

John Goodwin and the Origins of the New Arminianism

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Between the accession of Charles I in 1625 and the restoration of Charles II in 1660 Calvinism lost its hold over English religious life. The effect of Arminianism on this decline has yet to be fully understood. The impact of the early English Arminians, the circle of Archbishop Laud, is, to be sure, well known.¹ Less appreciated is the emergence of an Arminian critique of Calvinism from within the culture of nonconformity. This "radical" or, preferably, "new" Arminianism was a phenomenon of the Cromwellian era, the 1640s and 1650s. By reconstructing the origins of the new Arminianism of its chief exponent, John Goodwin (1595-1666), this essay will try to demonstrate its pivotal place as a link between the Puritanism of the pre-civil war decades and the rational theology of the early English Enlightenment.²

The term "Arminian" refers to the doctrines of the Dutch theologian, Jacobus Arminius (d. 1609), whose modifications of Calvinism provoked a profound crisis of reformed doctrine in the Dutch and English church of the early seventeenth century. Arminius's doctrines can be summarized as follows: that Christ died for all men (universal atonement); that all men have the power to believe in the atonement; and that God pledged salvation to all who so believe (later termed general redemption). In short, his views rejected the high Calvinist doctrine that God predestined all mankind to salvation or election before the Fall (supralapsarianism)

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¹ Cf. Nicholas Tyacke, in an important article called "Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution," in *The Origins of the English Civil War*, ed. Conrad Russell (London, 1973), pp. 119-143. Tyacke argues that the Laudians drove the Puritans into an "unprecedented radicalism" in defense of predestinarianism (p. 121).

² I do not intend here to delineate the place of new Arminianism in the theology of the Enlightenment, although I do intend to pursue that subject in the near future. For a discussion of English freethinkers see Margaret Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons, and Republicans* (Winchester, Mass., 1981). Also see J.G.A. Pocock, "Post-Puritan England and the Problem of the Enlightenment," in *Culture and Politics*, ed. Perez Zagorin (Los Angeles, 1980), and H.R. Trevor-Roper, "The Religious Origins of the Enlightenment," in *Religion, the Reformation, and Social Change* (2nd ed.; London, 1972).

and allowed some place for human effort in the salvation process.³ Although Arminius himself rejected the doctrine of "free will" and insisted that man could achieve nothing toward salvation without divine assistance, his opponents accused him and his followers of holding it; for this reason "Arminian" was a term of opprobrium used against the Laudians and, later, the new Arminians by their orthodox Calvinist opponents.⁴ Like the Laudians, the new Arminians did indeed reject predestinarianism. That was, however, the extent of any resemblance between the two groups. As Christopher Hill has written, "The formal similarity of their rejection of predestinarianism conceals the fact that they rejected it for totally different reasons."⁵

Unlike the new Arminians of the civil war era, the Laudians upheld the divine ordination of bishops, doctrinal uniformity, and outward ceremony. Most of all they distrusted Puritans as insubordinate, self-righteous zealots. The new Arminians, on the other hand, rejected the more rigid aspects of Calvinist theology but did so from within the culture and polity of English nonconformity. For one thing, they were congregationalists; for another, they defended to differing degrees a reasonably broad religious toleration and, in some cases, complete separation of church and state; finally, they strongly supported the king's opponents, although in some cases this support waned with the army's victory in 1648.⁶ Despite these points in common, the new Arminians

³ For a concise discussion of the views of Arminius see Carl Bangs, "Arminius and the Reformation," *Church History*, 30 (June, 1961), 158-63. See also Carl Bangs, *Arminius* (Nashville, 1971), pp. 66-70, 209, 275-77, 309-10. For an expression of Arminius's mature views see Jacobus Arminius, "Declaration of Sentiments," in *Works*, I, trans. James Nichols (Auburn, 1853), pp. 221-23, 264, 362. For his views on universal atonement and what was later termed general redemption see Jacobus Arminius, "An Examination of a Treatise by Rev. William Perkins Concerning the Order and Mode of Predestination and the Amplitude of Divine Grace," in *Works*, III, trans., Rev. W.R. Bagnall. (Auburn, 1853) pp. 329-40, 345, 292-99, 311-16, 362.

⁴ Tyacke, "Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution," pp. 131-34; Conrad Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics, 1621-1629* (Oxford, 1979), p. 207

⁵ Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (New York, 1977), p. 272; To my knowledge the phrase "new Arminianism" occurs for the first time in Christopher Hill's *God's Englishman: Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution* (London, 1970), p. 215. In *The World Turned Upside Down* and in *Milton*. Hill refers to this phenomenon both as "new" and as "radical" Arminianism. See also my diss. "The New Arminians: John Goodwin and his Coleman Street Congregation"; (Ph.D. thesis, Univ. of Rochester, 1980), referred to below as U.R. Diss.; William Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millenium* (London, 1979), p. 130, calls Goodwin an "Arminian of the Left." I have found it useful not to mix historical metaphors and so choose the term "new" Arminian.

