

**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SYSTEMATIC AND POLEMICAL FUNCTION OF UNION
WITH CHRIST IN JOHN OWEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO SEVENTEENTH CENTURY
DEBATES CONCERNING ETERNAL JUSTIFICATION**

MATTHEW W. MASON

M.TH. LONG DISSERTATION (LD6.1)

OAK HILL COLLEGE

MAY 2005

CONTENTS

Preface	iii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1. Methodology	3
Chapter 2. John Owen's Theological Context	9
Chapter 3. Broad Contours: Owen on Justification and Union with Christ	23
Chapter 4. Union with Christ and Eternal Justification	33
Conclusion	52
Bibliography	59

PREFACE

I wish to thank my supervisor, Dr. Garry Williams, for his generous encouragement and thorough, constructive criticism. During Garry's sabbatical, Dr. David Field helped me to formulate a proposal, and asked lots of stimulating questions. Oak Hill's librarian Wendy Bell was a model of efficiency in securing various inter-library loans.

I could not have carried out this extra year of study without the generous financial support of the Evangelical Alliance, the Milne Trust, the Olford Trust, and the Sola Trust. My work for the *Kairos Journal* has provided rich intellectual stimulation, great Christian fellowship, and a delightful avenue in which to serve the Church, in addition to the welcome pay-cheques!

Finally, it is a joy to thank my wife, Annabel. She has endured more than her fair share of aimless wittering about John Owen with great grace, patience, and even apparent interest. She has encouraged me to keep at it, and with our daughter, Tabitha, has provided a wonderful reason to take as many breaks as possible from the desk and the computer.

INTRODUCTION

Union with Christ and justification are both central themes in the work of the Puritan pastor-theologian John Owen (1616-83). His most complete account of justification is found in *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith* (1677).¹ Although he wrote no comparable work on union with Christ, Owen discusses it throughout his corpus.² C.F. Allison explains the link between these two doctrines in Owen's thought:

A sinner in justification becomes truly righteous as he becomes a member of Christ whose righteousness is thereupon imputed to him in such union. A justified person is truly righteous, then, because he is *in Christ*. Owen places more explicit emphasis on this union with Christ than even Downname does, and perhaps more than anyone of the period with the exception of John Donne.³

In this, Owen saw himself as a faithful representative of mainstream Reformed Orthodox theology.⁴ However, he is not without detractors. In this dissertation, I shall consider three specific criticisms of his teaching on justification. First, advocates of the 'Calvin against the Calvinists' thesis accuse Owen, and others like him, of betraying the Reformation. They charge that Reformed Orthodox theologians – under the malign influence of Calvin's successor in Geneva, Theodore Beza, and, in England, of William Perkins – deviated markedly from Calvin's own theology. They assert that the later Reformed theologians start with the divine decrees and work deductively from there, in

¹ Owen 1850-55: V.1-400.

² E.g., Owen 1850-55: I.355-74; III.463-67, 478, 513-27; IV.383-86; V.175-80, 196, 208-217; X.468-71; XI.336-41; XIII.22-25; XXI.142-60.

³ Allison 1966: 175.

⁴ Cf. Owen 1850-55: V.208f.

the process losing Calvin's Christ-centred, biblical approach; this accusation is levelled against Owen by Alan Clifford.⁵ The second criticism comes from Owen's great Puritan contemporary Richard Baxter. In 1649 Baxter accused Owen of teaching the doctrine of eternal justification,⁶ whereby the elect are justified in Christ from eternity, not, as in the standard Reformed view, from the moment they believe in Christ.⁷ Finally, Hans Boersma, in his discussion of Owen's response to Baxter's accusations,⁸ accuses Owen of expounding an incoherent *ordo salutis*, and in particular of failing adequately to account for the place and timing of union with Christ in relation to faith and to the imputation of Christ's righteousness. In a review of Carl Trueman's monograph on Owen,⁹ Boersma repeats his accusation, and goes so far as to say that, 'It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that with Owen history is in danger of being swallowed up by eternity.'¹⁰

Through a careful exposition of Owen's teaching on union with Christ and eternal justification, based on fresh research on a variety of sixteenth and seventeenth century primary texts, I shall examine whether or not these criticisms are fair. I shall argue that Owen faithfully teaches the Reformed doctrine of justification, although the precise manner in which he does so is sensitive to theological developments among Reformed theologians in mid-seventeenth century England. However, before considering Owen's position, it is important to outline the methodology that this dissertation will employ in seeking to understand his teaching.

⁵ The classic statements are found in Hall 1966 and Armstrong 1969: 31-33. Their assumptions are uncritically picked up and repeated by McGrath in his discussion of Reformed Orthodox formulations of justification (1998: 227), and by Clifford in his assessment of Owen on justification (1990: 69f).

⁶ On eternal justification, see chapter 2, below.

⁷ Baxter 1649: II.146ff.

⁸ Boersma 1993: 104-108.

⁹ Trueman 1998a.

¹⁰ Boersma 2001: 269.

1

METHODOLOGY

The study of seventeenth century Reformed Orthodoxy has undergone a sea change in the past thirty years. In an overview of the history of such scholarship, Richard Muller identifies five approaches, in roughly chronological order.¹¹ First, the 'nineteenth century dogmatic approach' that focused on the development of predestination as a 'central dogma'.¹² Secondly, those who regard differences between Calvin and the later Reformed as stemming from differences between Calvin and Bullinger.¹³ Thirdly, the 'Calvin against the Calvinists' thesis, which argues that the later development of Reformed theology as a deductive, decretal, predestinarian system is a departure from Calvin's inductive, Christocentric biblical theology. This approach is often linked with neoorthodox dogmatic assumptions, and is generally hostile to 'scholasticism'.¹⁴ Fourthly, research based in a limited way on Heppe *et al*, which looks to Beza and Vermigli as founders of Reformed scholasticism and sees Christology and predestination as the 'central dogmas', and which in some ways serves as a transition to the fifth group.¹⁵ Fifthly, the group of contemporary scholars who reject the 'central dogma' theory and neoorthodox theological premises of previous research, who examine more closely the medieval background of the Reformation, and who are particularly

¹¹ Muller 2003d: 63-65. He does, however, note that the range of scholarly opinions and approaches is more diverse than this somewhat simplified paradigm suggests.

¹² Without citing any specific texts, Muller names Alexander Schweitzer, Heinrich Heppe, Paul Althaus, Hans Emil Weber, and Ernest Bizer as representatives of this approach, with Schweitzer viewing the development as positive, the others viewing it as problematic.

¹³ E.g., Leonard Trinterud, Jens Moeller, Charles McCoy, and J. Wayne Baker.

¹⁴ Muller cites scholars such as Walter Kieckel, Brian Armstrong, Basil Hall, Thomas F. Torrance, Cornelis Graafland, Philip Holtrop, and Cornelius van Sliedregt.

¹⁵ E.g., John Bray, Joseph McClelland, John Patrick Donnelly, Robert Godfrey, Ian McPhee, and Robert Letham.

interested in issues of continuity and discontinuity between the medieval period, the Reformation, and later Reformed thought.¹⁶

The main change is a shift from dogmatically driven studies of seventeenth century theology (the first three groups) to more narrowly focussed historical expositions (the fifth group).¹⁷ In John Owen research¹⁸ this last group is represented particularly by Carl Trueman¹⁹ and Sebastian Rehnman.²⁰

The aim of Muller, Trueman, *et al* is to provide balanced historical expositions that take particular account of the contextual setting of their subjects. They are generally hostile to dogmatic approaches to church history, placing a high value on 'objectivity' and regarding the role of the historian as one simply of exposition, not evaluation. Thus, Trueman prefaces his monograph on Owen with this caveat:

I wish at the start to make it clear that I write as a historian of ideas, not as a systematic theologian. My interest is not to discover whether Owen was right or wrong, but to see what he said, why he said it, whether it was coherent by the standards of his day, and how he fits into the theological context of his own times and of the western tradition as a whole. Of course, I do have personal intellectual convictions about the theological value of Owen's writings, but I have tried to be aware of my own theological commitments and to keep them as separate as humanly possible from my analysis.²¹

Muller is, if anything, even stronger: "The insertion of one's own theological premises into a historical analysis – often with polemical intention – only muddies the waters and

¹⁶ Most prominently, Willem van Asselt, Olivier Fatio, Eef Dekker, Anton Vos, Carl Trueman, Martin Klauber, Lyle Bierma, and Muller himself.

¹⁷ Muller 2003a: 3.

¹⁸ For an extensive review of research on John Owen up to and including 1999, see Kapic 2001: 12-48.

¹⁹ Trueman 1998a; 1998b; 2001; 2002.

²⁰ Rehnman 2001; 2002.

²¹ Trueman 1998a: ix.

obscures the meaning of the past.²² These scholars are also critical of earlier models of scholarship for failing to account for context, literary genre, and development and legitimate variety within a tradition.²³

In an article on Puritan theology as an historical event, Trueman builds on Quentin Skinner's approach to the history of ideas.²⁴ Observing that sentences are '*historical acts* which both partake of the forms of their age and are intended to fulfil a particular purpose', Trueman argues that history should primarily be a linguistic enterprise, 'which focuses on establishing authorial intention by analysing the range of plausible intentions that underlie any given text.'²⁵ This requires reading the text in its historical context, both synchronic and diachronic. In the case of Owen, this means examining his thought within the diachronic setting of the western catholic tradition (patristic, medieval, renaissance and Reformed), and the synchronic setting not simply of English Christianity of the seventeenth century, but also the broader international setting.²⁶ It also entails particular awareness of Owen's theological opponents, since his writings and theology often developed in the midst of controversy, and so a proper understanding of this polemical context is vital for understanding the questions Owen is seeking to answer, and the arguments he is seeking to refute.²⁷

Thus, to compare Owen directly with, say, Calvin or Barth, without accounting for their different historical, and so intellectual and theological, contexts, would be hopelessly anachronistic. It may well fail to account for theological development

²² Muller 2003e: 93.

²³ E.g. Muller 2003a: 8.

²⁴ Trueman 2001; cf. Skinner 1969.

²⁵ Trueman 2001: 258, italics his.

²⁶ Trueman 1998: 9-46; 2001: 259f.; Rehnman 2002: 21-47. I shall consider some of the details of Owen's context in chapter 2.

²⁷ Trueman 1998: 19.

between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, different opponents, and different purposes for writing. It may also foist on Owen questions he never faced, and so should not be expected to answer.²⁸

In contrast to this New Perspective on the Puritans, lie two different, but theologically motivated, approaches to Puritan theology. The first approach corresponds broadly to the third group of scholars detailed above. Broadly speaking, the Puritans can be regarded as a subset of the wider grouping of Reformed Orthodoxy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²⁹ Thus, this approach to Puritanism is essentially a subset of the third scholarly grouping listed above. Scholars who take this approach posit a sharp contrast between Calvin and later Calvinism, arguing that the roots of Calvinism lie in the theology of Beza, subsequently mediated into English theology by William Perkins.³⁰ Their assessment of the Puritans is generally negative, and with reference to Owen is represented most obviously by Alan Clifford, who intends his study of justification as ‘a reply to John Owen’.³¹ He focuses on Owen and John Wesley as the leading English representatives of Calvinism and Arminianism, but also looks at Calvin, and Owen’s contemporaries Tillotson and Baxter. Clifford asserts that, ‘The fact that Wesley was not a contemporary of the others in no way affects the investigation, which is concerned primarily with their convictions rather than their careers.’³² However, this is naïve; as we have seen, theologians’ views are necessarily influenced by their careers. Wesley

²⁸ See e.g., Trueman’s trenchant criticisms of Alan Clifford for attacking Owen’s Aristotelianism without grasping the changes between Aristotle’s own philosophy and the subsequent development and application of his thought in the Christian tradition, and of Clifford’s use of David Hume (eighteenth century) and Bertrand Russell (twentieth century) to support his case (Trueman 1998a: 216).

²⁹ On the problem of defining Puritanism, see e.g., Haller 1932; Knappen 1939; Hall 1965; Collinson 1967; Hill 1967; Duston and Eales 1996; Spurr 1998; Kapic and Gleason 2004a. On Puritanism as a subset of Reformed Orthodoxy, see Trueman 1998a: 13-19. Clearly not all Puritans were Reformed; for example, John Goodwin was Arminian; nevertheless, generally speaking, Puritanism can be regarded as Reformed in outlook.

³⁰ E.g., Hall 1966; Kendall 1997.

³¹ Clifford 1990: viii.

³² Clifford 1990: ix.

postdates Owen by roughly a century; thus, detailed historical analysis of both thinkers would be necessary before accurate expositions, and so accurate comparisons, could be drawn; this Clifford fails to provide. Their different contexts cannot be regarded as irrelevant to the task of doctrinal exposition and evaluation. Additionally, regarding Calvin as *the* authentic representative of, and benchmark for, the Reformed tradition is highly problematic historically, given the diversity of influences, Reformed and otherwise, on the Reformed tradition in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.³³

A second group of writers is far more positive towards Owen. Flowing out of the work of men such as Martyn Lloyd-Jones and J. I. Packer, and organisations such as the Banner of Truth Trust, they represent a neo-Calvinist appropriation of the Puritan tradition.³⁴ In Owen research, they are represented most prominently by Packer himself³⁵ and Sinclair Ferguson,³⁶ both of whom are basically sympathetic to Owen's theology.³⁷ Nevertheless, although the work of this group often offers a far more accurate portrayal of Owen, not least because of the authors' sympathy with him,³⁸ it too fails to account adequately for the complexity of Owen's historical setting, and its difference from our own. Thus, it fails fully to expound and grasp the depth and breadth of his thought.³⁹ Although the first chapter of Ferguson's monograph is a biographical sketch of Owen, his analysis of Owen's thought contains little attempt to situate him within the world of

³³ Cf., *inter alia*, Muller 2003; Rehnman 2002; Trueman 1998a; 2004. I shall discuss this briefly in chapter 2.

³⁴ Cf. Trueman 1998a: 5.

³⁵ Packer has published widely on the Puritans, including essays specifically on Owen, collected in Packer 1991.

³⁶ Ferguson was the first author to publish a monograph on Owen's thought (1987), and has since published significant essays on his Christology (2002a) and pneumatology (2002b).

³⁷ Packer cites Owen as the closest thing to the 'hero' of his book on the Puritans, one of the greatest English theologians, and a 'giant' (1991: 251). Ferguson speaks openly of the personal debt he owes Owen and of the privilege of knowing his ministry through the written word (1987: xi, xii).

³⁸ See Trueman's comments (1998a: 5, n. 7).

³⁹ The one obvious exception in work from this group (although not on Owen) is Packer's 1954 D.Phil. thesis on the thought of Richard Baxter, which has finally been published almost half a century later (Packer 2003). The work is a masterpiece of careful historical and theological scholarship, which is all the more remarkable for predating the work of Muller, Dekker, van Asselt, Trueman, *et al* by several decades.

the seventeenth century.⁴⁰ Moreover, although he acknowledges Owen's debt to Augustine, Ferguson also falls prey to the temptation to compare Owen primarily with Calvin.

