44; cf. p. 73.

55. J. Marlowe, who says, "Ultimately, the Puritan has only remained a Christian to the extent of his abandonment of Puritanism", *The Puritan Tradition in English Life*, 1956, p. 140, produces a bibliography at the end of his book in which not one single Puritan work is named! Similarly, C. E. Simcox, in an otherwise constructive book on *Living the Ten Commandments*, falls into the same snare when treating of the Sabbath. The only way he seems able to express his own views is to flay the Puritans and to group them with the Pharisees, but, again, not with a shred of evidence. *Op. cit.*, 1957, pp. 56-66.

56. *Divine Imperative*, p. 138.

(ii) *Antinomianism*

The reason why Puritanism is decried by many modern writers is that they themselves are Antinomians in some sort. W. Haller shrewdly remarks, "Perhaps the desire of later generations to escape from Puritanism has been at least in part a desire to do business with less hindrance from a scheme of life so insistent upon keeping the individual forever in mind of his moral responsibilities."⁵⁷ The arguments presented by the Antinomians today are much the same as those presented by John Eaton, John Saltmarsh and Robert Towne in theirs, and it is assumed that Law and love are so contradictory that where one is the other cannot be. M. Burrows, for example, considers that "the Christian is free from the law precisely because he is ruled by the spirit of love and therefore needs no law."⁵⁸ The general Antinomian opinion of the present day is that Law is superfluous to the good, and so the moral imperatives of Jesus are not to be thought of as "laws".⁵⁹ Love, therefore, is thought to take the place of Law in Christian life, and it is the opinion of many that "if we really try to love our neighbour, we shall automatically keep all the Commandments."⁶⁰

This exaltation of love as the comprehensive ethical standard is usually supported by the contention that the Gospel contains inspiring principles of conduct, but no laws or rules. The Christian life is thus considered to be an "adventurous quest",⁶¹ or an "ethical achievement",⁶² both of which descriptions seem to merit E. Brunner's caustic criticism of them as "antinomian Vitalism".⁶³ T. W. Manson holds that Jesus gave principles, not laws: and that what Jesus offers in His ethical teaching is "not a set of rules of conduct, but a number of illustrations of the way in which a transformed character will express itself in conduct."⁶⁴ Others regard the ethical teaching of Jesus as no more than the announcement of a mere "practical possibility."⁶⁵ R. Niebuhr expresses a completely Antinomian sentiment when he says that "Orthodox Christianity . . . cannot come to

57. *Rise of Puritanism*, p. 119. See the forceful article by R. W. Dale, "The Old Antinomianism and the New", *Congregational Review*, 1887, I. pp. 11-18.

58. *An Outline of Biblical Theology*, 1946, p. 160.

59. L. H. Marshall, *The Challenge of New Testament Ethics*, p. 101; cf. H. A. A. Kennedy, *The Theology of the Epistles*, 1919, p. 241.

60. J. Drewett, *The Ten Commandments in the 20th Century*, p. 12.

61. W. Lillie, *The Law of Christ*, p. 18.

62. L. H. Marshall, *The Challenge of New Testament Ethics*, p. 69.

63. *Divine Imperative*, p. 74. It should be observed, however, that in this comment he is attacking not so much the "Antinomianism" as the "Vitalism", for he himself is as Antinomian as those whom he criticises. Cf. the judgment of R. A. Gessert in "The Integrity of Faith", *SJT*, XIII. pp. 254, 255; and N. H. G. Robinson, *Christ and Conscience*, pp. 22, 23, 72, 88, 102.

64. *The Teaching of Jesus*, 1931, p. 301; cf. L. H. Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. 99; Olaf Moe, Article, "Commandment", 1915, *DAC*, I. 233.