⁶ Moreover, the ecclesiological differences between Laudians and new Arminians far outweighed any theological similarities. I am grateful to Prof. J. Sears McGee for allowing me to read his chapter, "William Laud and the Outward Face of Religion," from a forthcoming A. G. Dickens *festschrift*, in which he convincingly confirms the view that Laud's personal latitudinarianism (to whatever extent it existed) was overshadowed by his insistence on outward uniformity to the ultimate detriment of tolerance. Also see H.R. Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud* (2nd. ed.; London, 1962); cf. his "The Church of England the Greek Church," *Studies in Church History*, 14 (1978).

were a mixed lot. They incorporated aspects of Arminianism into a diverse array of religious polities and political goals.⁷ Their most noteworthy representatives were John Milton and the London Independent minister, John Goodwin (1595-1666).

Only John Goodwin published a systematic exposition of this theology. He rightly is considered the leading exponent of the new Arminianism.⁸ His thought needs to be better understood. Goodwin's Arminian theology and republican politics combined to produce a reputation as one of the most controversial ministers of his day. Late in the 1630s, while the vicar of St. Stephen's, Coleman Street parish, he founded what became the leading separatist church of civil war London.⁹ His Independent followers, "Master Goodwin's people," exerted a profound influence on his career and thought. Goodwin's Arminianism and conspicuous defense of religious toleration would be inexplicable apart from his congregationalism. This article, however, will concentrate on the evolution of Goodwin's thought and the effect on it of his political and intellectual milieu.¹⁰

Goodwin's theology owed as much to covenantal Calvinism as to Arminianism. However, neither Perkins nor Arminius by himself was sufficient to catalyze Goodwin's doctrinal musings into their mature form. Rather, the writings of the Protestant rationalists Jacobus Acontius and—somewhat less certainly—Sebastian Castellio, reexamined by Goodwin in the heat of the toleration controversy of 1644 through 1648, propelled him toward Arminianism. Moreover, the theology that resulted went even beyond Arminius in its rationalism and what might be termed (albeit awkwardly) proto-biblicism. Goodwin's thought resulted from the action of political reality upon a substantially more complex intellectual heritage than hitherto has been emphasized. While it was not typical of new Arminianism in every respect, its main features do demonstrate that means by which some of English religious thought could be, and was, transformed between the 1630s and the 1670s.

What follows is a description of the changes in Goodwin's thought that resulted in a theological outlook charged with Arminianism and rationalism. It begins with a description of the Puritan roots of his thought followed by an account of the political and intellectual forces that spurred him toward a "new" Arminianism.

⁷ The Cambridge Platonists, the General Baptists, the Quakers, the Leveller William Walwyn, and the True Leveller Gerrard Winstanley were among those who integrated new Arminianism into their religious doctrines.

⁸ H.C. Porter, *Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1958) suggests Whichcote as the main link connecting anti-Calvinism of the 1590s to the Arminianism of the 1640s (pp. 428-29). Without denying Whichcote an important place, I suggest Goodwin was even more central to these developments.

⁹ U.R. Diss., Chapt. 4; Murray Tolmie, *The Triumph of the Saints* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 111-15; David Kirby, "The Parish of St. Stephen's Coleman Street, London"; (B. Litt. thesis, Oxford, 1969).

¹⁰ Goodwin's congregation's career is described in a paper to the American Society of Church History, December, 1982, and in a book-length manuscript now in progress, to be titled *The New Arminians*.

I

Goodwin began his clerical career in the 1620s as a Calvinist. His slow transformation into an anti-predestinarian began in the 1630s and was complete by 1651. Prior to 1636 he seemed a typical representative of the London Puritan brotherhood. He subscribed to the covenant theology of such leading Puritans as William Perkins, William Ames, John Preston, and the much beloved Richard Sibbes. Goodwin edited one of the many editions of Sibbes's popular sermon collection, *The Bruised Reed and Smoaking Flax* as well as a posthumous collection, *An Exposition of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Philippians*.¹¹ Like many nonconformists he encountered opposition from the Laudian hierarchy. As vicar of the notoriously puritanical parish of St. Stephen's, Coleman Street, he was subjected to diocesan examination for "inconformity." He was among the group of influential London ministers who petitioned against imposition of the Laudian canons in 1640. Despite his opposition to episcopacy and the ceremonialism of the Laudian church, however, he conformed just enough to avoid suspension and was permitted to continue in his living throughout the period of Laud's primacy.¹²

Goodwin's published works from the 1630s were influenced noticeably by the covenant theology of Preston and Sibbes. The form of English Calvinism known as federal or covenant theology, the doctrine of a covenant of grace between God and man, was propounded by William Perkins in the 1590s. It enabled Calvinist ministers to reconcile the iron decrees of predestination with the pastoral charge to stir up the faith of their flocks.¹³ Perkins defined the covenant of grace in terms of the conditions it imposed on both parties. The covenant was "that whereby God, freely promising Christ and...his benefits, exacts of man that he...receive Christ and repent of his sins."¹⁴ The covenant was depicted as a volun-

¹¹ Richard Sibbes, *The Bruised Reed and Smoaking Flax* (1630; British Library 4454 aa.4). Goodwin also edited Sibbes's posthumous *Exposition of the Epistle of St. Paul* (1639).

¹² PRO, S.P. 16/339/53, "Informacions Concerning the Diocese of London, 1636."