Hence, in the light of the above discussion, the approach taken in this dissertation will broadly follow the expository historiography of Muller *et al*, placing a significant emphasis on Owen's context as an important key to exegeting his writings accurately. In what follows, I shall endeavour to set Owen in his historical and polemical context (chapter 2), in order to see more clearly the questions he must answer in defending the Reformed doctrine of justification. I shall then outline the broad contours of Owen's teaching on justification and union with Christ (chapter 3), before analysing the role that union with Christ plays in enabling Owen to defend his doctrine of justification against seventeenth century English alternatives (chapter 4).

⁴⁰ Cf. Rehnman 2001: 202.

2

JOHN OWEN'S THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

In order to set Owen in his seventeenth century context, this chapter will consider the views of his great theological opponent Richard Baxter, and the theory of eternal justification. However, first I shall outline the Reformed doctrine of justification as it relates to union with Christ, and to eternal justification.

Sebastian Rehnman has demonstrated that the sources of Owen's theology include the Reformed tradition of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; humanism; the church fathers, particularly Augustine; and medieval scholastics such as Anselm, Lombard, and above all Aquinas.⁴¹ Thus, Owen operated in a rich and diverse intellectual tradition. However, owing to various developments in the seventeenth century that led to novel formulations of justification, the particular moves he makes that are relevant to this dissertation focus on seventeenth century varieties of justification. Therefore, I shall focus primarily on Reformed writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and particularly Owen's polemical interaction with differing seventeenth century Reformed views of justification, whilst recognizing that his intellectual context is much broader.

1. The Historic Reformed Consensus

Owen possessed a substantial personal library, and, as a student at Oxford, and later Dean of Christ Church and Vice-Chancellor of the University, he had access to the

⁴¹ Rehnman 2001 (=2002: 15-46).

large collections in Oxford's libraries.⁴² Therefore, we might expect him to be extremely well read in contemporary Reformed thought. According to his own comments, Bucer, Calvin, Vermigli, Musculus, and Beza were the leading Reformed theologians.⁴³ Clark and Beeke have also noted Ursinus's influence (through the Heidelberg Catechism and his published lectures on the Catechism) in sixteenth and early seventeenth century England, particularly in Oxford,⁴⁴ where Owen studied with influential Reformed tutors.⁴⁵

Regarding the doctrine of justification, Alister McGrath states that the English Puritans generally followed Reformed Orthodox formulations, especially in relation to election and to the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and cites Owen as typical of this.⁴⁶ Indeed, when writing on justification, it is evident that Owen regarded himself as expounding the central tenets of the Reformed doctrine whilst acknowledging that the tradition was not monolithic regarding the details.⁴⁷

The Reformed formulations of justification⁴⁸ were attempts to expound the teachings of Scripture, but were forged in a polemical context against the Catholic doctrine, a polemic that hardened following the Council of Trent. Reformed theologians

⁴² On Owen's life and career, the standard biography is Toon 1971; see also Thomson 1850-55; Ferguson 1987: 1-19; Oliver 2002a; Payne 2004: 1-17.

⁴³ Rehnman 2001: 184, who cites Owen 1850-55: IV.229; X.488; XI.487, 489.

⁴⁴ Clark and Beeke 2004. 'Ursinus played a significant role in mediating Calvinism to Oxford. His connection with English Calvinism...lies first of all in the Heidelberg Catechism itself and secondarily in his lectures on the Heidelberg Catechism.... The Catechism was widely used in England and, in January 1579, Oxford University required that it "should be used for the extirpation of every heresy and the preparation of the youth in true piety." It was the only catechism printed by the University.' (pp. 9f.). Henry Parry's 1587 translation of Ursinus's lectures on the Catechism was the standard textbook in Oxford in the early seventeenth century (p. 12).

⁴⁵ Rehnman 2001: 182.

⁴⁶ McGrath 1998: 302-304.

⁴⁷ E.g., Owen 1850-55: V.60-64. Owen acknowledged that the Reformed tradition was not uniform regarding some of the details of justification, for example, whether or not Christ's active obedience, as well as his passive obedience was imputed; nevertheless he regarded the central tenets of the doctrine as settled and uniform.

⁴⁸ Cf. McGrath 1998: 219-240; Rohls 1998: 117-30; Lane 2002: 17-43.

argued that justification is forensic, a judicial declaration, not a real or infused change in the believer.⁴⁹ Turretin went so far as to argue that any non-forensic use of justification language in Scripture is an 'improper' use.⁵⁰ The formal cause of justification, that which gives its form or essence, is not any righteousness inherent in the person, but the imputation, or reckoning, of Christ's righteousness to the believer, and the non-imputation of the believer's sins.⁵¹ One of the central aspects of the Reformed doctrine is that the immediate ground of this imputation is the believer's union with Christ.⁵² Thus, although Christ's righteousness is an alien righteousness, it is not imputed 'from a distance', but becomes ours through intimate spiritual union with Christ by faith. This union is the fruit of calling, and is the foundation for the receipt of Christ's benefits, for salvation is found in Christ alone, and thus one can only obtain salvation by coming to him and taking refuge in him.⁵³ So Calvin: 'We do not, therefore, contemplate him outside ourselves from afar in order that his righteousness may be imputed to us but because we put on Christ and are engrafted into his body – in short, because he deigns to make us one with him.'⁵⁴

In Reformed Orthodoxy, justification is a free gift of God. It is therefore received by faith alone, to the exclusion of works.⁵⁵ Faith itself is not a work, but is merely the instrument that 'apprehends' Christ and all his benefits; by it we receive and apply to ourselves Christ and his righteousness.⁵⁶ As faith instrumentally unites to Christ,

⁴⁹ Ames 1968: I.xxvii.7; Calvin 1960a: III.xi.2-3; Davenant 1844: 231; Turretin 1992-97: XVI.i; Witsius III.vii.27, 38f.

⁵⁰ Turretin 1992-97: XVI.i.

⁵¹ Calvin 1851: 128; Davenant 1844: 231; Turretin 1992-97: XVI.iii; Ursinus n.d.: 177; Vermigli 2003: 87f.; Witsius 1822: III.viii.28.

⁵² E.g., Ames 1968: I.xxvi.1-2; xxvii.10; Calvin 1960a: III.xi.10; Davenant 1844: 237f.; Turretin XV.viii.8; XVI.iii.8; Ursinus n.d.: 177; Witsius 1822: III.viii.31; cf. Gaffin 2003.

⁵³ Turretin 1992-97: XV.viii.8.

⁵⁴ Calvin 1960a: III.xi.10.

⁵⁵ Calvin 1960a: III.xi.2, 16-19; 1851: 151; Turretin XVI.viii; Vermigli 2003: 161f.

⁵⁶ Ames I.xxvii.14; Calvin 1851: 119; 1960a: III.x; III.xii.21; Turretin XV.viii.9; XVI.iii.5; XVI.vii.5; Ursinus n.d.: 177f., 270, 331; Vermigli 2003: 160; Witsius 1822: III.vii.6, 19; III.viii.32, 47-56; McGrath 1998: 237.

it is also instrumental in justification, because justification is the first fruit of union. Therefore, Witsius can summarise the Reformed position as follows: 'faith justifies, as it is the bond of our strictest union with Christ, by which all things that are Christ's become also ours.'⁵⁷ Thus, in their doctrine of justification, Reformed theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries consistently and intimately connect union with Christ and the imputation of Christ's righteousness, the former being the foundation of the latter, and both being received by the instrumentality of faith alone.

One final, and important, distinction made by a number of Reformed Orthodox theologians is between active and passive justification.⁵⁸ Active justification is God's conferral of justification by the imputation of Christ's righteousness; passive justification is our reception and application of it by faith. Thus, Ursinus speaks of a twofold application of Christ's righteousness, one in respect to God, the other in respect to us: the former is God's imputation of Christ's righteousness; the latter is the act of believer 'in which we are fully persuaded that it is imputed and given unto us.'⁵⁹ The two concur in the formal act of justification, and the former is of no account without the latter. Nevertheless, in order of nature, passive justification follows active, and active justification precedes faith.

[O]ur application of the righteousness of Christ is from God; for he first imputes it unto us, and then works faith in us, by which we apply unto ourselves that which is imputed; from which it appears that the application of God precedes that which we make, (which is of faith) and is the cause of it, although it is not without ours'.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Witsius 1822: III.viii.56.

⁵⁸ McGrath 1998: 232. Although McGrath offers no evidence for this doctrine, it can be found in, for example, Turretin 1992-97: XVI.vii.1; XVI.ix.9; Ursinus n.d.: 330f.; Witsius 1822: III.viii.59-61.

⁵⁹ Ursinus n.d.: 330.

⁶⁰ Ursinus n.d.: 330.

Alister McGrath notes the importance of the distinction: "The absence of a corresponding distinction within Lutheranism led to a considerable confusion concerning the precise causal relationship of faith and justification, whereas the Reformed theologians were able to state that faith was posterior to objective, and prior to subjective, justification."⁶¹ The distinction will be particularly significant for us when we consider Owen's views of precisely how Christ's righteousness is made out to the believer.⁶²

2. Richard Baxter

As we have seen, the English Puritans generally followed the contours of the Reformed Orthodox doctrine of justification. However, Richard Baxter was somewhat idiosyncratic. He therefore became Owen's chief antagonist concerning this doctrine.⁶³ Baxter's novel view of justification stemmed, at least in part, from a desire to provide a solution to contemporary disagreements.⁶⁴ In particular, he hoped to provide a 'middle way' between the Reformed doctrine of justification and that of the Arminians.⁶⁵

The key to Baxter's doctrine is that there are two covenants, with distinct conditions: the covenant of works and the new covenant.⁶⁶ For Baxter, righteousness is conformity to the law, which is the condition of the covenant, and only a righteous man is judicially justifiable.⁶⁷ Christ's righteousness is indirectly necessary for justification, because by it he fulfilled the covenant of works and so upheld God's honour and merited

⁶¹ McGrath 1998: 232.

⁶² See pp. 43f., below.

⁶³ Cf. Boersma 1993: 104; Trueman 1998a: 214ff.

⁶⁴ Packer 2003: 242.

⁶⁵ Cf. Baxter 1675; Boersma 1993: 25; Packer 2003: 242-47.

⁶⁶ Baxter 1675: I.ii.27-51.

⁶⁷ Baxter 1675: I.ii.70.

our reward.⁶⁸ However, it is not the formal cause of justification.⁶⁹ Christ's fulfilling of the covenant of works made it possible for God to enter into a new covenant with mankind. Thus, Christ's righteousness is a necessary ground of justification. However, the 'law' of the new covenant is faith, and so the personal righteousness required for justification consists in faith. Packer explains:

Had it not been for Christ's obedience, the new covenant would never have been made, the law of works would still be in force, and all would be condemned under its terms. Christ's fulfilment of that law was therefore essential for the justification of anyone. But a man only qualifies for pardon under the new covenant when he believes. And his faith, as such...constitutes him righteous.⁷⁰

Justification is a forensic act of God, but it does not involve the imputation of Christ's righteousness personally to the believer; rather it is the believer's faith that is imputed.⁷¹

'This is *evangelical* righteousness. Unlike the first, it is the believer's own', and it is no less necessary to justification than Christ's righteousness, although it occupies a subordinate position.⁷²

Baxter circumvented the Reformed dispute over whether the elect are justified by Christ's passive righteousness only, or also by his active righteousness, because he held that it was based on the wrong view of the relationship of Christ's righteousness to us. For him, the appropriate point of dispute concerned, 'How the righteousness of Christ is made ours'.⁷³ He offered a number of reasons why it is mistaken to believe that Christ's righteousness is imputed to us on the basis of our union with him. Two are pertinent

⁶⁸ Baxter 1658: 262f.

⁶⁹ Cf. Boersma 1993: 243-45.

⁷⁰ Packer 2003: 258.

⁷¹ Baxter 1649: I.226f.; 1658: 268; 1675: I.ii.64, 66.

⁷² Baxter 1658: 268, italics in original.

⁷³ Baxter 1649: I.45.

here.⁷⁴ First, that 'It supposeth us to have been in Christ, at least in legall title, before we did beleve, or were born; and that not onely in a generall and conditionall sense as all men, but in a speciall as the justified'.⁷⁵ That is, the imputation of Christ's righteousness through union with Christ necessitates a doctrine of eternal justification.⁷⁶ Secondly, 'It seemeth to ascribe to God a mistaking judgement, as to esteem us to have been in Christ when we were not, and to have done and suffered in him, what we did not.'⁷⁷ On the assumption that one denies eternal justification, God is mistaken to count the believer as if they had been in Christ when he died.

Thus, according to Baxter, the standard Reformed view, of which Owen was a representative, faced the difficulty of explaining how God could reckon the elect as having been in Christ, and so having suffered what Christ suffered, without falling into a doctrine of eternal justification. Baxter believed he had highlighted systematic pressures within the Reformed doctrine of justification, particularly as it relates to the believer's union with Christ, which led logically to a doctrine of justification prior to faith. It is therefore important that we understand what the doctrine of eternal justification involved. The importance of this is further highlighted by the fact that, in an appendix to *Aphorismes of Justification* (1649), Baxter accused Owen of teaching eternal justification,⁷⁸ leading Owen to a heated response a year later.⁷⁹

3. Eternal Justification

⁷⁴ The other objections relate less to the function of imputation (how we receive Christ's benefits), and more to the nature of the atonement (issues of justice, guilt, penalty, etc., such as whether Christ paid the *solutio eiusdem*, an identical penalty for our sins, or the *solutio tantundem*, an equivalent payment; on which see Boersma 1993: 245-54; Trueman 1998a: 211-24).

⁷⁵ Baxter 1649: I.46.

⁷⁶ On which, see below.

⁷⁷ Baxter 1649: I.47.

⁷⁸ Baxter 1649: II.146ff.

⁷⁹ Owen 1850-55: X.429-79, esp. 439-79.

The doctrine of eternal justification appears to have been limited to certain English and Dutch Reformed divines of the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, it was not confined to those on the extreme fringes of Protestant theology.⁸⁰ The doctrine was popularised in England in the 1640s by Tobias Crisp, John Eaton, and John Saltmarsh.⁸¹ The primary concerns of adherents to the doctrine were to magnify the freeness of God's grace,⁸² and to assure those who doubted their justification.⁸³ Put simply, eternal justification is the view that God not only chose the elect in eternity, he also justified them in eternity.

As in the standard Reformed definition, those who held to eternal justification argued that the ground of justification is the obedience and suffering of Christ, which is imputed to the elect, their sins being imputed to him.⁸⁴ Thus, in both views, Christ alone justifies. However, exponents of eternal justification argued that the mainstream Reformed divines could not consistently maintain that Christ alone justifies because of the place they accorded to faith. For example, Crisp argued that, were faith required as the instrument by which justification is appropriated, then Christ would not justify alone: 'Is faith Christ himself? If not, then Christ must have a partner to justifie, or else Faith doth not justifie, but Christ alone doth it. Nay, I say more, Christ doth justifie a person before he doth believe.'⁸⁵

For Crisp, the New Covenant is different from other biblical covenants because the others all have stipulations, conditions on both sides. However, on humanity's side,

⁸⁰ Trueman 1998a: 28. On eternal justification, see Boersma 1993: 66-135; Packer 2003: 248-251; Trueman 1998a: 28, 207-210; Representative exponents include Tobias Crisp, John Eaton, John Saltmarsh, and William Twisse.

⁸¹ Eaton 1642; Saltmarsh 1646; 1647; Crisp 1690 [first published 1643]; cf. Packer 2003: 248.