65. H. H. Schrey, H. H. Walz, W. A. Whitehouse, *op. cit.*, p. 102

the aid of modern man . . . because its morality is expressed in dogmatic and authoritarian moral codes."⁶⁶

Support for the view that the "Law" of God now continues as an inward "principle" is derived in part from the fact that νόμος also means principle, but whether this meaning can be established in the New Testament is open to doubt. C. H. Dodd,⁶⁷ recognizes some element of the authoritative in "the law of Christ", and he demonstrates this in *ENNOMOS XPISTOY*,⁶⁸ but his conclusion seems to be in favour of the idea of a potent spiritual principle to which Christ's example gives the direction and quality.⁶⁹

All these were old and familiar arguments to the Puritans, and the main body of this thesis has shown how they dealt with them. The Puritans saw that Antinomianism—in all its guises—was as dangerous as legalism, and so they stood for the continuance of the Law and the obligation of the Christian believer to keep it.

The Puritans were not Antinomians.

A. R. Vidler remarks that "The Church on earth has always, as it were, to walk on the razor edge between legalism and antinomianism, between taking the Law too seriously and not taking it seriously enough. It is not surprising that every Church tends to err in one direction or the other".⁷⁰ The Puritans walked this middle path and rendered a service to the Christian doctrine of sanctification which cannot be over-estimated. They rejected Antinomianism as firmly as they repudiated Legalism, and their exposition of evangelical Law-keeping remains today as a bulwark against the naturalistic Antinomianism of liberalism, the dispensationalist Antinomianism of certain schools of orthodoxy, the evangelical Antinomianism of holiness movements, and the supernatural Antinomianism of neo-orthodoxy. In all this resistance against Antinomianism the Puritans contended, in the words of an immediately post-Puritan Scottish preacher, Ralph Erskine, that

When once the fiery Law of God
Has chas'd me to the Gospel road;
Then back unto the holy law
Most kindly Gospel-grace will draw.⁷¹

66. *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, 1956, p. 14.

67. Other writers, also, such as W. Lillie, C. A. A. Scott, and L. H. Marshall.

68. In *Studia Paulina*, pp. 96-110.

69. *Gospel and Law*, 1950, pp. 71-73. C. E. Simcox makes an endeavour to draw the principle of love into proximity to the Commandment of God by saying, "If we love God rightly, we may do as we please; and we shall be pleased to do only that which is pleasing in His sight," *Living the Ten Commandments*, p. 23; but even this does not come up fully to the level of living under Divine authority. Law must be subsumed under love but not submerged by it.

70. *Christ's Strange Work*, p. 53.

71. *Gospel Sonnets* 1720 in *Works*, X. 270.

C. ITS THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

The Puritans emphasized the God-relatedness of human life and the moral obligations resulting from man's creation by God. They held that the obligation to obey derived from the creature-Creator relation, and that the right to command arose from the Creator-creature relation. On this ground, therefore, they maintained that the obligation to obedience and the right to command remained undiminished either by the Fall or through the intervention of grace.

This truth has recently been ably discussed by G. Wingren in *Creation and Law*, and he expounds what is distinctively the Puritan position in this respect as opposed to that of neo-orthodoxy. The Puritans related man's obligation under Law to his creatureliness, and, as G. Wingren would put it, they thought within the framework, "Law and Gospel", rather than "Gospel and Law."⁷² The arguments of this Swedish scholar were anticipated by a few years in the discussions reported in *The Biblical Doctrine of Justice and Law*. The question then raised was: "Is the foundation of Christian ethics, and therefore of the Christian doctrine of law, to be found in the biblical message of the Lordship of Christ, as Karl Barth and others maintain? Or is it rather to be sought in the biblical doctrine of God's work as Creator and Preserver of his world through the law? Lutheran theologians such as Nygren and Aulén maintained this second position in opposition to Barth's Christological one."⁷³ This protest against the neo-orthodox formula "Gospel and Law" is not a denial that in the history of redemption the Covenant of Grace ante-dated the Sinaitic Law, but it draws attention to the priority of man's creature relation to God over his "new-creature" relation. There cannot be any fundamental difference between "natural" and "Christian" ethics. "Indeed", says G. Wingren, "to raise this question means that we have failed to think of God as the One who acts in the universe and whose dealings with humanity will culminate in His Judgment of the whole world on the last day."⁷⁴ It is still the "old commandment" that lies upon the Christian believer, for "when the Gospel is proclaimed together with the Law in preaching, the hearer resumes an obedience to a demand which he has continually defied."⁷⁵ It is by His Law and its accompanying sanctions that "*God continues to be God and to rule His Creation*",⁷⁶ and "any attempt to

72. "If, with Barth, we change law and Gospel into 'Gospel and law'—in that order—something of the Bible's own content disappears." G. Wingren, *The Living Word*, 1949, p. 148n. Cf. *Creation and Law*, p. 66.