¹³ Perry Miller, *The New England Mind; The Seventeenth Century* (New York, 1939), pp. 380-81, 474-94, sees covenant theology in light of Arminian and antinomian challenges; J.S. Coolidge, *The Pauline Renaissance in England* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 109-131, argues that the federalists stressed covenant "conditions" as visible signs of grace; R.T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 8, 9, 61-66, 155-64, understands the federalists (called "experimental predestinarians") to be working out the implications of Perkins's doctrine of temporary faith. In a trenchant review of the literature on covenant theology up to 1968, Riochard Greaves rightly reasserts its descent from the "Zwingli-Tyndale" line as well as the (in my words) Beza-Perkins tradition: "The Origins and Early Development of English Covenant Thought," *The Historian*, 31 (1968), 21-35. An earlier statement of the contractual and reciprocal nature of covenantalism is in Leonard J. Trinterud, "The Origins of Puritanism," *Church History*, 20 (March, 1951), 37-57.

¹⁴ William Perkins, "A Golden Chain," in *Works*, ed. Ian Breward (Abingdon, Eng., 1970), pp. 213-14, 225, 337, 230.

tary agreement. As Sibbes wrote, although "God's grace do all, yet we must give our consent." Preston assured his audience that God pledged to enter into covenant with "all those that are faithful." Covenant theologians never tired of urging, in Preston's words, that their followers "labor" for a "perfect faith."¹⁵ Covenant theologians thus were left open to the charge that they countenanced a form of free will, the un-Calvinist doctrine that sinful man was free to choose his soul's destiny. Yet because they did believe in predestination, that is, that God foreordained the identities of those who chose to enter the covenant, covenanters prior to Goodwin kept clear of the charge of preaching free will.

Goodwin's preaching during his first years in London was rooted squarely in the doctrine of the covenant of grace.¹⁶ In a series of sermons preached in 1634 and published in 1640 under the title *The Saints' Interest in God*, he advanced the thesis that "The Church and people of God have a peculiar right and interest in God by means whereof He may truly and properly be called theirs, or their God."¹⁷ The same idea occurs in Sibbes's *The Faithful Covenanter*: "God takes it upon him to be a God to all those that are in covenant with him, that is to be all-sufficient, to be our portion."¹⁸ Goodwin's account of the conditions of the covenant at first sight was indistinguishable from any by Perkins, Preston, or Sibbes: "There is no creature under heaven but God hath covenanted with it that if it will believe and accept of Jesus Christ from his hand, He will receive it and be a God to it." A closer examination of this sermon, however, reveals a distinct tension within Goodwin's conception of the covenant. He conceived of it as both exclusive and inclusive. At first he described a covenant between God and the "Church and people of God." Yet he also assured his hearers, on the other hand, that there is "no creature under heaven but God hath covenanted with it that if it will believe....He will be a God to it."¹⁹

Goodwin's actual experiences as a preacher reflected these same tensions between an exclusive and an inclusive conception of the covenant. By the mid-1630s, when *The Saints' Interest* was preached, Goodwin had acquired two distinct—if overlapping—audiences. The first was, of course, his St. Stephen's parish augmented frequently by the many Londoners, outsiders to the parish, who roamed the city in search of a good sermon. The second was his fledgling gathered church. During the mid-1630s the latter consisted of no more than a handful of laymen

¹⁵ John Preston, *The New Covenant, or The Saint's Portion* (1629), pp. 175-76; Richard Sibbes, "The Faithful Covenanter," in *Complete Works*, ed., Alexander Grosart (Edinburgh, 1863), pp. 8, 50-60, 71, 220.

¹⁶ That Goodwin was an exponent of the covenant of grace has been noticed by Christopher Hill in *Milton*, p. 224. See also Kendall, *Calvin*, pp. 141-40, for a discussion of the relationship between covenant theology and Arminianism.

¹⁷ Goodwin dedicated the collection to Isaac Penington, the future Presbyterian Lord Mayor of London, and the rest of his parishoners.

¹⁸ Sibbes, *Bruised Reed*, p. 8; Preston, *New Covenant*, p. 175

¹⁹ Goodwin, *The Saints' Interest in God*, 1640, pp. 79, 25, 26, 43. Italics mine.

meeting informally to study Scripture and pray together with Goodwin. Often he would address these constituencies together; occasionally he would meet his parish and his congregational followers separately. By 1639 at the latest, however, his gathered church had constituted itself into a formally institutionalized congregation that elected officers and administered an informal covenant to new members. By 1642 Goodwin was attempting to transform St. Stephen's into a congregational church built upon a parochial framework, one in which access to the communion table was limited to the godly. The cornerstone of these efforts was Goodwin's hope to merge his two congregations into one. Increasingly Goodwin's loyalties and esteem for his regular parishioners were superseded by his ties to "those who in the clearest and most regular way had chosen him for their Pastor."²⁰ It was these men and women of his gathered church who were the "saints" of his sermon, the "Church and people of God" of his exclusive imagery.