⁸² Hence the title of Saltmarsh 1646; see also Crisp 1690: 93-95.

⁸³ Crisp 1690: 431; Saltmarsh 1646: 91ff.

⁸⁴ Saltmarsh 1646: 143.

⁸⁵ Crisp 1690: 85.

the New Covenant is entirely unconditional. All conditions having been met in Christ, the justified sinner has no part to play in his salvation, and faith is not the condition of the covenant.⁸⁶ Faith is not irrelevant, but it certainly does not fulfil the instrumental role assigned to it in the classic Reformed doctrine of justification. Rather, 'it serves for the manifestation of that justification which Christ puts upon a Person by himself alone.' The favourite proof-text, which appears time and again, is Hebrews 11:1: 'Faith is...the evidence of things not seen'.⁸⁷ Faith is not, therefore, 'the condition without which we receive not benefit from Christ',⁸⁸ it simply reveals to the believer his or her justified status:

A man is justified, and that by Christ alone, but it is not known to him, it is an unseen thing. Well, how shall he see this, and know that it is so? The Text saith, *Faith is an evidence*, Faith gives evidence to this thing, Faith makes it known, by Faith we come to apprehend it.⁸⁹

Only in this sense is justification 'by faith'. There is, therefore, never a time when an elect person is an object of God's wrath, for unbelief does not hinder the elect from having a part in Christ, although everyone who is elect and therefore justified will eventually come to faith.

In a later sermon, Crisp explicitly makes the link to union with Christ. As we have seen, from its beginnings, Reformed theology had held that we receive Christ's benefits only when united to him by faith, which is the gift of the Spirit. So Turretin:

So great is the necessity of faith in the matter of salvation that as Christ alone is the cause of salvation, so faith alone is the means and way to Christ. Hence it is celebrated as the bond of our union with Christ because he dwells in us

⁸⁶ Crisp 1690: 80-85.

⁸⁷ E.g., Crisp 1690: 85.

⁸⁸ Crisp 1690: 85.

⁸⁹ Crisp 1690: 85.

by faith (Eph. 3:17); as the condition of the covenant of grace under which salvation is promised to us, the fruit of election (Tit. 1:1), [and] the instrument of justification (Rom. 5:1).⁹⁰

However, for Crisp, and other advocates of eternal justification, all who are justified are justified and reconciled to God prior to believing. Therefore, contrary to Reformation theology, 'faith is not the instrument radically to unite Christ and the Soul together, but rather is the fruit that follows and flows from Christ the root, being united before hand to the person that do believe'.⁹¹ As with justification, faith has only declarative, evidencing power with respect to union; it does not effect union instrumentally, for it flows from union. Crisp argues that John 15:4-5 demonstrates that faith is a fruit of union with Christ, the Vine, and thus must follow union with him. If faith came before union, the branch would bear fruit before being in the Vine, which directly contradicts Christ's words.⁹²

Crisp then asks a series of questions, which we must eventually put to Owen as we examine his disagreements with Baxter:

'Is faith the gift of Christ or no?...Doth Christ beget faith in us by vertue of our being united unto him? and shall this faith beget that union of which it was but a fruit? From whence shall persons that do believe before they are united unto Christ, receive this faith of theirs? They are not yet united unto Christ, and therefore it cannot come from him, for we can have nothing of Christ but by vertue of union, and then it proceeds not from the spirit of Christ neither for we partake of that only by vertue of union with him too; From whence should it come then?'⁹³

⁹⁰ Turretin 1992-97: XV.vii.2.

⁹¹ Crisp 1690: 597; see also vol. 3, sermon 8, 'Faith the Fruit of Union' (1690: 607-18); and Saltmarsh 1646: 156.

⁹² Crisp 1690: 598f.

⁹³ Crisp 1690: 599.

Crisp's point is simple. Owing to the bondage of the will, no-one can exercise faith in and of themselves. At Calvary, Christ effectually merited salvation for the elect, and this necessarily includes the gift of faith. The elect receive every spiritual blessing in Christ, including the blessing of faith, otherwise whence is faith? Thus, it would seem that, on Crisp's Reformed assumptions about human inability and the receipt of all blessings in Christ, faith must be a gift of God that follows and rests upon union with Christ.

However, this union with Christ is not effected in time; rather the elect are united to him from before creation, for although redemption was accomplished in time, the elect were chosen in Christ before time.⁹⁴ Therefore, the elect, being united to Christ from eternity past, are justified from eternity past; actual justification is collapsed into the decree of election, and this on the basis of union with Christ.

4. Reformed Orthodoxy and Eternal Justification

Although eternal justification shares many features with the Reformed doctrine of justification, in its view of the timing of justification and the place of faith it represented a novel departure from mainstream Reformed thought. In particular, by denying the instrumentality of faith, it compromised the Protestant emphasis on *sola fide*. There is no trace of eternal justification in the early Reformers; not only did they not adhere to the doctrine, as Curt Daniel notes, 'the Reformers said precious little (if anything at all)' about the subject.⁹⁵ The absence of any discussion in authors such as

⁹⁴ Saltmarsh 1649: 115f., 123f.

⁹⁵ Daniel 1983: I.322.

Luther, Calvin, Vermigli, Musculus, and Ursinus suggests that it was not an issue for the generations immediately after the Reformation.

When Turretin, towards the end of the High Orthodox period⁹⁶ addressed the question,⁹⁷ he acknowledged that some of his Reformed contemporaries differed over the issue. However, he denied justification from eternity, arguing that it takes place 'in this life in the moment of effectual calling'.⁹⁸ It is not entirely clear which mainstream Reformed theologians advocated justification prior to faith. For example, William Twisse did,⁹⁹ but although William Ames and Herman Witsius are sometimes cited as advocates¹⁰⁰ this seems less likely. Both use somewhat equivocal language at times, with Ames asserting, for example, that 'The agreement between God and Christ [viz., the covenant of redemption] was a kind of advance application of our redemption and deliverance of us to our surety and our surety to us.'¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, both insist that the elect receive the blessings available in Christ only when spiritually united to Christ, and that this is accomplished by calling.¹⁰² How these statements can be reconciled is not entirely clear, but it at least raises a question over whether they really advocated eternal justification.

When the issue was addressed confessionally, the Westminster Divines stated that, although God decreed from eternity to justify the elect, 'they are not justified, until the Holy Spirit doth, in due time, actually apply Christ unto them,'¹⁰³ and the definition

⁹⁶ Cf. Muller 2003a: 4f.

⁹⁷ Turretin 1992-97: XVI.ix.

⁹⁸ Turretin 1992-97: XVI.ix.8.

⁹⁹ Cf. Boersma 1993: 80-88; Trueman 1998a: 209; *contra* Jessop 1654.

¹⁰⁰ E.g. Daniel 1983: I. 370, 380; Trueman 1998: 209, following Daniel's list.

¹⁰¹ Ames 1968: I.xxiv.3, cf. also 4.

¹⁰² Ames 1968: I.xxvi.2-3; Witsius 1822: III.viii.56.

¹⁰³ Westminster Confession of Faith XI.4.

was maintained in the Savoy Declaration with only the insertion of the adjective 'personally'.¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

For a theologian such as John Owen, who was concerned to argue for an historic Reformed understanding of justification, and who regarded the doctrine of justification as centrally important because it described how one could stand before a holy God, the accusation that he held to eternal justification would have been a particularly serious charge.

In common with advocates of eternal justification, Owen argued that on the cross Christ purchased all spiritual blessings for the elect, including faith.¹⁰⁵ He also agreed that union with Christ is the way in which the elect receive all of Christ's benefits:

God communicates nothing in a way of grace unto any but in and by the person of Christ, as the mediator and head of the church.... Whatever is wrought in believers by the *Spirit of Christ*, it is in their *union* to the person of Christ, and by virtue thereof.¹⁰⁶

Union with Christ is thus the immediate ground of justification.¹⁰⁷ However, this is also common ground that he shared with mainstream Reformed Orthodoxy. Moreover, where Owen differed from advocates of eternal justification, on the relationship of faith to union with Christ, he sided with the Reformed tradition, for, as we shall see, he held faith to be instrumental to union. Therefore, in the light of this background, we must investigate whether Owen can sustain the case that faith is a blessing received through Christ, but prior to actual union with Christ, which would appear to be received

¹⁰⁴ Savoy Declaration XI.4: 'they are not justified personally, until the Holy Spirit doth, in due time, actually apply Christ unto them'.

¹⁰⁵ Owen 1850-55: X.253-58.

¹⁰⁶ Owen 1850-55: III.515f., italics in original.

¹⁰⁷ Owen 1850-55: V.175ff.

simultaneously with the gift of righteousness, whilst maintaining that faith is instrumental to justification.¹⁰⁸

Regarding the three criticisms of Owen that I outlined at the start of this dissertation, I have distanced myself from the methodology of the 'Calvin against the Calvinists' thesis by outlining, as the standard by which I will assess Owen's doctrine, not the teaching of Calvin alone, but the broader Reformed consensus of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I have explained Richard Baxter's criticism of Owen, and sketched the historical background of the rise of eternal justification that led to Baxter's concerns, so that we are now in a position to consider Owen's response. An evaluation of Boersma's criticisms of Owen must wait until we have considered the details of Owen's response to Baxter.

¹⁰⁸ E.g., Owen 1850-55: V.104-106.

3

BROAD CONTOURS: OWEN ON JUSTIFICATION AND UNION WITH CHRIST

In 1677, Owen published a treatise entitled *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith*.¹⁰⁹ He had been planning to write on justification for over twenty years. In *Vindiciae Evangelicae* (1655), a work countering John Biddle's Socinian 'Scripture Catechism',¹¹⁰ Owen, having offered no more than a cursory treatment of justification, explained that he planned to handle the doctrine more fully in a treatise on the subject.¹¹¹ *Justification by Faith* thus represents Owen's mature views, distilling decades of reflection.¹¹²

Owen's desire in the treatise was to expound what he took to be the biblical teaching on justification,¹¹³ with the pastoral aims of glorifying God in Christ, demonstrating how sinners find peace with God, and promoting the obedience of believers.¹¹⁴ He therefore chose to avoid excessive use of scholastic terms and distinctions,¹¹⁵ and, as far as possible, to steer clear of polemic,¹¹⁶ although throughout the treatise, he interacts with and refutes what he sees as the errors of Rome and those of the Socinians. Owen clearly believed himself to be expounding the Protestant consensus, which, with the exception of Osiander, he regarded as uniform in the essentials.¹¹⁷ He thus regarded justification as forensic, involving the non-imputation of sin, and the

¹⁰⁹ Owen 1850-55: V.1-400. Kacic provides the only extended discussion of this treatise (2001: 111-51), but, in line with his thesis, focuses primarily on anthropological concerns, rather than on union with Christ and imputation.

¹¹⁰ Biddle 1654.

¹¹¹ Owen 1850-55: XII.564.

¹¹² This makes it all the more surprising that Alan Clifford, in a work entitled *Atonement and Justification* (Clifford 1990), pays such scant attention to *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith*, preferring instead to concentrate on Owen's 1647 defence of particular redemption, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (Owen 1850-55: X.139-428).

¹¹³ Owen 1850-55: V.6.

¹¹⁴ Owen 1850-55: V.6f.

¹¹⁵ Owen 1850-55: V.8, 10f.

¹¹⁶ Owen 1850-55: V.3f.

¹¹⁷ Owen 1850-55: V.60-61. Osiander diverged from the Protestant consensus by teaching that believers are justified by the infusion of the essential, indwelling righteousness of Christ considered as to his divine nature. On Osiander, cf. Calvin 1960: III.xi.5-12; McGrath 1998: 213f.

imputation of Christ's righteousness.¹¹⁸ Owen contends that in the New Testament, Paul states the doctrine of justification 'especially by affirming and proving that we have the righteousness whereby and wherewith we are justified by *imputation*; or, that our justification consists in the *non-imputation* of sin, and the *imputation of righteousness*.'¹¹⁹

Owen argues that imputation has a double meaning.¹²⁰ It can mean to account or esteem something to us that actually was ours antecedently to imputation, and then to acknowledge that what is imputed is truly ours and to deal with us accordingly.

However, this would either render justification impossible, as we lack true righteousness, or would require God to reckon us as righteous even though we are not, which would deny his justice. Alternatively, imputation can refer to something given to us that was not ours prior to imputation. This requires two things: first, 'a grant or donation of this thing itself unto us, to be ours, on some just ground and foundation'; secondly, '*A will of dealing with us*, or an actual dealing with us, according unto that which is so made ours'.¹²¹

According to Owen, God does indeed deal with us in this way in justification. This second type of imputation, an imputation of the alien righteousness of Christ, is necessary, for, 'the most holy and righteous God doth not *justify any*...but upon the interveniency of a true and complete righteousness, truly and completely made the righteousness of them that are to be justified in order of nature antecedently unto their justification.'¹²² Thus, the logical order is that, upon some just foundation, Christ's righteousness is given to sinners; they are then reckoned truly to be righteousness; God then treats them as they truly are, and so justifies them. We should note three things.

First, prior to imputation Christ's righteousness is *extra nos*: we are not justified on the

¹¹⁸ Owen 1850-55: V.120-25.

¹¹⁹ Owen 1850-55: V.162f., italics in original.

¹²⁰ Owen 1850-55: V.166-69.

¹²¹ Owen 1850-55: V.167, italics in original.

¹²² Owen 1850-55: V.167, italics in original.

basis of our own inherent righteousness. Nevertheless, his righteousness does, by gift, become ours: we become righteous. Secondly, on the basis of imputation, God rightly regards Christ's righteousness as our righteousness; he therefore treats us as we really are. We are now righteous, and so God justifies us: justification is no legal fiction. Thirdly, and most importantly for this dissertation, there needs to be a 'just ground and foundation' for this gift of righteousness: if someone is to be reputed righteous, 'there must be a real foundation of that reputation, or it is a mistake, and not a right judgment'.¹²³

Owen outlines a number of possible grounds for the imputation of that which was not ours prior to imputation. First, a thing may be imputed *ex iustitia*, 'by the rule of righteousness'.¹²⁴ This may be done on the basis of one of two relationships: a federal relationship or a natural one. So, for example, the sin of Adam was imputed to all his offspring, and the ground of this imputation was 'that we stood all in the same covenant with him, who was our head and representative therein.' Imputation of sin may also occur on account of a natural relation, but this only happens 'with respect unto some outward, *temporary effects* of it', as with the wilderness generation when the children of those who sinned also wandered in the desert.

Secondly, a thing may be imputed *ex voluntaria sponzione*, 'when one freely and willingly undertakes to answer for another',¹²⁵ as when Paul transcribed Onesimus's debts to himself (Philem. 18), or when Judah stood in as a surety for Benjamin (Gen. 43:9; 44:32). This voluntary undertaking of the office of surety was one ground of the

¹²³ Owen 1850-55: V.166.

¹²⁴ Owen 1850-55: V.169f.

¹²⁵ Owen 1850-55: V.171.

imputation of our sin to Christ: 'He took on him the person of the whole church that had sinned, to answer for what they had done against God and the law.'

Thirdly, something may be imputed *ex injuria*, 'when that is laid unto the charge of any whereof he is not guilty'.¹²⁶ This *is* unjust, but God never acts in this way.