73. *Op. cit.*, pp. 38, 39.

74. *Creation and Law*, p. 57.

75. G. Wingren, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

76. *Op. cit.*, p. 66 (italics his).

eliminate God's dealings with the world through the Law will come into conflict with scripture itself, which assumes this very fact."⁷⁷

The Puritans identified this Creation-Law with the Decalogue and based their teaching not on any undefined demand remaining vaguely in man's fallen nature, but on the plain terms of the revealed Law of God given by the hand of Moses.⁷⁸ G. Wingren affirms that it was "their correspondence to the natural law" which constituted the positive value of certain of the Old Testament commandments, for "if we reject the concept of a natural law, then the Law of the Old Testament becomes an insoluble problem. The problem of the multitude of Old Testament regulations can be simplified only by starting with the concept of an unrecognized demand which is operative in human life itself and experienced by all men."⁷⁹ The "unrecognized demand", or the Law of conscience as it has more customarily been called, reveals itself to be at one with the Mosaic, and this is the generally-understood meaning of Paul's words in Romans ii. 13-15.⁸⁰

It is noticeable in some recent works that there is a return to a more theological view of ethics. C. J. Barker, for example, writes: "No ethics that are not religious can be finally satisfying. . . . They cannot give the final ground of their own precepts, nor answer the questions to which they inevitably give rise."⁸¹ The commandments "are addressed by a personal Being to personal beings", says A. R. Vidler,⁸² and God's will confronts men "as a demand."⁸³ This is a recognition

77. Op. cit., p. 67.

78. It is repeatedly remarked by writers on the Law of God that *tôrâh* is not to be identified with commanding law, but that it stands for the Covenant instructions given by God to His people. In his examination of the Greek words for law, C. H. Dodd gives his opinion that *tôrâh* is so closely represented by *vómos* that it is almost identical with it. He points out that *διδάχη* is never used to stand for *tôrâh*, and although in one sense *vómos* is a misleading translation of *tôrâh* it sheds light on what *tôrâh* became for Hellenistic Judaism. *The Bible and the Greeks*, 1935, p. 33; cf. pp. 25-41. It may be added that perhaps the association was even closer, and in its forms of *mitsvâh*, *chôq* and *mishpât* the *tôrâh* truly was *vómos*. T. W. Manson reiterates the inadequacy of the translation of the word *tôrâh* by "law" but says that one aspect of God's sufficiency to His people as their king "consists in his being the final authority on matters of right and wrong" and that this authoritative direction is embodied in the *tôrâh*. He contends that although "the idea that underlies the word *Torah* is not primarily the formulation of a series of categorical commands and prohibitions", this may be accepted as "part of its meaning." *Ethics and the Gospel*, pp. 28, 29. The impression gained from many of the discussions of *tôrâh* and *vómos* is that the concessions made to the customary idea of Law are sufficiently great to regard the theological difference of the words as negligible. The Puritans understood the difference between *tôrâh* and *vómos* well enough (see chapter III) but did not consider that it detracted from their arguments in the slightest degree.

79. *Creation and Law*, p. 124.

80. Cf. Chapter I, above, and P. Fairbairn, *Law in Scripture*, pp. 405-408.

81. *The Way of Life*, 1946, p. 13.

82. *Christ's Strange Work*, p. 7.