What accounted for the distinctly inclusive tone that also pervaded his sermon? Across a vast spiritual divide from his gathered church were the many unconverted, spiritually uncommitted members of his parish. Despite his commitment to his personal following, Goodwin was intensely preoccupied with the conversion process in general and with the fates of his parishioners in these years. Like most covenanters, Goodwin disliked the so-called "works-preaching"²¹ that emphasized the rigors and mortification of the soul that must dog the path of the sinner before he can find the way to a true conversion. Goodwin, perhaps thinking of the many unregenerate among his regular and transient parish auditory, instead emphasized God's use of varying means to bring a sinner to Christ. In a letter to an unnamed friend he wrote that faith, not "humiliation by the law", was the sole condition of the covenant. In *Christ Lifted Up* (1641) he wrote, "The grace of the gospel is every ways absolutely and entirely free to whosoever is willing to receive it....Neither is there any humiliation for sin....but that which is wrought in a man upon, or after, his believing."²² In his view God deliberately designed the terms of the covenant to be as inclusive as possible to encourage his emissaries to cast their nets widely in the search for converts.²³ Only believers could be saved, but anyone might choose to believe. The members of his gathered church had made this choice, but so might many others.

²⁰ John Goodwin, *Anapologesiates Antapologias* (1646), p. 228; U.R. Diss., Chap. II, *passim*.

²¹ Quoted by Kendall from Ann Hutchinson in *Calvin*, p. 177.

²² John Goodwin, *Christ Lifted Up* (1641), A5v; B.L., John Goodwin, "A Satisfactory letter of Mr. John Goodwin, Minister in Coleman St.," Harleian MS 837/151, fols. 48-59.

²³ Goodwin, *Saints' Interest*, p. 82. Goodwin ultimately resolved his conflict over the inclusive or exclusive nature of the covenant in *Redemption Redeemed* where he concluded that the covenant of grace must have been made with all mankind., p. 454ff.

By 1641 Goodwin's dual preoccupations, the covenant of grace and the conversion process, had converged on the single issue of the role of faith in the justification of sinners. Faith, after all, was the sole condition of the covenant. Goodwin's preaching aimed to bring it forth from his auditory. St. Paul had written, "To him that believeth, his faith is counted for righteousness (Rom. iv:5)." What, Goodwin wondered, did "faith" mean in Paul's text? Was it the act of faith or simply a metaphor for Christ's atonement? Goodwin interpreted him literally: Because of the atonement of Christ, God had agreed to accept men's actual faith in Christ and repentance for sin as sufficient atonement for their sins. Faith was enough. As he wrote in *Christ Lifted Up*, "Faith in Christ justifieth the believer...by virtue of that will, good pleasure....or covenant of God with his creature." Faith was God's instrument, the means "chosen and sanctified by God" to bring men into covenant.²⁴

Goodwin's emphasis on the act of faith in the conversion process drew an accusation of Arminianism from the future leader of the London Presbyterian classis, George Walker.²⁵ Goodwin's reply to Walker, *Imputatio Fidei* (1642), was the watershed of all his subsequent work. It contained the seeds of Arminius, twin tenets of universal atonement and general redemption. No longer did Goodwin define faith primarily in terms of the covenant. Instead he emphasized faith as the means by which God carries out the promise of Christ's atonement. Thus he expounded the mercy and power of the atonement, its capacity to save all who have faith in it.²⁶

II

From there it would seem only a short step to Arminianism. Yet - Goodwin did not publish his first Arminian tract, *Redemption Redeemed*, until 1651. Nevertheless the traditional account of Goodwin's evolution runs as follows: that Walker's charges provoked Goodwin seriously to examine Arminius's beliefs; that the rise of Presbyterianism after 1643 and the threat it represented to religious Independency pushed him ever farther from predestinarian Calvinism; and that his new-found Arminianism motivated Goodwin to defend an even broader conception of religious

²⁴ Goodwin, *Christ Lifted Up*, A5r, A6v.

²⁵ George Walker, *Socinianism in a Fundamental Point of Justification* (1640); George Walker, *A Defense of the True Sense and Meaning of... Romans, Chapter 4, between Mr. Anthony Wotton and Mr. George Walker* (1642). For a full account of Walker's quarrel with Goodwin and Goodwin's "rude, impudent and unmannerly followers," see U.R. Diss., pp. 188-92; Herbert McLachlan, *Socinianism in Seventeenth Century England* (Oxford, 1951) pp., 45-52; William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (1938; rept. New York: Harper Torchbook 1957), p. 200.

²⁶ John Goodwin, *Imputatio Fidei* (1642), Preface, 53, 121 and *passim*. An emphasis on the atonement was atypical of covenant theologians; it would, according to Coolidge, place Goodwin close to John Cotton (pp. 130-31).

toleration.²⁷ It is true that Goodwin's conception of toleration broadened drastically between 1643 when he fought for the liberty of congregationalism alone and 1647 when he would have brought anti-trinitarianism under its protection.²⁸ What must be questioned is the assumption that this change of heart was primarily the product of his conversion to Arminianism.