Fourthly, imputation may be *ex mera gratia*, 'of mere grace and favour'.¹²⁷ This happens when what is not ours in any way prior to imputation is 'granted unto us, made ours, so as that we are judged of and dealt with according unto it.' Owen argues that the Apostle Paul refers to such an imputation in Romans 4, where it includes both the non-imputation of sin and the imputation of righteousness. Since the foundation of imputation *ex mera gratia* is Christ's mediation, there are no parallel examples among humans.

These various grounds are not completely distinct; they can concur in the same imputation, and sometimes they do. The imputation of Christ's righteousness to the elect is both *ex justitia* and *ex mera gratia*. It is an act of grace because God gives to sinners what they do not deserve, yet also an act of justice, because Christ is the federal head of the elect. It is also an imputation *ex voluntaria sponcione*. In the covenant of redemption Christ undertook, according to the Father's will, to act as surety for the elect, and so to represent them, taking the guilt of their sins upon himself, and giving them his righteousness. This voluntary undertaking of the office of mediator therefore provides the foundation for Christ's covenant relationship to the elect in the covenant of grace.

¹²⁶ Owen 1850-55: V.171.

¹²⁷ Owen 1850-55: V.171.

However, although Owen offers a number of foundations for the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and non-imputation of sin, the principle and immediate foundation is

that *Christ and the church*, in this design, were one *mystical person*; which state they do actually coalesce into, through the *uniting efficacy* of the Holy Spirit. He is the head, and believers are the members of that one person, as the apostle declares, 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13. Hence, as what he did is imputed unto them, as if done by them; so what they deserved on the account of sin was charged upon him.¹²⁸

Thus, the immediate ground for this twofold imputation is union with Christ.¹²⁹

Having stated this thesis, Owen seeks 'historical validation'.¹³⁰ As we have seen, to support this thesis, he could easily have turned to the writings of others within the Reformed tradition. However, seventeenth century authors generally preferred to cite ancient writers rather than their own contemporaries.¹³¹ Therefore, it is perhaps unsurprising to find Owen turning to patristic sources for support.¹³² Owen offers extended quotations from a number of Fathers, most notably Leo,¹³³ Augustine,¹³⁴ Irenaeus,¹³⁵ Cyprian,¹³⁶ Athanasius,¹³⁷ Eusebius,¹³⁸ and Chrysostom.¹³⁹ He thus provides evidence from both East and West, and from the second, third, fourth, and fifth centuries to support his claim. Owen's main reason for each of the quotations he

¹²⁸ Owen 1850-55: V.176, italics in original; cf. 196, 208-10.

¹²⁹ On union with Christ more generally in Owen, see Ferguson 1987: 32-36; Gleason 1995: 89-95. On union with Christ and justification in Owen, see Allison 1969: 175.

¹³⁰ Kacic 2001: 144.

¹³¹ Rehnman 2001: 185.

¹³² Owen 1850-55: V.176-78. On Owen's patristic citations in this section, cf. Kacic 2001: 144-46.

¹³³ Leo the Great 1994: 123-27. (Sermons 16 and 17.).

¹³⁴ Augustine 1953: CXL.6 (Owen cites it as Epistle 120).

¹³⁵ Owen cites *Adv. Haer.* III.33. However, in the Ante-Nicene Fathers edition, book three only goes as far as chap. 25; Owen's reference is found at Irenaeus 1994: III.22.2.

¹³⁶ Cyprian 1999: LXII.13.

¹³⁷ Owen simply cites Athanasius, without reference, as saying, 'We suffered in him' (1850-55: V.177).

¹³⁸ Eusebius 1920: X.1.

¹³⁹ Chrysostom 1994: LIV.

transcribes is to highlight a special bond between Christ and the church. Clearly he believed that, although they might not use Reformation language of imputation, the Fathers upheld the implications of imputation grounded in union with Christ.¹⁴⁰ In finding evidence for a Protestant view of justification in the Fathers, Owen stands in contrast to contemporary scholars, who tend to regard the doctrine of imputation as a Reformation novelty.¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, whether or not Owen's patristic exegesis was accurate, what is obvious is his concern, common to Reformed Orthodox theologians, to emphasize the catholicity of his teaching. This is also evident earlier in the treatise when he quotes the sixteenth century Roman Catholic humanist Albertus Pighius, a leading anti-Reformation apologist, as an advocate of the Protestant doctrine at this point.¹⁴²

Union with Christ lies on or just below the surface of much of the argument in *Justification by Faith*. It also plays a significant role in various other works by Owen.¹⁴³ In his discussion in this treatise, he notes that among his contemporaries there had been much debate concerning personhood; however, he wishes to avoid arguments concerning natural, legal, civil and political persons, for Christ and believers enjoy a distinctive union: they are '*one mystical person*'.¹⁴⁴ Thus, although the union of Christ and the church may in some senses resemble other types of union, such as natural or political, discussion of these tends rather to obscure than to illuminate the nature of union with Christ. Demonstrating his comfort with the analogical language of Scripture,¹⁴⁵ Owen

¹⁴⁰ Kopic 2001: 145.

¹⁴¹ E.g., McGrath 1998: 189f.; cf. Kopic 2001: 144.

¹⁴² Owen 1850-55: V.38-40.

¹⁴³ E.g., Owen 1850-55: I.355-74; III.463-67, 478, 513-27; IV.383-86; V.175-80, 196, 208-217; X.468-71; XI.336-41; XIII.22-25; XXI.142-60.

¹⁴⁴ Owen 1850-55: V.178, italics in original.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Owen 1850-55: V.12: 'The Holy Ghost, in expressing the most eminent acts in our justification... is pleased to make use of many *metaphorical expressions*. For any to use them now in the same way and to the same purpose, is esteemed rude, undisciplinatory, and even ridiculous; but on what grounds? He that shall deny that there is more spiritual sense and experience conveyed by them into the hearts and minds of believers (which is the life and soul of teaching things practical), than in the most accurate philosophical expressions, is himself really ignorant of the whole truth in this matter. The propriety of such expressions

argues that it is best to utilise the various Scriptural metaphors used to describe the union. The metaphors Owen cites are the common stock used by Reformed Orthodox theologians: the unions between husband and wife, head and body, vine and branches, Adam and his posterity.¹⁴⁶ The sheer variety of these metaphors demonstrates that the spiritual union between Christ and believers cannot be reduced to any one type of union occurring in the world.

The distinctiveness of the union is further demonstrated by considering the causes and grounds of it. The 'first spring or cause' is the eternal covenant of redemption made between Father and Son to save fallen mankind.¹⁴⁷ A significant part of this covenant concerned the assumption, by the Son, of a human nature. This common nature, shared by Christ and the elect, provides 'the foundation of this union'. The Son, as to his human nature, was then predestined to grace and glory. The grace and glory of the personal union of natures in the incarnation was obviously peculiar to Christ alone, but all other spiritual blessings were then, in due course, to be 'communicated by and through him, unto the church'.¹⁴⁸ To this end Christ was appointed the surety (e;gguoj) of the covenant of grace.¹⁴⁹ However, all of these preceding causes of union find their focus and are 'rendered a complete foundation' of the imputation of righteousness and the non-imputation of sin in 'the *communication of [Christ's] Spirit*'.¹⁵⁰ The Holy Spirit, poured out by the exalted Christ, and dwelling both in him and in the believer, is thus the bond of the union. Therefore, we can see why Owen, in line with

belongs and is confined unto natural science; but spiritual truths are to be taught, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." God is wiser than man; and the Holy Ghost knows better what are the most expedient ways for the illumination of our minds with that knowledge of evangelical truths'.

¹⁴⁶ Owen 1850-55: V.178f.

¹⁴⁷ Owen 1850-55: V.179.

¹⁴⁸ Owen 1850-55: 180.

¹⁴⁹ Owen then enters into an extended digression on Christ's suretiship (1850-55: V.181-96).

¹⁵⁰ Owen 1850-55: V.196, italics in original.

the Reformed tradition, describes the union as mystical, or spiritual. We can also see why mystical union with Christ is unique, and far more intimate even than the one flesh union between a man and his wife, or the natural union between a vine and its branches. Thus, because the elect are truly united to Christ in this profound way, truly and spiritually members of his mystical body, the justice of imputation is secured, for he 'bare the person of the church in what he did as mediator, in the holy, wise disposal of God as the author of the law, the supreme rector or governor of all mankind, as unto their temporal and eternal concernments, and by his own consent'.¹⁵¹ Hence, their sins were justly imputed to him. Owen again asserts that not only is this viewpoint supported by Scripture, it is also, 'the faith and language of the church in all ages'.¹⁵²

Thus, according to Owen, in line with Reformed Orthodoxy, the relationship between Christ and the elect that underlies imputation is *sui generis*. However, it does not conflict with or render irrelevant the other grounds of imputation that Owen has already outlined. As we have seen, the foundation for the union is found in the covenant of redemption: Christ voluntarily undertook to stand as surety and covenant head for the elect (*ex voluntaria sponione*), and so to become one mystical person with them. Moreover, because he *voluntarily* undertook to become the covenant head and mediator for his people, the union also finds a foundation *ex mera gratia*. Finally, precisely because Christ and the church are one person, it is also just for God to reckon their sin to him, and his righteousness to them (imputation *ex iustitia*). Hence, in assuming the office of mediator voluntarily:

There was a concurrence of his *own will* in and unto all those divine acts whereby he and the church were constituted one *mystical person*; and of his own love and grace did he as our surety stand in our stead before God, when

¹⁵¹ Owen 1850-55: V.196.

¹⁵² Owen 1850-55: V.196.

he made inquisition for sin; – he took it on himself, as unto the punishment which it deserved. Hence it became just and righteous that he should suffer, ‘the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.’¹⁵³

In the divine economy, the imputation of righteousness and non-imputation of sin is gracious, just, and ultimately founded on the will of God. In relation to imputation, this gracious and just will to justify sinners finds its outworking in the mystical union between Christ and the elect, accomplished by the indwelling Spirit. We can therefore see that the underlying structure of Owen's thought as it pertains to imputation is profoundly trinitarian,¹⁵⁴ and finds its focus in the doctrine of union with Christ.

In all of this, faith, which is produced in the elect sinner by the Holy Spirit at the moment of regeneration, is instrumental to union with Christ: we coalesce into one mystical person with him by faith,¹⁵⁵ which, in order of nature, therefore precedes justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ.¹⁵⁶ Thus, faith is also instrumental to justification, because by it one takes hold of Christ, and in receiving him receives his righteousness, hence, says Owen, the biblical language of justification *dia. pi, stewj, evk pi, stewj, etc.*¹⁵⁷

In contrast to the Calvin against the Calvinists thesis, we have seen that in *Justification by Faith*, Owen proceeds inductively, formulating his doctrine on the basis of Scriptural exegesis. In contrast to caricatures of Reformed ‘scholastic’ theology, although he employs scholastic distinctions, he eschews what he regards as the excesses of some

¹⁵³ Owen 1850-55: V.200, italics in original.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Trueman 1998a, *passim*.

¹⁵⁵ Owen 1850-55: V.218.

¹⁵⁶ Owen 1850-55: V.212.

¹⁵⁷ Owen 1850-55: V.109f.

medieval school theology, and prefers the 'metaphorical expressions' of Scripture in explaining the believer's union with Christ and justification.

However, Owen's treatment of justification might seem to raise questions concerning eternal justification. As we have seen, Owen speaks of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the elect, and imputation of the sins of the elect to Christ, in a parallel fashion; both imputations happen on the basis of the believer's union with Christ. Following Richard Baxter, this raises the question of whether Owen is able to separate the moment of Christ's satisfaction from the moment of imputation. If he cannot, then he would leave himself open to the charge of teaching justification at least from the time of the atonement, if not from eternity. We have also noted that, for Owen, faith is a gift to the believer, purchased by Christ when he made atonement. Faith is thus one of the spiritual blessings that a believer receives 'in Christ'. How then can faith be instrumental to union? Owen appears to hold to conflicting strands of thought, suggesting that Hans Boersma's accusations that he promulgated an incoherent *ordo salutis*, in which the respective positions of faith and union with Christ are unclear, might be valid. In the light of the charges made by Baxter and Boersma, we must return to the specific issue of the possibility of justification prior to faith.

4

UNION WITH CHRIST AND ETERNAL JUSTIFICATION

As we have seen, in his *Aphorismes of Justification* (1649), Richard Baxter accused Owen of teaching eternal justification. Owen responded to Baxter's accusations a year later in *Of the Death of Christ*,¹⁵⁸ in which he addresses two issues raised by Baxter. The first concerns the nature of the payment made by Christ,¹⁵⁹ the second, the issue of justification before faith.¹⁶⁰ Only the latter need concern us here.¹⁶¹ Owen explicitly denies ever having advocated 'actual and absolute' justification before believing,¹⁶² although, as we shall see, in *Of the Death of Christ* he does advocate partial justification logically, if not temporally, prior to faith. Nevertheless, 'absolute, complete, pactional justification', defined as 'an act of favour quitting the sinner from the guilt of sin, charged by the accusation of the law, terminated in the conscience of a sinner' follows faith 'in order of nature'.¹⁶³ In order to establish this, Owen makes a number of theological moves. He first rules out justification from eternity, then also justification from the time of Christ's satisfaction, before discussing precisely how Christ and his benefits are applied to the elect.

Owen starts with 'the eternal acts of the will of God towards us, antecedent to all or any consideration of the death of Christ'.¹⁶⁴ In so doing, he closes the door to justification from eternity. In chapter 2, we saw that advocates of eternal justification collapse justification into the decree of election: the elect are united to Christ from

¹⁵⁸ Owen 1850-55: X.429-79.

¹⁵⁹ Owen 1850-55: X.437-449.

¹⁶⁰ Owen 1850-55: X.449-479.

¹⁶¹ Trueman details Owen's position on the former in 1998a: 206-26.

¹⁶² Owen 1850-55: X.449.

¹⁶³ Owen 1850-55: X.453.

¹⁶⁴ Owen 1850-55: X.454.

eternity; in him they have every spiritual blessing; therefore they are justified from eternity. Owen regards the decree of election as the cause of Christ's satisfaction, and the foundation for the whole covenant of grace.¹⁶⁵ However, in contrast to Crisp and Saltmarsh, he insists that although prior to the cross the elect are beloved, elected, and ordained to eternal life, their actual condition, which they share with all people, remains unchanged by the decree of election alone.¹⁶⁶ He offers three proofs.

First, if the decree of election of itself caused a change in the elect, the decree of reprobation must also work a change in those appointed for condemnation. This is manifestly not the case; if it were, they would already be suffering the consequences of the decree, and would merely need to be made aware of the fact.

Secondly, God's eternal purpose is not the same as the mighty act of his power. God's decrees guarantee the certain futurity of the events decreed, but they do not accomplish their actual existence. In so distinguishing God's decrees from his actions, Owen stands in the western catholic mainstream. For example, Aquinas, whilst not using the language of decrees, discusses the issue in relation to God's knowledge. According to Aquinas, God's knowledge, joined to his will, causes all things. Answering the objection that as God's will is eternal, creatures must be eternal, he argues that 'The knowledge of God is the cause of things according as things are in His knowledge. Now that things should be eternal was not in the knowledge of God; hence although the knowledge of God is eternal, it does not follow that creatures are eternal.'¹⁶⁷ This distinction between God's decrees and his acts is also standard among the Reformed Orthodox.¹⁶⁸ Turretin,

¹⁶⁵ Owen 1850-55: X.455.