83. Op. cit., p. 24.

that the dimly-perceived "I ought" of natural morality is not displaced by the revelation of God, but is overshadowed by the "Thou shalt" of the Divine imperative.⁸⁴ A. L. Williams, who considers "the law of Christ" to be not a series of commands, but subjection to a Person, remarks nevertheless that "of course, in one sense, moral obligation to a Person is the highest Law of all."⁸⁵ T. W. Manson likewise points out that in the Old Testament "the last ground of moral obligation is the command of God."⁸⁶ He goes on to show that the Jews revered the Law in this manner, and that by the use of the term *kawwānāh* they indicated "the doing of God's commandments just because they are his commandments and with a view to pleasing him."⁸⁷ To this extent there was more reverence in the heart of the devout Jew than in the antinomian type of Christian. In opposition to the subjectivism of humanistic ethics, C. H. Dodd writes, "Paul certainly did not mean to say that there is no law for the Christian except his own 'inner light'. . . . It is, indeed, difficult to maintain, in face of the New Testament, the once-popular view that Christianity is a 'religion of the spirit' in a sense which contrasts it with 'religions of authority'. Its basic postulate is the Kingdom of God; and a kingdom implies authority. . . . Clearly, then, it would be a mistake to think that the difference between the 'administration of the written word' and the 'administration of the spirit' is precisely that between objective and subjective ethical standards, or between authority and freedom. . . . The law of the new covenant . . . is aboriginal. It is the law of our creation, and its field of application is as wide as the creation itself."⁸⁸ All the while that a subjective or humanistic standard is accepted, there will be inadequate conceptions of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. T. W. Manson expresses this when he writes: "It is this ethic of self-realization which leads to the explicit or implied corollary that wrong-doing is most harmful to the wrong-doer. So

84. Cf. N. H. G. Robinson, *Christ and Conscience*, p. 76. Cf. R. W. Dale who writes, "What conscience requires is the strong support of a Supreme Personal Will, enforcing righteousness; and where the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the apostles is frankly received this support is given. Men are not left to order their life according to an ideal law, the ideal law is expressed and asserted in the Will of the Personal God; and to keep the law men have to obey Him." "The Old Antinomianism and the New", op. cit., p. 16.

85. *Galatians*, 1910, p. 131.

86. *Ethics and the Gospel*, p. 19; cf. H. Schultz, *Old Testament Theology*, I. 214; W. S. Bruce, *The Ethics of the Old Testament*, 1909, pp. 24, 25.

87. Op. cit., p. 43. G. F. Moore, in *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, 1927, Vol. II. p. 223, says that the principle of *kawwānāh* may be concisely formulated as "Commandments demand intention". On the principle of *kawwānāh*, "the mere doing of a thing that is commanded in the law is not the fulfilment of the commandment; to make it such it is necessary that in the act a man should have in mind that it is a commandment and mean to fulfil it for that reason."

88. *Gospel and Law*, pp. 70, 71, 79.

we get in many quarters a general attitude that forgets the wrongs done to the victims of crime . . . in concern for the psychological health of the criminal and enthusiasm for reforming him. The Prodigal does not say, 'I am the victim of a psychological upset'; he says, 'I have sinned *against heaven* (i.e. God) and in thy sight' (Luke 15. 21)".⁸⁹

All this recent work gives welcome support to the Puritan view of the Law of God and shows, once more, how valid a conception it is. In "An Inquiry into the Meaning of Law in the Thought of John Calvin", R. A. Gessert points out that Calvin observes the implications for Law of such concepts as *aequitas* and *jus* but is then driven to remark, "One does not have to read far in Calvin, however, to discover that it is finally *legislator* (Lawgiver) that gives law its character as law".⁹⁰ The concern of the Puritans for moral Law was thus the direct descendant of the thought of the great reformer, and their conception of it was theological through and through.

D. ITS SOTERIOLOGICAL INTEREST

The Puritans were not mere revivers of Law but, as evangelists and pastors, their advocacy of it was soteriological. They recognized that the Law was the standard by which God would judge the world and condemn the ungodly, but they also perceived its saving use as it slew men's self-confidence, revealed their guilt and pollution, and drove them to Christ. They found their way through the paradox of the Law in its simultaneous condemnation of sin and provocation to it, and they discovered that only by obedience to the Law was the believer truly free from it. They learned that the grace that led them from Law-keeping for justification led them to Law-keeping in sanctification. They were occupied with obedience to the Law as the way of the believing man and with the fulfilment of the Law as the end for which he was saved. The Law of God thus connoted for the Puritan nothing but blessedness and delight: it belonged to the doctrine of salvation.