In his reply to Walker, Goodwin denied knowing very much of Arminius's teaching; his statements at the time indicate that what little he knew was inaccurate or plain wrong.²⁹ Moreover, Goodwin's followers, in a public declaration of 1652, implied that his complete conversion occurred no earlier than 1648.³⁰ How then are we to explain the radical shift in Goodwin's public declarations prior to that time? The evidence that Goodwin became an Arminian in the mid-1640s hinges on a passage taken from a sermon he preached in April, 1644. He was heard to say that if "[natural men] engage themselves withall [sic] within them to seek for this grace, they shall surely find it...certainly this grace shall be vouchsafed to them." What is often overlooked is Goodwin's next remark in which he amplified his definition of "natural man." One parishioner objected that natural man is dead in sins. Goodwin replied that such men "have a natural life of reason, judgment, understanding, consciences, etc. in them by reason of which...they are not so dead, but...they may do such things whereunto God hath been graciously pleased to annex a promise of grace." ³¹ This formulation went considerably beyond what Arminius himself was willing to accord the capacities of unregenerate man.³² It suggests that something more than Arminianism lay behind Goodwin's counter-attack on Presbyterian intolerance. The evidence of this remark coupled with the textual evidence of his toleration tracts between 1644 and 1648 suggests that Goodwin's toleration doctrine owed more to the Protestant rationalist Acontius and, to a lesser extent, to the "Acad-

²⁷ Thomas Jackson, *The Life of John Goodwin* (London, 1822), pp. 150-54; David Kirby, "The Parish of St. Stephen's, Coleman Street," p. 65. W.K. Jordan, *The Development of Religious Toleration in England*, III, (Cambridge, Mass., 1938), p. 403, concluded that Goodwin became an Arminian between 1645 and 1648 and that his Arminianism became the primary motivation for his defense of religious toleration.

²⁸ Compare, for example, [John Goodwin and John Price], *M.S. to A.S. with a Plea for Liberty of Conscience* (1644) with Goodwin's *Hagiomastix, or the Scourge of the Saints* (1647).

²⁹ In 1642, Goodwin's knowledge of Arminius was still second hand, based mainly on John Prideaux's *De Justificatione* (1626). He believed that the Arminians equated faith and works as causes of justification: *Impedit Ira Animum, or a Defense of the True Sense and Meaning of... Romans, Chapter 4, Verses 3, 5, 9, Together with a Reply* (1641), pp. 12-15. For Prideaux, see McLachlan, *Socialism in Seventeenth Century England*, pp. 127-28.

³⁰ John Goodwin, et al., "The Agreement and Distance of Brethren," (1652), ed. Thomas Jackson, *An Exposition of the ... Ninth Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans* (1835), p. 44.

³¹ [Samuel] Lane], *A Vindication of Divine Grace* (1645), Breviate.

³² U.R. Diss., p. 174.

emical" skeptic Castellio than to Arminius.³³ If this is so, it will help to explain why Goodwin's "new" Arminianism was so much broader than Arminianism per se, and why its genealogy is much more complex than is generally credited.

The heart of Goodwin's argument for toleration was that Scripture must be read by the light of reason. He took pains, of course (for good political and intellectual reasons), never to claim reason as a substitute for faith in exegesis. Nor did his tolerance ever extend to the antinomian sects; he found their doctrine no less offensive than their denial of the need for an educated clergy. Nevertheless with the emergence of rival Presbyterian and Independent factions in the Westminster Assembly in the wake of parliament's alliance with the Scots, Goodwin liberalized his position considerably. He maintained reason was an indispensable, not merely a useful, exegetical tool. Arminianism will not explain his increasing resort to religious rationalism and corresponding rejection of the written word of Scripture.

The ideas of Acontius and Castellio were well known in English intellectual circles by the mid-1640s. Jacobus Acontius (d. 1566) was a native of the region around Trent. He practiced law and civil engineering. In 1557 he fled to Basle to avoid persecution as a Protestant convert. He soon after moved to Zurich and Strassburg before his final migration to England in 1559. It was in England that he wrote the work on religious toleration and the resolution of religious differences, *Satanae Stratagemata*, for which he is remembered.³⁴ Sebastian Castellio (d. 1563) may have been one of Acontius's associates during his Swiss exile and was an influence on his approach to religious toleration in *Satanae Stratagemata*. Castellio, too, was a convert to Protestantism. His skeptical denunciations of the persecution of heretics such as Michael Servetus, and particularly the *De haereticis* (1554), earned him the lifelong enmity of Calvin and Beza.³⁵

The influence of both men on English thought may be said to have been

³³ As quoted in Sebastian Castellio, *Concerning Heretics*, ed. and trans. Roland Bainton (New York, 1935), p. 115. The reference is from William Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation* (1638), p. 126. "Academicall" skepticism refers to the "mitigated" skepticism of the followers of Sextus Empiricus as described by Richard Popkin, *The History of Skepticism from Erasmus to Descartes* (1st ed. rev. 1964; New York; Harper Torchbook, 1968), Chap. I, *passim*.

³⁴ J. Acontio, *Satanae Stratagemata libro octo* (Basle, 1565), was reprinted many times in Latin, French, German and Dutch editions. It was not translated into English until 1648 (see below). For Acontius's life see Joseph Lecler, S.J., *Toleration and Reformation*, I, trans. T.L. Westow (London, 1960), pp. 369-70; Jordan, *Development of Religious Toleration*, I (1932), pp. 304-17.