¹⁶⁶ Owen 1850-55: X.456f.

¹⁶⁷ Aquinas 1964-73: Ia.q.14.a.8.

¹⁶⁸ E.g. Ames 1968: I.vii.37; compare also I.vii.7 with I.viii.8; Pictet 1834: III.2; Turretin 1992-97: IV.ii.10; Westminster Confession of Faith III.6.

having used the distinction in his discussion of the divine decrees, explicitly applies it to eternal justification in a manner parallel to Owen:

although we do not deny that our justification was decreed even from eternity (as nothing takes place in time which was not constituted by [God] from eternity), still we do not think (speaking accurately) justification itself can be called eternal. The decree of justification is one thing; justification itself another.... The will or decree to justify certain persons is indeed eternal and precedes faith itself, but actual justification takes place in time and follows faith.¹⁶⁹

Thirdly, Owen offers an exegetical argument. Scripture places all humans, prior to faith, in the same condition: guilty and under God's wrath (citing Rom. 3:9, 19; Eph. 2:3; Jn. 3:36). Commenting on this, he explicitly addresses the claims of advocates of eternal justification: "The condition of all in unregeneracy is really one and the same. Those who think it is a mistaken apprehension in the elect to think so, are certainly too much mistaken in that apprehension."¹⁷⁰ As a mainstream Reformed theologian, Owen held that Scripture provides the only infallible rule for interpreting Scripture;¹⁷¹ he therefore refused to allow mistaken logical deductions from one strand of biblical teaching (election in Christ) to neuter another strand: the explicit teaching on the condition of the elect prior to regeneration.

Thus, although the elect are chosen in Christ, this does not, of itself, justify them: there is no justification from eternity. Indeed, Owen goes further. Not only are the elect as yet unjustified by virtue of God's electing love alone, they do not even have the right to justification. God appointed that the fruit of his love would be received in and by

¹⁶⁹ Turretin 1992-97: XVI.ix.3.

¹⁷⁰ Owen 1850-55: X.457.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Westminster Confession of Faith I.9; Muller 2003f.: II.490-97.

Christ; thus, the right to justification would be made out to the elect only on the death of Christ.¹⁷²

However, although Owen has ruled out eternal justification, as yet there remains the possibility of justification prior to faith, more particularly, justification from the time of Christ's satisfaction, especially when one remembers Owen's *Justification by Faith* regarding the imputation of believers' sin to Christ. Christ suffered in the place of the elect, that is, 'in his suffering he bare the person of the church...Christ and believers are one mystical person, one spiritually-animated body, head and members. Hence, what he did and suffered is imputed unto them.'¹⁷³ As we saw, the principal ground of imputation is union with Christ; the foundation for the justice of penal substitution is that Christ and his Church are one mystical person. Hence, what is true of Christ, the Head, is true also of his body; thus the church suffered in him when he suffered for the church. However, as we noted, it therefore appears that mystical union functions in a parallel way for the imputation of Christ's righteousness to sinners when they are justified and the imputation of their sins to him when he made atonement.

This parallel imputation on the basis of the same union appears to leave open the door for justification from the moment Christ made atonement, that is, justification prior to faith. Nevertheless, Owen insists that one must not 'assent to one part of the gospel unto the exclusion of another',¹⁷⁴ and God's design in the covenant is that Christ's righteousness be communicated to the elect by faith.¹⁷⁵ Faith thus comes prior to justification.

¹⁷² Owen 1850-55: X.457.

¹⁷³ Owen 1850-55: V.214.

¹⁷⁴ Owen 1850-55: V.214, also 216.

¹⁷⁵ Owen 1850-55: V. 214f.

When Christ died as a propitiatory sacrifice, God did indeed lay all the sins of the elect on him. Yet, notwithstanding this 'full, plenary satisfaction', all men equally are born by nature children of wrath. Therefore,

on the only making of that satisfaction, no one for whom it was made in the design of God can be said to have suffered in Christ, nor to have an interest in his satisfaction, nor by any way or means to be made partaker of it antecedently unto another act of God in its imputation unto him.¹⁷⁶

Although Christ's payment was perfect and sufficient, the elect do not immediately receive its benefits, until he is made theirs. Not that the future application of his benefits is uncertain – it is 'sure and steadfast' in the purposes of God – but the immediate foundation of the imputation of Christ's satisfaction and righteousness is 'our actual coalescency into one mystical person with him by faith.... Our actual interest in the satisfaction of Christ depends on our actual insertion into his mystical body by faith, according to the appointment of God.'¹⁷⁷

Thus, justification does not occur until the elect are united to Christ by faith, and this occurs according to God's appointment, at the time of his choosing. At the time of Christ's death, he and the elect are one mystical person, not in the sense that they have already been knit together by the Spirit, but only in the plan and intention of God. As Christ died, God knew for whom he was dying, and so counted their sin to Christ as though they were already one person. Yet, only at the point of faith are the elect actually inserted into Christ's mystical body; thus, only then is his suffering and

¹⁷⁶ Owen 1850-55: V. 216f.

¹⁷⁷ Owen 1850-55: V. 218.

obedience imputed to them. In all of this, the integrating factor is the will of God.¹⁷⁸ He willed that Christ should make satisfaction for the elect; he willed that Christ's satisfaction should be applied to the elect; and he willed that the accomplishment and application should happen at separate points in time. As Trueman notes, 'Owen does not use Christ's objective satisfaction as some kind of logical axiom which forces him into placing the actual justification of individuals in eternity or at the moment of Christ's death.'¹⁷⁹

In contrast to Saltmarsh, Owen also demonstrates a far more nuanced account of union with Christ. Saltmarsh treats union with Christ in eternal election as identical with mystical union, which provides the immediate ground of justification. Owen, however, acknowledges that full, mystical union occurs at the point of faith. Prior to that, the relationship between Christ and the elect exists in the intention and will of God, but does not exist as an actual union; from eternity we might describe the elect as *decretally* united to Christ. Thus, although the elect are chosen 'in Christ' and although, *contra* Baxter, their relation to him in God's will secures the justice of the atonement, this is not, for Owen, the same as saying that the elect have always been united with Christ in an undifferentiated fashion.

Owen offers a more detailed set of arguments against justification from the time of the atonement in *Of the Death of Christ*.¹⁸⁰ According to Owen, although God's will toward the elect was not changed upon the death of Christ, for he is immutable,¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Trueman 1998a: 213.

¹⁷⁹ Trueman 1998a: 213.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Boersma 1993: 103-108; Trueman 1998a: 218-220.

¹⁸¹ Owen 1850-55: X.458; cf. 451-53.

Christ's death nevertheless changed the status of the elect. On the basis of Christ's merit, founded on God's free engagement in the covenant of redemption with his Son, God is obliged to deliver them from the curse *ipso facto*.¹⁸² Therefore, because of Christ's satisfaction, God is able to make out the benefits Christ purchased, without any other conditions needing to be fulfilled.¹⁸³ In particular, Christ also purchased the condition of the covenant, faith; hence, from the time of the atonement, the elect have an absolute right to justification.¹⁸⁴ Nevertheless, although they have a right to justification, they do not yet have a present enjoyment of it. To establish this, Owen makes a number of distinctions.

First, although Christ's death is the efficient cause of justification, it is a moral, rather than a physical cause.¹⁸⁵ Physical causes produce their effects immediately in time, such as when a bat strikes a ball. However, moral causes do not. Nor do they have 'any immediate influence' on their effects. A third thing always intervenes, 'namely, proportion, constitution, law, covenant', which 'takes in the cause and lets out the effect'.¹⁸⁶ In the case of Christ's death, the thing that intervenes is 'that relation, coherence, and causality that the Lord hath appointed between the several effects, or rather parts of the same effect, of the death of Christ'.¹⁸⁷ Thus, all the effects of Christ's death, including intermediate effects such as faith, are immediate, but with an immediacy appropriate for a moral, not a physical cause. Hence, although Christ's death is the immediate cause of justification, there can be a delay between its purchase and its application.

¹⁸² Owen 1850-55: X.449f., 464f.

¹⁸³ Owen 1850-55: X.458.

¹⁸⁴ Owen 1850-55: X.449f.; cf. X.232-36, 247-58.

¹⁸⁵ Owen 1850-55: X.459-62.

¹⁸⁶ Owen 1850-55: X.459.

¹⁸⁷ Owen 1850-55: X.461.

Secondly, Owen distinguishes a present right to salvation from present possession of salvation. God made out the stipulations of the covenant of grace *sub termino*. They are therefore stipulations regarding something that is still future, although in contrast to stipulations *sub conditione*, they are a future certainty; they are not based on an uncertain condition.¹⁸⁸ However, although the elect have a right to justification, they do not yet have possession. This is because there are two different kinds of right to something: *ius in re* and *ius ad rem*. *Ius in re* is the right a father has to his estate: it is a present possession, of which he cannot justly be deprived. *Ius ad rem* is the right a son has to his father's estate; he does not yet possess it, but he will do on his father's death. Upon the death of Christ, the elect do not yet have a right to justification *in re*. However, they do have a right to justification *ad rem* and *sub termino*. Thus, they have an absolute right, with no further conditions required, Christ having done all that is necessary for their justification. Nevertheless, they are not yet in possession; although, on the death of Christ, the elect have an absolute right *ad rem* to justification, they are not yet justified:

Notwithstanding the right granted them for whom Christ died, upon his death, to a better state and condition in due time, — that is, in the season suiting the infinitely wise sovereignty of God, — yet as to the present condition, in point of enjoyment, they are not actually differenced from others. Their prayers are an abomination to the Lord, Proverbs 28:9; all things are to them unclean, Titus 1:15; they are under the power of Satan, Ephesians 2:2; in bondage unto death, Hebrews 2:15; obnoxious to the curse and condemning power of the law in the conscience, Galatians 3:13; having sin reigning in them, Romans 6:17, etc.¹⁸⁹

Therefore, Owen has ruled out justification from the time of Christ's satisfaction. The question now becomes how the elect actually come to possession of it.

¹⁸⁸ Owen 1850-55: X.465.

¹⁸⁹ Owen 1850-55: X.468f.

Owen reaffirms that all spiritual blessings are bestowed on someone for Christ's sake, and by his merit and intercession alone. These blessings are made out *sub termino*, but are not given over 'unless, in order of nature, Christ be first reckoned unto us.'¹⁹⁰ Owen defines this reckoning in terms of imputation: Christ is imputed 'unto ungodly, unbelieving sinners for whom he died, so far as to account him theirs, and to bestow faith and grace upon them for his sake.'¹⁹¹ Thus, Christ is, in some sense, given to sinners before they believe, 'Else why is faith given [to one sinner] at this instant for Christ's sake, and not to another, for whom he also died?' Faith, purchased by Christ, is given to the sinner for Christ's sake, and so Owen 'cannot conceive how any thing should be made out to me for Christ, and Christ himself not be given to me, he being "made unto us of God, righteousness", 1 Corinthians 1:30'.¹⁹² Again, 'That we should be blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ, and yet Christ not be ours in a peculiar manner before the bestowing of those blessings on us, is somewhat strange. Yea, he must be our Christ before it is given to us for him to believe'.¹⁹³ Thus, it seems that for Owen some kind of union with Christ takes place *prior* to faith. However, it must be emphasised that Owen is no longer speaking in temporal categories. Whereas before he was concerned to ensure a temporal separation between the moment of Christ's satisfaction and the moment of justification, he is now speaking of an 'order of nature',¹⁹⁴ that is a logical, rather than a temporal, sequence. Each of the events that he will now detail occur at the same point in time, even though they can be considered as related in a chain of logical cause and effect.

¹⁹⁰ Owen 1850-55: X.469.

¹⁹¹ Owen 1850-55: X.469.

¹⁹² Owen 1850-55: X.470.

¹⁹³ Owen 1850-55: X.470.

¹⁹⁴ Owen 1850-55: X.469, cf. 453.

However, if union with Christ takes place even logically prior to faith, Owen faces a problem, for as we saw in chapter 3, faith is instrumental in uniting someone to Christ. How can union precede faith, if faith is instrumental to union? Owen is not unaware of this difficulty, but suggests it is 'easily resolved.' He explains that, 'Christ is ours before and after believing in a different sense. He who is made ours in an act of God's love, that for him we may have faith, may be found and made ours in a promise of reconciliation by believing.'¹⁹⁵ Owen seems to conceive of some kind of *forensic* union with Christ prior to faith, perhaps better described as an imputation of Christ. This imputation occurs when, at the time of his choosing, God proceeds to justify a sinner on the basis of the antecedent decretal union. It consists in the Father reckoning him to us, and giving him to us, and with him faith. However, full, reconciling union does not happen until, on the basis of the imputation of Christ, the sinner believes. Only at this point can he or she be regarded as truly united to Christ in the one mystical person of the *totus Christus*.

Thus, Owen's position answers Crisp's rhetorical questions¹⁹⁶ without following Crisp's departure from the Reformed tradition in placing union prior to faith. Crisp argues that faith must flow from union with Christ, and so faith cannot be the human instrument by which union is accomplished. In contrast, Owen distinguishes full union with Christ which follows faith, and forensic union, or the imputation of Christ prior to faith on which ground faith is given. Faith is therefore a gift of God, purchased by Christ and applied through Christ; at the point of application it is not received without reference to Christ; yet it does not have to follow full, mystical union, and so can maintain its role as instrumental in laying hold of Christ.

¹⁹⁵ Owen 1850-55: X.470.

¹⁹⁶ See p. 18, above.

Owen also regards part of justification as occurring before faith, although in this he is somewhat more tentative. Given the context, it is likely that he is still referring to an order of nature, rather than a temporal order:

I offer [suggest], also, whether absolution from the guilt of sin and obligation unto death, though not as terminated in the conscience for complete justification, do not precede our actual believing; for what is that love of God which through Christ is effectual to bestow faith upon the unbelieving? and how can so great love, in the actual exercise of it, producing the most distinguishing mercies, consist with any such act of God's will as at the same instant should bind that person under the guilt of sin?¹⁹⁷

Owen suggests that this may be what is meant by the justification of the ungodly.

However, he is quick to affirm that 'Absolution in heaven, and justification, differ as part and whole', and that, only when the sinner believes, do they receive 'a full soul-freeing discharge', for forgiveness of sin is received by faith alone.¹⁹⁸

Owen may here be exploiting the Reformed Orthodox distinction between active and passive justification. As we noted in chapter 2,¹⁹⁹ a number of Reformed theologians regarded active justification, whereby God imputes Christ's righteousness to a sinner, as preceding faith in order of nature, although not in order of time. Passive justification then follows faith, and is the means by which one applies this imputation to oneself. Thus, Owen's division of justification into absolution in heaven and complete justification terminated in the conscience is not entirely novel, although he may press the point slightly harder than do other Reformed writers.