In their belief in the soteriological purpose of the Law the Puritans are in harmony with later Biblical scholarship. This is clearly expressed by such Old Testament scholars as O. F. Oehler,⁹¹ H. Schultz,⁹² A. B. Davidson,⁹³ W. S. Bruce⁹⁴ and others. T. W. Manson refers

89. *Ethics and the Gospel*, p. 64 (italics his).

90. "The Integrity of Faith", in *SJT*, XIII. p. 248, with reference to Calvin, *Inst.* II. viii. 6.

91. *Theology of the Old Testament*, I. 254 f.; 266.

92. *Old Testament Theology*, II. 36-39.

93. *The Theology of the Old Testament*, pp. 280, 281.

94. *The Ethics of the Old Testament*, pp. 26-27.

to the contexts of grace in which the Decalogue is set, both in Exodus and in Deuteronomy, and says that "this setting of God's requirements in the framework of God's gifts is a phenomenon that constantly recurs in the Bible."⁹⁶ St Paul's views are well argued by A. B. Bruce in his chapter on "The Law" in *St Paul's conception of Christianity*,⁹⁶ and H. A. A. Kennedy rather naively says that "the apostle by the sheer force of his spiritual sensibility anticipates the discovery of modern investigation that legalism was not the essential foundation of Old Testament religion."⁹⁷ C. Hodge speaks of the "evangelical character which unquestionably belongs to the Mosaic covenant."⁹⁸ G. Wingren refers to the "sharpening" of the demands of the Law by Jesus, which "is the reverse side of grace and forgiveness"⁹⁹ and contends that "the law, in exercising its function, is not at strife with the *kerygma* but in its service."¹⁰⁰ It is thus the function of the Law "to fix upon us the bondage of a salutary despair"¹⁰¹ and so to serve the ends of grace. This is what the Puritans meant by the "Spirit of bondage",¹⁰² and their belief in this respect was perfectly expressed by the later hymn-writer, Joseph Hart, when he wrote:

What comfort can a Saviour bring
To those who never felt their woe?
A sinner is a sacred thing,
The Holy Ghost hath made him so.¹⁰³

The soteriological significance of the Law, however, is not limited to its power of conviction of sin, but manifests itself in the redeemed life of sanctification. The believer's life is a life in the Law, and he thereby renders to God the homage of obedient love.¹⁰⁴

In the theological confusion of the seventeenth century, the Puritans found themselves opposing the Antinomians on the one hand and the Neonomians on the other. Both these parties, however, were moved by the same praiseworthy desire to state the Christian doctrine of sanctification in a way that would preserve it from abuse. The

95. *Ethics and the Gospel*, p. 20.

96. See pp. 295, 303, 305; cf. J. S. Stewart, *A Man in Christ*, p. 115.

97. *The Theology of the Epistles*, p. 45.

98. *Systematic Theology*, II. 375; see also E. F. Kevan, *The Law of God in Christian Experience*, 1955, pp. 45-61.

99. *Creation and Law*, p. 43; cf. 59n.

100. *The Living Word*, p. 139.

101. A. R. Vidler, *Christ's Strange Work*, p. 42.

102. See above, chapter II.

103. Joseph Hart (1712-68) was minister at the Independent Chapel, Jewin Street, London. Julian says that "at one time his hymns were widely used, especially by Calvinistic Nonconformists".

104. Cf. a valuable introductory chapter in R. W. Dale, *The Ten Commandments*, 1872, pp. 1-20 and an equally important chapter "On Obeying Christ" in his volume, *Laws of Christ for Common Life*, 1911, pp. 273-88.

former desired to secure it against legalism and the latter against libertinism. The Puritans resisted both these extremes and expounded the truth of sanctification in terms of the paradox of active-passivity, or a working out in active godliness of that which had been worked in by the renewing and enabling grace of God.¹⁰⁵ They taught that in the work of sanctification the believer was neither self-indulgently-passive nor self-sufficiently-active.