³⁵ Castellio was a native of Savoy who lived first in Strassburg and then in Basle where he died in 1564, a friend of the anti-Trinitarians Ochino and Lelio Sozzini. Jordan writes that Acontius probably knew Castellio and certainly read his work: Jordan, I, pp. 303-10; Lecler, *Toleration and Reformation*, pp. 337-38, 369-70.

deep as well as wide. Acontius exerted an especially profound impact on his readers. John Dury referred to him as an "excellent man," and *Satanae Stratagemata* as "not the work of an ordinary courage." Goodwin, who read the 1631 Latin edition of that work, later wrote that he "had not met with any author comparable to this now in thine hand."³⁶ Two editions of the *Stratagemata* were published at Oxford in 1631, the outset of a decade dedicated to the search for philosophical and religious certainty through a variety of means that included, among others, atomism, Baconianism, fideism, and irenicism.³⁷ The latitudinarians of the Great Tew circle read Acontius at this time. Chillingworth, in *The Religion of Protestants* (1638), cited Acontius and Castellio. The *Stratagemata* contributed to the irenicism of the Cambridge Platonists.³⁸ Acontius's *De Methodo* was a model for the educational reforms proposed by the Hartlib circle.³⁹ Milton and his friend, Dr. Nathan Paget, knew of many of the works of Castellio and the Socinians. Paget's library contained, in addition to many Socinian, medical, and alchemical works, a copy of the rare *Contra Libellum Calvinii* by Castellio. Paget was a parishioner of Goodwin and probably a personal friend. When an arbitration committee was formed in 1645 to debate the dispute between the parishioners and Goodwin over Goodwin's attempted imposition of congregationalism, Paget was one of those who represented Goodwin. Goodwin may have used Paget's library, for he claimed to own few books himself.⁴⁰

Goodwin read Acontius no later than 1641. The "Introduction" to *Imputatio Fidei* contained a close paraphrase of a passage from the *Stratagemata*. He did not acknowledge Acontius, however, nor utilize

³⁶ John Goodwin, "Reader's Preface," in J. Acontius, *Satan's Stratagems* (1648). Goodwin and Samuel Hartlib were the co-publishers; the translator, once thought to be Goodwin, is unknown, but see n. 43 below. Arminius, too, in "On Reconciling Religious Dissensions among Christians," *Works*, Vol. I, pp. 146-92, reflected the influence of Acontius. His Erastianism, however, was suited to the Dutch situation and is quite at variance with Acontius's (and Goodwin's) desires to limit the role of the magistrate in religion. The reformer and logician, Peter Ramus, also fell under the spell of the *Stratagemata*. Goodwin and Samuel Hartlib, publishers of a 1651 edition titled *Darkness Discovered*, quoted Ramus as writing, "I am possessed with an earnest longing to know and peruse all Acontius his writing." The Remonstrant Episcopius is also known to have relied on Acontius: Jordan, II (1936), pp. 325, 338, 332-40; cf. Rosalie Colie, *Light and Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1957), pp. 40-41; Bangs, *Arminius*, pp. 275-77.

³⁷ McLachlan, *Socinianism in Seventeenth Century England* (1951), p. 58, n. 2; Robert H. Kargon, *Atomism in England From Hariot to Newton* (Oxford, 1966), pp. 45, 53.

³⁸ Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants*, p. 198; McLachlan, *Socinianism in Seventeenth Century England*, p. 58; H.G. VanLeeuwen, *The Problem of Certainty in English Thought* (The Hague, 1970), pp. 27-28.

³⁹ G.H. Turnbull, *Hartlib, Dury, and Comenius* (Liverpool U.P., 1947), pp. 37, 257.

⁴⁰ For Goodwin's problems with his parish, see p. 61 below. Gulielmum Cooper, *Bibliotheca medica ... Nathanis Paget, M.D.* (1681), no. 412; Hill, *Milton*, 492-93; Lecler, p. 351, n. 1; James H. Hanford, "Dr. Paget's Library," *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association*, 33 (1945), pp. 90-99. Guildhall Library MS 4458/1, fol. 134.

him in more than an incidental way in this work.⁴¹ By 1644 he was relying on and acknowledging the arguments of Acontius and Castellio. Goodwin utilized both the structure and the substance of their arguments. Particularly pertinent were Castellio's use of methodological skepticism as an argument for religious toleration and Acontius's reliance on a form of religious rationalism at the expense of traditional Protestant biblicism. As Richard Popkin has argued, the revival of "academic" or "mitigated" skepticism in the sixteenth century provided anti-dogmatic writers from the Catholic Erasmus to the anti-trinitarian Socinus with a forceful argument for toleration.⁴² Where fundamental articles of faith were at issue Erasmus urged a fideistic acceptance of the authority of the Roman church. In the case of *adiaphora*, matters not essential to salvation, he prescribed tolerance for differences of opinion. Acontius shared Erasmus's attitude toward matters indifferent. His two-sided argument for toleration in *Satanæ Stratagemata* can be expressed concisely: Religious truths are subject to progressive revelation aided by the application of reason to scriptural exegesis. No one, neither cleric nor magistrate, may persecute on a presumption of heresy. What may appear to be heretical may well, in years to come, prove to be the word of God.⁴³ Acontius's argument was based on the words of the Pharisee, Gamaliel (Acts v:38-39) and those of the parable of the tares: "A people is never in so great light but that there are some mists of darkness; we must first diligently examine whether [the doctrine in question] agree with....Scriptures lest it should fall out that while we think to resist an error, we become resistors of the truth."⁴⁴ Acontius's purpose was also constructive. He believed that the fundamentals of Christianity could be determined by rational methods. Rules of analysis and argumentation could be designed—indeed were designed by Acontius himself—to increase the chances of disputants reaching an accord.⁴⁵