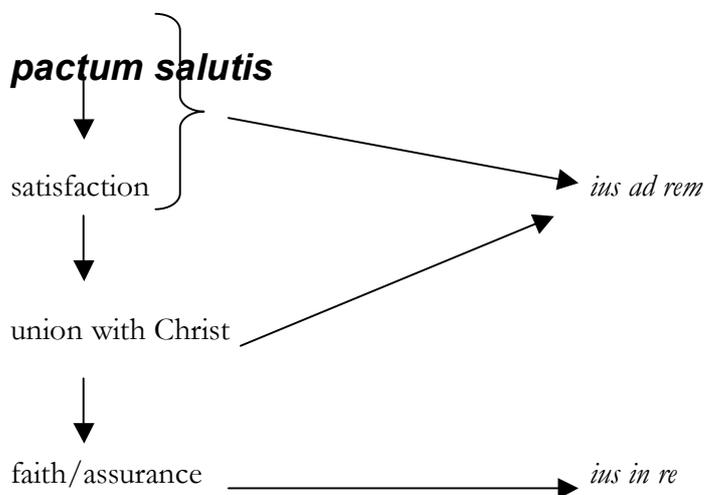
¹⁹⁷ Owen 1850-55: X.470, bracketed text in original.

¹⁹⁸ Owen 1850-55: X.470f.

¹⁹⁹ See pp. 12f., above.

Owen was faced with the charge of eternal justification, which arose from a misunderstanding of his radically Christ-centred soteriology, wherein Christ is central and alone sufficient for both the accomplishment and the application of redemption. He sought a solution that kept Christ central at every stage, and yet took seriously the Reformed Orthodox doctrine concerning the instrumentality of faith in union with Christ and justification. He clearly denied any form of justification at a point in time before faith, and also denied full justification logically prior to believing. For Owen, union with Christ and justification are both processes that commence before faith, but are only brought to completion when the sinner believes. In this sense, faith is instrumental for full justification and full, mystical union with Christ. The reckoning of Christ to the believer, and possibly active justification, are both necessary before faith is bestowed. Nevertheless, we must remember that, for Owen, this process is not a temporal sequence, but is one event, within which he distinguishes a logical relationship between the component parts.

Discussing this passage, Hans Boersma has diagrammed Owen's position as follows:²⁰⁰



²⁰⁰ Boersma 1993: 108.

Boersma believes that the *ius ad rem* is based on two conflicting foundations: first on the covenant of redemption as it finds fruition in the atonement; secondly on union with Christ. He argues that Owen's problem lies in having two irreconcilable thought patterns: first that the benefits of Christ's death are immediate, with no conditions required; secondly that no benefit can be given to us unless we are first united to Christ. Owen has, ultimately, failed to separate the *ius ad rem* from the *ius in re* because, 'Having isolated the *ius ad rem* he is uncertain as to its position in the process of justification.'

Nevertheless, Boersma appears to have misunderstood Owen's position in two ways. First, Boersma regards union with Christ as providing the *ius ad rem*. However, in this, he fails sufficiently to distinguish the different types of union that Owen describes. In particular, Boersma does not recognise the difference between forensic union and full, mystical union; he therefore makes it appear that Owen believes that the latter occurs prior to faith, which he does not; as we have seen, Owen holds that it is only a forensic union that occurs prior to faith. However, even if the union in question were full, mystical union, rather than forensic union, Boersma's analysis would imply that there is a time delay between union and the actual receipt of righteousness, because he claims that union with Christ provides a *ius ad rem*, which is given temporally prior to the actual possession of righteousness. It is true that Owen uses the *ad rem* / *in re* distinction to separate the atonement from justification temporally, in order to deny justification from the moment of the atonement. However, he is clear that when the allotted time elapses and God actually unites Christ to sinners, although there are a number of events, which follow a particular order, it is an order of nature.²⁰¹ The events following the imputation of Christ to sinners make up a logical sequence, not a temporal one; there is no

²⁰¹ Owen 1850-55: X.453, 469.

separation in time between Christ being reckoned and given to the sinner, and faith; they form a single 'time-slice'. Hence, in terms of Owen's *ad rem* / *in re* distinction, they must be considered as a single package, which grants the beneficiaries the *ius in re*.

Moreover, Boersma also misrepresents the precise role of faith in this package of events. Although he acknowledges that Owen distinguishes the senses in which people are related to Christ before and after believing, Boersma argues that all that is lacking prior to faith is assurance, so that faith is identified with assurance. Citing Joel Beeke, he suggests that, at this early stage in his career, Owen reduced faith to assurance.²⁰²

However, Beeke's claim is more modest. Quoting the questions on faith in Owen's two catechisms (1645),²⁰³ Beeke observes that both demonstrate that, for early Owen, faith and assurance are inseparable: 'assurance is part and parcel of faith'.²⁰⁴ This is very different from the claim that faith and assurance are identified, and it is Beeke's, not Boersma's position that finds support from Owen's Greater Catechism, which defines justifying faith as 'A gracious resting upon the free promises of God in Jesus Christ for mercy, with a firm persuasion of the heart that God is a reconciled Father unto us...'.²⁰⁵

Similarly, in *The Death of Death*, Owen describes a clear distinction between faith and assurance.²⁰⁶ Discussing what a sinner is required to believe in order to be saved, Owen offers a 'ladder' of beliefs: (1) he must repent and believe the gospel; (2) he must recognise the inseparable connection between faith and salvation; (3) he must be convicted by the Spirit of his personal need of a Redeemer; (4) there must be 'a serious full recumbency and rolling of the soul upon Christ in the promise of the gospel'.

Assurance then follows: 'after all this, and not before, it lies upon a believer to assure his

²⁰² Boersma 1993: 108.

²⁰³ Owen 1850-55: I.463-94.

²⁰⁴ Beeke 1991: 213f.

²⁰⁵ Owen 1850-55: I.486.

²⁰⁶ Owen 1850-55: X.407f.

soul...of the good will and eternal love of God to him...in particular.²⁰⁷ This need not mean that Owen believes that faith and assurance can be separated in the formal act of believing; nevertheless, he clearly does distinguish faith and assurance.

Therefore, when in *Of the Death of Christ* Owen speaks of what is lacking prior to faith, there is no reason to interpret his answer as implying that only assurance is lacking. Prior to faith, justification is lacking in three ways:

1. It wants that act of pardoning mercy on the part of God which is to be terminated and completed in the conscience of the sinner; this lies in the promise. 2. It wants the heart's persuasion concerning the truth and goodness of the promise, and the mercy held out in the promise. 3. It wants the soul's rolling itself upon Christ, and receiving of Christ as the author and finisher of that mercy, an all-sufficient Saviour to them that believe. So that by faith alone we obtain and receive the forgiveness of sin; for notwithstanding any antecedent act of God concerning us, in and for Christ, we do not actually receive a complete soul-freeing discharge until we believe.²⁰⁸

Perhaps point two can be taken to refer to assurance, but the act of pardoning mercy on God's part, and the soul's rolling onto Christ to receive him as author of mercy probably refer to more than simply assurance. This is confirmed by what Owen says in *The Death of Death* about assurance *following*, and being distinct from, the soul's rolling itself onto Christ as Saviour.

²⁰⁷ Owen 1850-55: X.408.

²⁰⁸ Owen 1850-55: X.471f.

When Owen adds that we receive forgiveness by faith alone, and receive a complete soul-freeing discharge only when we believe, it sounds like faith is the instrument of justification. Owen had made this explicit in *The Death of Death*: 'Faith is the cause of pardon of sin; but what cause? in what kind? Why, merely as an instrument, apprehending the righteousness of Christ.'²⁰⁹ In describing faith as an instrument to apprehend Christ's righteousness, Owen employs terminology that seems practically to have had the status of a textbook definition among the Reformed when they describe how faith functions in justification. This language can be traced back at least as far as Ursinus: 'our *faith is the instrumental cause* [of justification], apprehending and applying to ourselves the righteousness of Christ.'²¹⁰ Towards the end of the period of High Orthodoxy,²¹¹ Witsius states that the Reformed 'affirm, that we are justified by [faith] as by it we apprehend Christ, are united to him, and embrace his righteousness.'²¹² Moreover, as we saw in chapter 2, advocates of eternal justification explicitly reject the idea that faith is instrumental to justification. It therefore seems safest to conclude that Owen's view of faith's role in justification follows that of Reformed Orthodoxy more generally. Faith does not merely manifest a prior justification; it instrumentally receives the justifying righteousness of Christ that God has imputed. Thus, although justification is, for Owen, a process that begins, in order of nature, prior to faith, its completion is only grasped by the faith received working instrumentally fully to receive all of Christ's benefits.

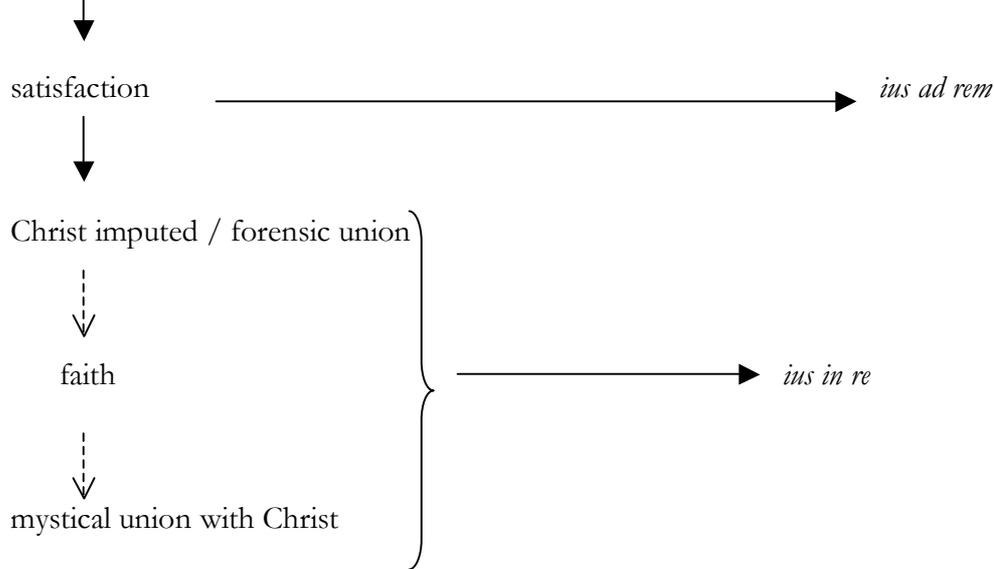
Therefore, we can modify Boersma's diagram as follows:

²⁰⁹ Owen 1850-55: X.252.

²¹⁰ Ursinus n.d.: 331, italics in original; cf. Ames 1968: II.xxvii.14; Turretin XVI.vii.5, 7; XVI.ix.9.

²¹¹ Following Muller's taxonomy of post-Reformation Reformed Protestantism (2003a: 4f).

²¹² Witsius III.viii.51.

***pactum salutis* (elect decretally united to Christ)**

For Owen, the elect are *decretally* united to Christ in the *pactum salutis*, which provides the foundation both for Christ's satisfaction, and for the imputation of Christ to the sinner, but does not yet provide a *ius ad rem*.²¹³ At the time of Christ's satisfaction, God acts on the basis of the decretal union and imputes the sins of the elect to Christ. This grants the *ius ad rem*. At a later point in time, at the moment of justification, God imputes Christ to the elect sinner in a *forensic* union, on the basis of which, God grants the sinner faith. Then, through this faith, the believer is *mystically* united to Christ. In this second diagram, the solid arrows indicate stages that are separated by time, whilst the broken arrows indicate stages that are related in a linear logical sequence, but which occur at the same point in time. Therefore, *contra* Boersma, Owen does successfully distinguish the *ius ad rem* from the *ius in re*. Although the *ius in re* is comprised of a logical sequence of stages, temporally, it is one event. The climax of this sequence is mystical union with Christ, and, as in Reformed Orthodoxy more generally, full justification follows and is grounded upon the union, which itself is received by faith.

²¹³ Cf. p. 36, above.

This analysis of Owen also offers a strand of evidence that further undermines the 'Calvin against the Calvinists' thesis which, as we have seen, asserts that the later Reformed theologians start with the decrees and work deductively from there, in the process losing Calvin's Christ-centred, biblical approach. Yet Owen's treatment of justification is profoundly Christ-centred. Although the process of justification is governed by God's will, it nevertheless focuses on Christ through the *pactum salutis*, Christ's satisfaction, and the need for union with him in order to receive his benefits. Owen could have moved Christ from the centre of his system, either by arguing that Christ did not purchase faith, it being self-generated by the believer, or by arguing that faith, once purchased, is applied without explicit reference to Christ. Had he done so, then other problems for his system would have arisen – relating to the particularity and unconditionality of redemption on the one hand, and to the inseparable operation of the members of the Trinity on the other – but the precise set of difficulties faced by his theology as it stands would have been resolved.

Arguably, Baxter's accusations of eternal justification, and Owen's complex description of the application of Christ, in which he distinguishes types and moments of union and stages of justification, stem from Owen's determination to be Christ-centred at every point. They do not arise from the problems of a deductive, decretal system. Indeed, as we have seen, although some Reformed theologians did work 'logically' to the doctrine of eternal justification from the decree to elect in Christ, Owen rejects this move. A significant part of his rejection is his use of the analogy of Scripture, whereby he refuses to allow a mistaken conclusion drawn from one Scripture doctrine to override another Scriptural truth. Thus, whether or not his doctrine of justification proves satisfying at every point, it cannot be condemned for being decretal at the expense of

being Christ-centred, nor for relying on deductive reasoning at the expense of inductive exegesis of Scripture.

In short, Owen's contribution to seventeenth century debates on eternal justification demonstrates that because, for him, Christ is central to salvation at every stage, union with Christ holds a central place in his doctrine of justification. In common with the Reformed consensus of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Owen held that Christ, according to the will of God and on the basis of the covenant of redemption, purchased all that was required for the salvation of the elect, including faith, when he died as their federal representative and substitute. At the time of God's choosing, the Holy Spirit unites elect sinners to Christ, by the instrumentality of faith. This mystical union provides the immediate ground for the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and non-imputation of their sins, and so God is able justly to declare them righteous.

CONCLUSION

In the course of studying John Owen's teaching on union with Christ and eternal justification, I have examined three criticisms of Owen and found them wanting. I have observed that, for Owen, Christ is central at every stage in the process of justification, from the *pactum salutis*, through the atonement, to the imputation of his righteousness when elect sinners are united to him. Thus, the accusations of the 'Calvin against the Calvinists' school that Owen proceeds deductively, on the basis of the decrees, at the expense of a Christ-centred, biblical approach, are seen to be unfounded. Secondly, I have demonstrated, against Richard Baxter, that Owen denies the doctrine of eternal justification, and, indeed, justification at any point temporally prior to faith. Thirdly, I have distinguished Owen's use of temporal sequence from his use of logical sequence. He affirms a temporal distinction between the time of Christ's satisfaction and the moment of the imputation of his righteousness in justification. In contrast, he affirms a logical sequence between the separate stages in the application of Christ to the sinner. I also distinguished three different senses in which the elect might be said to be united to Christ: decretal union from eternity and the time of atonement; forensic union logically prior to faith; and full, mystical union logically consequent to faith. In so doing, I have demonstrated, against Hans Boersma, that Owen maintains a coherent *ordo salutis*, in which, although the elect have a right to justification from the time of Christ's satisfaction, they are not actually justified until they believe. Therefore, Owen can be regarded as a mainstream Reformed Orthodox theologian with respect to his doctrine of justification, albeit one who was faced with particular challenges in his mid-seventeenth century English context, which necessitated careful elaboration of

the Reformed doctrine in order to preserve it from the heterodox formulations of eternal justification.