The Puritans held that Christian liberty freed the believer, not *from* the Law, but *for* the Law;¹⁰⁶ so that although he is no longer "under" the Law, he is, nevertheless, still "in" the Law.¹⁰⁷ This, they taught, was freedom itself.¹⁰⁸ The Puritans believed that this freedom in the Law—a freedom dependent on the Law—was effected by the Holy Spirit who applied the saving merits of Christ's death to the believer and then wrote the Law within his heart. Love for the Law thus gave power to keep it.

An unawareness of the gracious ability of the Holy Spirit within the believer has led many to a state of spiritual despair. Walter Marshal says,

Many that are seriously devout, take a great deal of Pains to mortifie their corrupted Nature, and beget an holy Frame of Heart in themselves, by striving earnestly to master their sinful Lusts, and by pressing vehemently upon their Hearts many Motives to Godliness, labouring importunately to squeeze good Qualifications out of them, as Oyl out of a Flint. They account that tho' they be justified by a Righteousness wrought out by Christ, yet they must be sanctified by a Holiness wrought out by themselves. And tho' out of Humility they are willing to call it infused Grace, yet they think they must get the Infusion of it by the same manner of working, as if it were wholly acquired by their Endeavours.¹⁰⁹

The Puritan doctrine, therefore, takes note of the gracious ability that God gives¹¹⁰ and looks for the manifestation of that grace in the liberty of obedience which is the true life and heritage of the Christian.

105. This is not in the least to be identified with the scholastic conception of a materialistic infusion of grace.

106. A. S. P. Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty*, Introduction, pp. 67, 68.

107. There is no fundamental opposition between Law and Gospel. What theoretical opposition there appears to be, says R. A. Gessert, arises from the fact that "we apprehend them under the distortions of existence", "The Integrity of Faith", *SJT*, p. 259.

108. Cf. Calvin, *Inst.* III. xix. 1.

109. *Sanctification*, pp. 42-43. What is said here in deprecation of "Holiness wrought out by themselves" is no denial of the believer's true activity in salvation, but is to be understood in the light of the later expression, "wholly acquired".

110. See a stimulating discussion on the paradox of ability and inability in W. P. Du Bose, *The Gospel according to Saint Paul*, 1907, p. 190.

The Law is "of unspeakable use", says John Wesley, "in deriving strength from our Head into His living members, whereby He empowers them to do what His law commands; and . . . in confirming our hope of whatsoever it commands and we have not yet attained."¹¹¹

It is possible that in the doctrine of gracious ability there may be some bridge of thought between the concept of an outward authoritative Law and the sense of liberty which every obedient believer experiences. It has been shown above¹¹² that the Puritans taught a spontaneity in Law-keeping, so that the works of the Law come from the believer as fruit from a tree.¹¹³ The Puritans would readily have concurred with Karl Barth that to the regenerate the Law is no longer "external and heteronomous law"¹¹⁴ and with P. T. Forsyth who, in 1905, wrote, "Theonomy is not heteronomy. He, our law, becomes also our life".¹¹⁵ For the true child of God there is no such alternative as duty or devotion: he is devoted to duty, and in this he is saved.

The Grace of Law

As a summary of what has been presented in this treatise it is appropriate to assert that the Puritans taught the exquisite doctrine of the Grace of Law. They took it into their lives and were ennobled by it. That it brought a seriousness into life no one can deny, but it was a seriousness with a glory. J. Marlowe cynically remarks, "Ultimately the Puritan was faced with the alternatives of apostacy, hypocrisy or sainthood".¹¹⁶ He was possibly nearer the truth than he knew, but the imperishable glory of the Puritans is that most of them chose to be saints.

111. *Christian Theology*, p. 176.

112. Chapter VII.

113. Galatians v. 22, 23.

114. *Romans*, p. 297.

115. Article, "The Evangelical Churches and the Higher Criticism", *The Contemporary Review*, LXXXVIII, 1905, p. 578.

116. *The Puritan Tradition in English Life*, p. 135.

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