The work of Acontius acted, as it were, as a letter of introduction to Castellio for English readers. There is no firm proof that Goodwin read

⁴¹ Goodwin, *Imputatio Fidei*, Preface, Cf. Haller, p. 201 and McLachlan, p. 50; Charles Webster, *The Great Instauration* (New York, 1975), pp. 8-15. Cf. Acontius, *Darkness*, 19. Webster cites the use of Dan. 12:4 in this preface as reason to locate Goodwin within the orbit of "new Baconian" millenarianism. Goodwin's millennial fervor, however, died down more quickly than many others'. By 1645 at the latest he looked to a distant, not an imminent millenium.

⁴² Popkin, *The History of Skepticism*, Chap. I *passim*; pp. 132-33.

⁴³ *Satanæ Stratagemata* (1648) Readers Preface. I have used the 1651 reissue titled *Darkness Discovered* (rpt. Delmar, New York: Scholar's Facsmiles, 1978). The translator was once thought to be Goodwin, although there is no evidence for that, and I agree with R.E. Field, editor of the 1978 reprint, that it is unlikely. It is likely to have been someone close to the Hartlib circle, such as John Sadler, or John Milton.

⁴⁴ Acontius, *Darkness*, p. 18, 94ff.: "For to the servants demanding whether [to] pluck up the tares, the householder is said to have answered, that they should not go, lest gathering the tares, they should pluck up the wheat."

⁴⁵ Nor did Acontius hesitate to heap scorn on those scholars who "mispend their leisure" in unprofitable "wrangling."

him. Nevertheless the expression and structure of Goodwin's ideas, especially in *Theomachia*, are identical to Castellio's in *De haereticis*. Men of Goodwin's personal or intellectual acquaintance were familiar with his works. It would not be amiss to be alert to Goodwin's probable debt to Castellio. The latter composed, or rather compiled, *De haereticis* using passages from church fathers and reformers (including both Calvin and Castellio's own earlier work). These passages all pertained to the question of religious toleration.⁴⁶ A preponderant number referred to the parable of the tares; a few, including those by Castellio, linked the parable to the words of Gamaliel.⁴⁷ The core of Castellio's arguments was the assertion that no one man could distinguish with certainty between the orthodox and the heterodox, the saint and the heretic. It was far better to wait for "the day of the Lord" when God would make his meaning clear than prematurely to take up the sword against presumed heresy. "Through zeal for Christ," he wrote, "we pull up the tares, though he commanded they be left until the harvest lest the wheat be uprooted." Continuing with this theme in the next paragraph he wrote, "I need scarcely mention the advice of Gamaliel, who pointed out that if this "work be of men it will come to nought; but if it be of God ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God!"⁴⁸

Goodwin relied on these arguments in increasing measure between 1644 and 1648, his reliance increasing in proportion to his political need. The first sign of this development came early in October, 1644, when Goodwin published *Theomachia*, one of the outstanding toleration tracts of this period. Goodwin wrote it at a time when his personal fortunes no less than the fortunes of Independency in general were undergoing rapid political change. Since 1642 Goodwin had been attempting to impose a modified congregationalism on his St. Stephen's parish, a move opposed by many of the select vestry. Relations between Goodwin and the parish were strained to their limit by 1645.⁴⁹ At the same time the Independents of the Westminster Assembly were fighting a losing battle to keep parliament from imposing Presbyterianism on London in keeping with the demands of their military allies, the Scots. In 1645 parliament did authorize a trial Presbyterianism for London. Moreover by the middle of that year the combined opposition of a Presbyterian-dominated parliamentary Committee on Plundered Ministers and a pro-Presbyterian vestry at St. Stephen's resulted in Goodwin's ejection from

⁴⁶ Sebastian Castellio, *Concerning Heretics*, trans. and ed. Roland Bainton (New York, 1935). The original Latin edition was published in 1554.

⁴⁷ As Roland Bainton makes clear in "The Parable of the Tares as the Proof Text for Religious Liberty to the End of the Sixteenth Century," *Church History*, I (June, 1932), pp. 67-89, this parable was a favorite text among proponents of religious toleration in the 16th century. Gamaliel's speech, too, was made the common property of Castellio, Acontius, Ochino, and others of the Castellio circle. Acontius, *Darkness*, p. 18; Lecler, pp. 366, 369.

⁴⁸ Castellio, *Concerning Heretics*, pp. 277-79.

⁴⁹ U.R. Diss., pp. 60-82.

his living. Between 1645 and 1649 he ministered to his gathered church exclusively.