This dissertation has also opened a number of possibilities for further research, both historical and theological. One avenue of historical research concerns Owen's controversy with William Sherlock.²¹⁴ In *A Discourse Concerning the Knowledge of Jesus Christ* (1674), Sherlock attacked Owen's *Communion with God* (1657). Owen responded in 1675, accusing Sherlock of Socinianism; the same year Sherlock issued a rejoinder. A central part of the dispute concerned Sherlock's denial of imputation, and his insistence that union with Christ is a merely political union. No detailed work has been done on this debate, and, as it relates quite closely to the topic of this dissertation, it may well shed further light on Owen's precise views concerning union with Christ, and the imputation of his righteousness.²¹⁵

Regarding possible avenues of theological research, I need to augment the historiographical approach employed in this dissertation. I have examined Owen's writings using an approach that attempts to expound and analyse his thought within its historical context, but have not offered a biblical and theological evaluation of the truth or falsity of Owen's formulations. However, this requires further clarification, since I am unpersuaded by some of the presuppositions underlying Richard Muller's methodology.

²¹⁴ On which, see Owen 1850-55: II.276-364; Sherlock 1674; 1675; Wallace 1982: 170-73.

²¹⁵ Also relevant is Hotchkis 1675; 1678; cf. Kopic 2002: 142, n. 127.

In a series of interactions in the *Westminster Theological Journal*,²¹⁶ John Frame has criticized Muller's approach to history. In particular, Frame censures Muller for refusing to ask 'normative' questions, such as whether the early church's exegesis of key trinitarian texts was correct.²¹⁷ Muller argues that legitimate historical method cannot be inferred from Scripture; the presuppositions of historiography are 'minimal and belong to the realm of common sense';²¹⁸ they are neutral, and can be shared by believers and unbelievers alike. In contrast, Frame believes that Scripture must govern *every* aspect of faith and life, including historical method, whether by explicit precept, or, at least, by permission. Therefore, part of the historian's task is evaluation in the light of Scripture.²¹⁹

Building on Frame, I would argue that the historical method espoused by scholars such as Muller, far from belonging simply to the realm of common sense, actually represents the application to historical research of such Scriptural virtues as honesty, love for the truth, respect for one's interlocutors, a willingness to be quick to listen and slow to speak, and a refusal to be judgmental. Thus, it is shaped not by neutral common-ground shared by believers and unbelievers, but by God's Word; unbelievers can use this method only because of common grace.

Further, autonomous, 'non-evaluative' historiography is not simply undesirable; it is impossible. As Cornelius Van Til observed, the doctrine of creation means that humanity's task is 'To think God's thoughts after him, to dedicate the universe to its

²¹⁶ Frame 1994; 1997a; 1997b; Muller 1994; 1997.

²¹⁷ Frame 1994: 140-44.

²¹⁸ Muller 1997: 302.

²¹⁹ Frame 1997b: 311-15. See also 1987: 310: '[God's Word] is the historian's criterion of evaluation. [Historical theology] applies the Word to the church's past for the sake of the church's present edification?.'

Maker, and to be the vice-regent of the Ruler of all things.²²⁰ Therefore, 'Education'²²¹ is implication into God's interpretation.²²² There are no brute facts; they must be interpreted, and the theist will interpret them differently from the anti-theist.²²³ Van Til illustrates this with reference to the fact that two times two is four, which is inevitably linked to one's view of numerical law, and thence to all law. For non-Christians, law is independent of God, so they use 'two times two is four' as a way of attempting to further their escape from God. In contrast, for Christians, law is an expression of God's will and nature; hence our numerical fact enables us 'to implicate [ourselves] more deeply into the nature and will of God.'²²⁴ It is thus necessary for Christian thinkers to evaluate every 'fact' in relation to the triune God and his revelation. I have precommitments: that is inevitable. And these precommitments, assuming them to be correct, *should* shape my response to John Owen.

In the context of scholarship that has been skewed by theological precommitments, Muller and Trueman's concern is to represent their subjects accurately in their historical contexts, and to limit evaluation to that context: why, given his context, does *x* say this? Is it reasonable and coherent by the standards of his day, not those of a previous or later period? Thus, Muller argues that

historians can only make truth claims about the world that they attempt to reconstruct in their investigations.... What the historian cannot do, without the importation of non-historical criteria to his work, is assess the truth or falsity of a theological or philosophical point or the rectitude of an ethical act.²²⁵

²²⁰ Berkhof and Van Til 1990: 44.

²²¹ Which surely includes historical research.

²²² Berkhof and Van Til 1990: 44.

²²³ Berkhof and Van Til 1990: 46.

²²⁴ Berkhof and Van Til 1990: 7f.

²²⁵ Muller 1997: 306.

This, however, begs the question because it assumes that everyone is agreed on the nature of the world that is reconstructed, which is not the case. Is it one in which Jesus Christ is Lord, and ruling all things by his Word? Alternatively, is it one where he does not exist, or is irrelevant to the events that take place? The very fact that Muller seeks an accurate reconstruction of the world of his subjects inevitably brings one to the question of the nature of the world that he reconstructs. For the Christian, therefore, there can be no neutral historiography. One can only address historical events and writings in a 'neutral' fashion if one assumes that the Christ who has all authority in heaven and on earth has no bearing on this particular issue. In other words, one cannot address anything in a neutral fashion. The consistent historian must approach the world of the seventeenth century with a basic commitment either to Christ's Lordship, or to his irrelevance.²²⁶ Thus, for the historian approaching John Owen, there is another, larger set of expository questions. One should ask not simply how Owen related to the world of his English contemporaries, the western catholic tradition, continental Reformed theology, etc. One should also consider how Owen related to the world created by Christ and recreated in him, ruled and renewed by his Word. Did Owen dwell faithfully in this world, in a right relationship to the Triune God, understanding things rightly in the light of him? Or did he seek to create a false world of his own in which to dwell? These are historical criteria, which are therefore legitimately applied to historical events and people.

Using a photographic analogy, the 'Muller method' can be compared to a camera fitted with a zoom lens. It focuses narrowly on a particular, detailed set of questions

²²⁶ In saying this, I am not, of course, doubting the sincerity of any particular historian's Christian commitment. I am simply arguing that some Christian historians are intellectually inconsistent at this point.

relating to human interactions in an historical setting. In a limited way, zoom lens historiography can provide an accurate portrayal of certain aspects of the world being studied, and the detail that a zoom lens supplies is immensely valuable. However, using only a zoom lens isolates objects and events from their broader context and can ultimately lead to a rather skewed interpretation of the facts.²²⁷ Of course, this analogy must not be pushed too hard, lest the zoom lens picture be taken to indicate that if one focuses narrowly enough one can find a portion of the universe not related to Christ, which is impossible. Nevertheless, allowing for the limited usefulness of the analogy, although I do not deny the value of zoom lens historical study, ultimately the Christian thinker should replace the zoom lens with a wide-angle lens, in order to place the details in their full context. This requires asking normative questions on the basis of Scripture; in other words, it requires asking a broader range of expository questions in order to present a fuller picture. Hence, the problems with, for example, Alan Clifford's reading of Owen, are not that he seeks to evaluate Owen's theology, but rather first, that his exposition of Owen is inaccurate, and so his evaluative conclusions are skewed from the outset, and secondly, that his criteria for evaluation are, to my mind, wrongheaded.

I therefore regard this dissertation as accomplishing only half the task of a Christian student of historical theology. Certainly, it is the foundational half; without careful historical exposition fair evaluation according to the wider set of expository questions is impossible. Nevertheless, such evaluation is, in my view, integral to truly Christian scholarship.

²²⁷The irony here is that Muller, Trueman, *et al*, in seeking to distance themselves from the theologically skewed interpretations of previous generations of scholars, themselves offer a somewhat skewed analysis when viewed from a fuller biblical perspective.

Therefore, building on this dissertation, further theological research is required. This would require biblical and theological evaluation of Owen's views of union with Christ and justification. His insights could then be appropriated, and where necessary modified, to enrich contemporary Protestant theology. In particular, Owen on union with Christ and justification might serve us in three contemporary debates. First, as a theologian who emphasises the place of union with Christ with respect to justification, Owen provides an historic Protestant resource for investigating recent claims by the 'Finnish School' of Luther research regarding the place of union with Christ in Luther's theology, particularly as those claims relate to Luther's doctrine of justification.²²⁸ Secondly, Owen provides material for considering the claims of those proponents of the 'New Perspective on Paul' who regard Pauline participation language and Reformed imputation language as standing in tension.²²⁹ Thirdly, the doctrine of justification is a live issue in the light of ecumenical debates and Protestant-Roman Catholic agreements such as *ARCIC*, *ECT*, and the *Joint Lutheran/Roman Catholic Declaration on Justification*, all of which remain controversial.²³⁰ As one of the major expositors of the Reformed doctrine of justification, Owen offers resources for adequately understanding and evaluating the theology and significance of these agreements, and for formulating a Protestant response.

Thus, Owen's teaching on justification and union with Christ does not merely offer a fascinating insight into the world of seventeenth century English Reformed

²²⁸ For the contours of this debate, see Braaten and Jenson 1998; Jenson 2003; Metzger 2003; Seifrid 2003; Trueman 2003.

²²⁹ The so-called New Perspective on Paul (NPP) is, of course, far from monolithic, and some advocates would be far closer to historical Reformed formulations than others. The material on NPP is vast, and we cannot begin to detail it here. A good place to start, both for essays for and against NPP, and for bibliographical resources, is Mark M. Mattison's website, *The Paul Page*, <http://www.thepaulpage.com> (last accessed 2 May 2005).

²³⁰ Some of the relevant documents include *ARCIC II* 1987; *ECT* 1997; The Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church 2000; Lane 2002; Husbands and Trier 2004; Mattes 2004.

theology; it also offers rich resources for the further edification of Christ's Church at the start of the third Christian millennium.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

- Ames, William. 1968. *The Marrow of Theology*. Trans. John Dykstra Eusden. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Aquinas, Thomas. 1964-73. *Summa Theologiae*. Ed. Thomas Gilby. Trans. Thomas Gilby *et al.* 61 vols. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode.
- Augustine. 1953. *Letters: Volume III (131-164)*. Trans. Wilfrid Parsons. The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation. New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc.
- Baxter, Richard. 1649. *Aphorismes of Justification*. London.
- . 1658. *Of Justification: Four Disputations Clearing and Amicably Defending the Truth, Against the Unnecessary Oppositions of Divers Learned and Reverend Brethren*. London.
- . 1675. *Catholick Theologie: Plain, Pure, Peaceable: For Pacification of the Dogmatical Word-Warriours*. London.
- . 1701. *An Account of the Judgment of the Late Reverend Mr. Baxter: Concerning the Imputation of Adam's Sin, and Christ's Righteousness... Collected from His Own Writings... by Samuel Clifford*. London.
- Biddle, John. 1654. *A Twofold Catechism*. London.
- Calvin, John. 1851. 'Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, with the Antidote'. In *Calvin's Tracts, Vol. III*. Trans. Henry Beveridge. Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society: 17-188.
- . 1960a. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Ed. John T. McNeill. Trans. Ford Lewis Battles. 2 vols. Library of Christian Classics. Vols. 20-21. Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press.
- . 1960b. *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*. Calvin's New Testament Commentaries. Vol. 8. Ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance. Trans. Ross Mackenzie. Carlisle: Paternoster Press.
- . 1965. *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*. Calvin's New Testament Commentaries. Vol. 11. Ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance. Trans. T. H. L. Parker. Carlisle: Paternoster Press.
- Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. 1978. Trans. H. J. Schroeder. Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers.

- Chrysostom. 1994. *Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. First Series. Vol. 10. Ed. Philip Schaff. Trans. George Provost. Reprint; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.
- Cochrane, Arthur C., ed. 2003. *Reformed Confessions of the Sixteenth Century*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox.
- Crisp, Tobias. 1690. *Christ Alone Exalted*. 2 vols. London: John Bennett.
- Cyprian. 1999. *The Epistles of Cyprian*. Ante-Nicene Fathers. Vol. 5. Reprint; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc: 275-420.
- Davenant, John. 1844. *A Treatise on Justification*. Trans. Josiah Allport. 2 vols. London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co.
- Eaton, John. 1642. *The Honey-Combe of Free Iustification by Christ Alone*. London.
- Eusebius. 1920. *The Proof of the Gospel*. Trans. W. J. Farrer. 2 vols. London: SPCK. (Translation of *Demonstratio Evangelica*).
- Goodwin, Thomas. 1864. *The Works of Thomas Goodwin, D. D. Vol. VIII, Containing: The Object and Acts of Justifying Faith*. Ed. Thomas Smith. Edinburgh: James Nichol.
- Hotchkis, Thomas. 1675. *A Discourse Concerning the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness to Us, and Our Sins to Him*. London.
- . 1678. *A Postscript, Containing the Authors Vindication of Himself and the Doctrine from the Imputations of Dr. John Owen*. London.
- Irenaeus. 1994. *Against Heresies*. Ante-Nicene Fathers. Vol. 1. Ed. A. Cleveland Coxe. Reprint; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers: 315-567.
- Jessop, Constant. 1654. 'A Preface Concerning the Nature of the Covenant of Grace, Wherein is a Discovery of the Judgment of Dr. Twisse in the Point of Justification, Clearing Him from Antinomianism Therein'. In *A Modest Vindication of the Doctrine of Conditions in the Covenant, and Defenders thereof, from the Aspersions of Arminianism and Popery, which Mr. W. E. Cast on Them*. By John Graille. London.
- Leo the Great. 1994. *The Letters and Sermons of Leo the Great*. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. Second Series. Vol. 12. Trans. Charles Lett Feltoe. Reprint; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers: 1-205.
- Musculus, Wolfgang. 1583. *Common Places of the Christian Religion*. London.
- Olevianus, Caspar. 1995. *A Firm Foundation: An Aid to Interpreting the Heidelberg Catechism*. Trans. and Ed. Lyle D. Bierma. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Owen, John. 1850-55. *The Works of John Owen*. Ed. William H. Goold. 24 vols. London: Johnston & Hunter.

- Pictet, Benedict. 1834. *Christian Theology*. Trans. Frederick Reyroux. London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside.
- Racovian Catechism*. 1818. Trans. T. Rees. London: Longman.
- Saltmarsh, John. 1646. *Free Grace*. London.
- . 1647. *Sparkles of Glory, or, Some Beams of the Morning Star*. London.
- Schaff, Philip. 1983. *The Creeds of Christendom*. 3 Vols. Reprint of sixth edition; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Sherlock, William. 1674. *A Discourse Concerning the Knowledge of Jesus Christ*. London.
- . 1675. *A Defence and Continuation of the Discourse Concerning the Knowledge of Jesus Christ*. London.
- Turretin, Francis. 1992-97. *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*. Ed. James T. Dennison Jr. Trans. George Musgrave Giger. 3 vols. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed.
- Twisse, William. n.d. *The Doctrine of the Synod of Dort*. [s.l.].
- Ursinus, Zacharius. n.d.. *A Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*. Trans. G. W. Gillard. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed.
- Vermigli, Peter Martyr. 1574. *The Common Places of the Most Famous and Renowned Divine Doctor Peter Martyr*. [s.l.].
- . 2003. *Predestination and Justification: Two Theological Loci*. The Peter Martyr Library. Vol. 8. Ed. and trans. Frank M. James III. Kirksville: Truman State University Press.
- Westminster Confession of Faith*. 1994. Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Productions.
- Witsius, Herman. 1822. *The Economy of the Covenants between God and Man: Comprehending a Complete Body of Divinity*. Trans. William Crookshank. London: R. Baynes.

PUBLISHED SECONDARY SOURCES

- Allison, C. F. 1966. *The Rise of Moralism: The Proclamation of the Gospel from Hooker to Baxter*. London: SPCK.
- ARCIC II. 1987. *Salvation and the Church: An Agreed Statement by the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission*. London: Church House Publishing.

- Armstrong, Brian G. 1969. *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth-Century France*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Beeke, Joel R. 1991. *Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation*. New York: Peter Lang.
- . 1999. *The Quest for Full Assurance: The Legacy of Calvin and His Successors*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust.
- Beeke, Joel R., and Jan van Vliet. 2004. 'The Marrow of Theology by William Ames (1576-1633)'. In Kacic and Gleason 2004: 52-65.
- Berkhof, Louis, and Cornelius Van Til. 1990. *Foundations of Christian Education: Addresses to Christian Teachers*. Ed. Dennis E. Johnson. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed.
- Boersma, Hans. 1993. *A Hot Peppercorn: Richard Baxter's Doctrine of Justification in Its Seventeenth Century Context of Controversy*. Vancouver: Regent College Publishing.
- . 2001. 'Review of *the Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology*, by Carl R. Trueman'. *Evangelical Quarterly* 73: 267-69.
- Braaten, Carl E., and Robert W. Jenson, eds. 1998. *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Bradley, James E., and Richard A. Muller. 1995. *Church History: An Introduction to Research, Reference Works, and Methods*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Carpenter, Craig B. 2002. 'A Question of Union with Christ? Calvin and Trent on Justification'. *Westminster Theological Journal* 64: 363-86.
- Clark, R. Scott, and Joel R. Beeke. 2004. 'Ursinus, Oxford, and the Westminster Divines'. In *The Westminster Confession into the 21st Century: Essays in Remembrance of the 350th Anniversary of the Westminster Assembly, Volume 2*. Ed. J. Ligon Duncan III. Fearn, Ross-shire: Mentor: 1-32.
- Clifford, Alan C. 1990. *Atonement and Justification: English Evangelical Theology 1640-1790, An Evaluation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Collinson, Patrick. 1967. *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Cooper, Tim. 2001. *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England: Richard Baxter and Antinomianism*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Durston, Christopher, and Jacqueline Eales, eds. 1996. *The Culture of English Puritanism 1560-1700*. London: Macmillan.

- Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Gift of Salvation*. 1997. at <http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft9801/articles/gift.html> (Accessed 18 April 2005).
- Ferguson, Sinclair B. 1987. *John Owen on the Christian Life*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth.
- . 2002a. 'John Owen and the Doctrine of the Person of Christ'. In Oliver 2002: 69-99.
- . 2002b. 'John Owen and the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit'. In Oliver 2002: 101-129.
- Frame, John M. 1987. *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God. A Theology of Lordship*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed.
- . 1994. 'Muller on Theology'. *Westminster Theological Journal* 56: 133-51.
- . 1997a. 'In Defense of Something Close to Biblicism: Reflections on *Sola Scriptura* and History in Theological Method'. *Westminster Theological Journal* 59: 269-91.
- . 1997b. 'Reply to Richard Muller and David Wells'. *Westminster Theological Journal* 59: 311-18.
- Gaffin, Richard B. 2003. 'Biblical Theology and the Westminster Standards'. *Westminster Theological Journal* 65: 165-79.
- Gleason, Randall C. 1995. *John Calvin and John Owen on Mortification: A Comparative Study in Reformed Spirituality*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Gleason, Randall C., and Kelly M. Kopic. 2004. 'Who Were the Puritans?' In Kopic and Gleason 2004: 15-37.
- Godfrey, Robert W. 1992. 'Calvin and the Council of Trent'. In *Christ the Lord: The Reformation and Lordship Salvation*. Ed. Michael Horton. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House: 119-28.
- Griffiths, Steve. 2001. *Redeem the Time: Sin in the Writings of John Owen*. Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus.
- Hall, Basil. 1959-64. 'Calvin and Biblical Humanism'. In *Huguenot Society Proceedings* 20: 195-209.
- . 1965. 'Puritanism: The Problem of Definition'. In *Studies in Church History* 2. Ed. G. J. Cumming. London: Nelson: 283-96.
- . 1966. 'Calvin Against the Calvinists'. In *John Calvin*. Ed. Gervase E. Duffield. Abingdon: The Sutton Courtenay Press: 19-37.
- Haller, William. 1932. *The Rise of Puritanism*. New York: Harper.

- Hart, D. G. 2003. 'The Divine and Human in the Seminary Curriculum'. *Westminster Theological Journal* 65: 27-44.
- Hart, Trevor. 1989. 'Humankind in Christ and Christ in Humankind: Salvation as Participation in Our Substitute in the Theology of John Calvin'. *Scottish Journal of Theology* 42: 67-84.
- Heppe, Heinrich. 1978. *Reformed Dogmatics: Set Out and Illustrated from the Sources*. Rev. and Ed. Ernest Bizer. Trans. G. T. Thomson. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.
- Helm, Paul. 1982. *Calvin and the Calvinists*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust.
- Hill, Christopher. 1967. *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*. London: Secker and Warburg.
- Holmes, Stephen R. 2002. 'Calvin Against the Calvinists?' In *Listening to the Past: The Place of Tradition in Theology*. Carlisle: Paternoster: 68-85.
- Horton, Michael S. 2004. 'Of the Objects and Acts of Justifying Faith by Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680)'. In Kavic and Gleason 2004: 108-22.
- Husbands, Mark, and Daniel J. Trier. 2004. *Justification: What's at Stake in the Current Debates*. Leicester: Apollos.
- James, Frank A., III. 1999. 'Peter Martyr Vermigli: At the Crossroads of Late Medieval Scholasticism, Christian Humanism and Resurgent Augustinianism'. In Trueman and Clark 1999: 62-78.
- . 2002. 'Peter Martyr Vermigli: Probing his Puritan Influence'. In *The Practical Calvinist: An Introduction to the Presbyterian and Reformed Heritage*. Ed. Peter A. Lillback. Fearn, Ross-shire: Mentor.
- . 2003. 'Translator's Introduction'. In Peter Martyr Vermigli. *Predestination and Justification: Two Theological Loci*. The Peter Martyr Library. Vol. 8. Ed. and trans. Frank M. James III. Kirksville: Truman State University Press: xv-xliv.
- Jenson, Robert W. 2003. 'Response to Mark Seifrid, Paul Metzger, and Carl Trueman on Finnish Luther Research'. *Westminster Theological Journal* 65: 245-50.
- Jones, R. Tudur. 1990. 'Union With Christ: The Existential Nerve of Puritan Piety'. *Tyndale Bulletin* 41/2: 186-208.
- . 2004. 'Communion with God by John Owen (1616-1683)'. In Kavic and Gleason 2004: 167-82.
- Kavic, Kelly M., and Randall C. Gleason, eds. 2004. *The Devoted Life: An Invitation to the Puritan Classics*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.
- . 2004a. 'Who Were the Puritans?'. In Kavic and Gleason 2004: 15-37.

- Kendall, R. T. 1982. 'The Puritan Modification of Calvin's Theology'. In *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World*. Ed. W. Stanford Reid. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- . 1997. *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*. Carlisle: Paternoster Press.
- Knappen, M. M. 1939. *Tudor Puritanism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lane, Anthony N. S. 2002. *Justification by Faith in Catholic-Protestant Dialogue: An Evangelical Assessment*. London: T&T Clark.
- Lutheran World Federation, The, and The Roman Catholic Church. 2000. *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification: English Language Edition*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- MacLeod, Jack N. 1984. 'John Owen and the Death of Death'. In *Out of Bondage*. The Westminster Conference, 1983. Nottingham: Tentmaker Publications.
- McGowan, Andrew T. 2004. 'Justification and the Ordo Salutis'. *Foundations* 51: 6-18.
- McGrath, Alister E. 1983. 'The Emergence of the Anglican Tradition on Justification 1600-1700'. *Churchman* 98: 28-43.
- . 1984. 'Justification in Earlier Evangelicalism'. *Churchman* 98: 217-27.
- . 1998. *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*. 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2003. *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*. 3rd edn. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Mattes, Mark C. 2004. *The Role of Justification in Contemporary Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Metzger, Louis Paul. 2003. 'Mystical Union with Christ: An Alternative to Blood Transfusions and Legal Fictions'. *Westminster Theological Journal* 65: 201-13.
- Muller, Richard A. 1994. 'The Study of Theology Revisited: A Response to John Frame'. *Westminster Theological Journal* 56: 409-17.
- . 1997. 'Historiography in the Service of Theology and Worship: Toward Dialogue with John Frame'. *Westminster Theological Journal* 59: 301-10.
- . 2001. 'The Problem of Protestant Scholasticism'. In van Asselt and Dekker 2001: 45-64.
- . 2003. *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition*. Oxford Studies in Historical Theology. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 2003a. 'Approaches to Post-Reformation Protestantism: Reframing the Historiographical Question'. In Muller 2003: 3-21.

- . 2003b. 'Scholasticism and Orthodoxy in the Reformed Tradition: Definition and Method'. In Muller 2003: 25-46.
- . 2003c. '*Ad fontes argumentorum*: The Sources of Reformed Theology in the Seventeenth Century'. In Muller 2003: 47-62.
- . 2003d. 'Calvin and the "Calvinists": Assessing Continuities and Discontinuities between the Reformation and Orthodoxy, Part 1'. In Muller 2003: 63-80.
- . 2003e. 'Calvin and the "Calvinists": Assessing Continuities and Discontinuities between the Reformation and Orthodoxy, Part 2'. In Muller 2003: 81-102.
- . 2003f. *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Nuttall, Geoffrey F. 1946. *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*. S.l.: Basil Blackwell.
- Oliver, Robert W., ed. 2002. *John Owen – the Man and His Theology: Papers Read at the Conference of the John Owen Centre for Theological Study, September 2000*. Darlington: Evangelical Press.
- . 2002a. 'John Owen – His Life and Times'. In Oliver 2002: 9-39.
- Packer, J. I. 1991. *Among God's Giants: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life*. Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications.
- . 1991a. "'Saved by his Precious Blood": An Introduction to John Owen's "The Death of Death in the Death of Christ"'. In Packer 1991: 163-195.
- . 1992b. 'The Doctrine of Justification in Development and Decline among the Puritans'. In Packer 1991: 196-214.
- . 2003. *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter*. Carlisle: Paternoster Press.
- Parnham, David. 2005. 'The Humbling of "High Presumption": Tobias Crisp Dismantles the Puritan *Ordo Salutis*'. *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 56/1: 50-74.
- Payne, Jon D. 2004. *John Owen on the Lord's Supper*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust.
- Peterson, Robert A., Sr. 1999. *Calvin and the Atonement*. Revised edition. Fearn, Ross-shire: Mentor.
- Rehman, Sebastian. 2001. 'John Owen: A Reformed Scholastic at Oxford'. In van Asselt and Dekker 2001: 181-203.

- . 2002. *Divine Discourse: the Theological Methodology of John Owen*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Rohls, Jan. 1998. *Reformed Confessions: Theology from Zurich to Barmen*. Trans. John Hoffmeyer. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Ryken, Leland. 1986. *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Santmire, H. Paul. 1963. 'Justification in Calvin's 1540 Roman's Commentary'. *Church History* 33: 294-313.
- Schaefer, Paul R. 1999. 'Protestant "Scholasticism" at Elizabethan Cambridge: William Perkins and a Reformed Theology of the Heart'. In Trueman and Clark 1999: 147-164.
- Seifrid, Mark A. 2003. 'Paul, Luther, and Justification in Gal 2:15-21'. *Westminster Theological Journal* 65: 215-30.
- Skinner, Quentin. 1969. 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas'. *History and Theory* 8: 3-53.
- Spurr, John. 1998. *English Puritanism 1603-1689: Social History in Perspective*. London: Macmillan.
- Steinmetz, David C. 1982. 'The Theology of Calvin and Calvinism'. In *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research*. Ed. Steven Ozment. St. Louis: Center for Reformation Research: 211-232.
- Thomson, A. 1850-55. 'Life of Dr. Owen'. In Owen 1850-55: xxi-cxxii.
- Toon, Peter. 1971. *God's Statesman: The Life and Work of John Owen – Pastor, Educator, Theologian*. Exeter: Paternoster Press.
- Torrance, James B. 1982a. 'The Incarnation and Limited Atonement'. *Evangelical Quarterly* 55: 83-94.
- . 1982b. 'Strengths and Weaknesses of the Westminster Theology'. In *The Westminster Confession*. Ed. Alisdair Heron. Edinburgh: Saint Andrews Press.
- . 1982c. 'Calvinism and Puritanism in England and Scotland – Some Basic Concepts in the Development of "Federal Theology"'. In *Calvinus Reformer: His Contribution to Theology, Church and Society*. Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education.
- Torrance, T. F. 1960. 'Justification: Its Radical Nature and Place in Reformed Doctrine and Life'. *Scottish Journal of Theology* 13: 225-46.
- Trueman, Carl R. 1998a. *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology*. Carlisle: Paternoster Press.

- . 1998b. 'John Owen's *Dissertation on Divine Justice: An Exercise in Christocentric Scholasticism*'. *Calvin Theological Journal* 33: 87-103.
- . 2001. 'Puritan Theology as Historical Event: A Linguistic Approach to the Ecumenical Context'. In van Asselt and Dekker 2001: 253-275.
- . 2002. 'John Owen as a Theologian'. In Oliver 2002: 41-68.
- . 2003. 'Is the Finnish Line the New Beginning? A Critical Assessment of the Reading of Luther Offered by the Helsinki Circle'. *Westminster Theological Journal* 65: 231-44.
- . 2004. 'Calvin and Calvinism'. In *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*. Ed. Donald K. McKim. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Trueman, Carl R., and R. Scott Clark, eds. 1999. *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*. Carlisle: Paternoster Press.
- van Asselt, Willem J., and Eef Dekker, eds. 2001. *Reformation and Scholasticism: An Ecumenical Enterprise*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- . 2001a. 'Introduction'. In van Asselt and Dekker 2001: 11-43.
- Van Til, Cornelius. 1956. *The Dilemma of Education*. [s.l.]: Presbyterian and Reformed.
- . 1971. *Essays on Christian Education*. Phillipsburg, NJ.: Presbyterian and Reformed.
- Wallace, Dewey D., Jr. 1982. *Puritans and Predestination: Grace in English Protestant Theology, 1525-1695*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Webster, Tom. 2004. 'Criteria for "Good" History Books'. *Reformation* 9: 265-71.

UNPUBLISHED THESES

- Daniel, Curt. 1983. 'Hyper-Calvinism and John Gill'. 2 vols. Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Edinburgh.
- Kapic, Kelly Michael. 2001. 'Communion with God: Relations between the Divine and the Human in the Theology of John Owen'. Ph.D. Dissertation. Kings College, London.
- McGrath, Gavin John. 1989. 'Puritans and the Human Will: Voluntarism within Mid-Seventeenth Century English Puritanism As Seen in the Works of Richard Baxter and John Owen'. Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Durham.