Goodwin acknowledged neither Acontius nor Castellio in *Theomachia*. In that environment they were viewed with suspicion as "sneaking Socinians."⁵⁰ Moreover in the weeks surrounding *Theomachia's* publication, a parliamentary subcommittee for accommodation of religious differences, soon to dissolve in failure, still seemed to have a chance of success. Goodwin may well have wanted to avoid prejudicing his audience by introducing suspect sources at such a delicate moment.⁵¹ Nevertheless their echoes could be heard in this work. The structure of Goodwin's argument, like Castellio's, was almost entirely negative. His goal at this early date was to win toleration for congregationalism; his method was to deny that Scripture unequivocally favored Presbyterianism over congregationalism.⁵² Further, he denied that either polity could support its superior claim when Scripture was searched by the light of human reason. Rather than insist on the exclusive claims of congregationalism, he stressed the uncertainty that must lie behind any such claims. It would be perilous, he concluded, to allow the magistrate, or, for that matter, a national church to insist on a uniform religious polity. With Castellio he called on the words of Gamaliel: "If this counsel or work be of God...ye cannot destroy it lest ye be found even fighters against God!" No doctrine should be condemned without "proof upon proof, evidence upon evidence." Without such certainty, one could only adopt the way of Gamaliel, waiting in patience to see which polity would "in time wear out unto nothing and be dissolved."⁵³

Goodwin's tactical skepticism carried a dangerous double edge. Many readers took it for the real thing. Calling for "proof upon proof" seemed tantamount to denying that sufficient evidence could ever be obtained to certify the truth of a doctrine. Actually Goodwin's skepticism was of a much more limited kind. It extended only to matters he held to be indifferent, not to fundamentals. He believed that *adiaphora* received no more than equivocal support from Scripture; he did not deny Scripture's divine authority or the verifiability of its fundamental message. Where the Bible yielded inconclusive testimony, God would "give testimony from heaven...in due time."⁵⁴ In the meantime Goodwin could only reiterate, in the spirit of Acontius, that it was "extreme madness" for men to oppose violently a doctrine before they know "whether the things be indeed from God or no."⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Acontius, *Darkness*, Intro., p. xiii; McLachlan, pp. 58, 127. Both authors quote from Francis Cheynell, *The Rise, Growth and Danger of Socinianism* (1643).

⁵¹ Jordan, III, pp. 56, 57; Lawrence Kaplan, *Politics and Religion during the English Revolution* (New York, 1976), pp. 66, 67; Clive Holmes, *The Eastern Association in the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 203-04.

⁵² John Goodwin, *Theomachia* (1644), p. 22.

⁵³ John Goodwin, *Theomachia*, pp. 1, 11, 19, 20, 51.

⁵⁴ Goodwin, *Theomachia*, p. 19. To suppress even a doctrine that is not of God, if suppressed out of ignorance, is to perform a "sacrifice of fools."

⁵⁵ *Theomachia*, p. 19; Acontius, *Darkness Discovered*, pp. 11, 19, 24.

By the end of October, when Goodwin's next toleration tract, *Innocency's Triumph*, appeared, the political picture had changed considerably. The Scottish army had brought about the fall of Newcastle; their agents in London were ill disposed to compromise over religion. Perhaps more important, dissatisfaction with the leader of the Eastern Association army, the Earl of Manchester, was giving rise to disunity within parliament's war party. Whether as a soothing gesture to the Scots, or as a measure to eliminate an additional divisive debate—this one over religious toleration—parliament ordered the dissolution of the committee for accommodation of religious differences. That was on October 25.⁵⁶ The next day Goodwin's *Innocency's Triumph* appeared. This time his objective was to keep the magistrate out of spiritual affairs. Perhaps knowing caution would be useless, he quoted directly from Acontius. Citing the 1631 edition of the *Stratagemata*, Goodwin translated Acontius's explication of the parable of the tares. Again quoting Acontius he wrote, "The Lord verily definitively declared the magistrates are not competent judges of opinions [in matters of religion] but prohibited all such jurisdiction to them."⁵⁷

Over the next four years Goodwin's thinking shifted to the side of a more thoroughgoing scriptural skepticism. He continued to believe in the divine authorship of the Bible. He was no atheist. Nevertheless, he came to doubt that the original, exact meaning of Scripture could ever be known by natural means. Such views could entail radical consequences. They could justify any belief at all, short of outright anti-Christianity. Goodwin did not go that far. He did begin to write with a consciousness of the difficulty of attaining theological certainty.

Political necessity provided one reason for Goodwin's deepening commitment to reason in determining religious certainty. By 1646 and 1647 the toleration crisis had intensified. Independent fortunes were at low ebb. In May 1646 Charles I had escaped into Scottish hands at Newcastle. By playing Scottish demands for a Presbyterian religious settlement off against parliamentary fears of a Scottish-Royalist alliance, the king hoped to reach a settlement agreeable to himself. Parliamentary moderates, who might otherwise have voted against widespread imposition of Presbyterianism, now feared antagonizing the Scots and withdrew their opposition. In London, too, the citizenry petitioned for peace and an end to the disorderly proliferation of religious sects. Presbyterians made inroads in City government in the municipal elections of December 1646. More ominously, by early 1647 the pro-peace faction of M.P. Denzil Holles stood ready to vote for disbandment of the New Model Army and even to raise its own militia if parliament did not give in to its demands.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Holmes, pp. 203-04; Kaplan, pp. 49, 66, 67; Jordan, III, pp. 56, 57.

⁵⁷ John Goodwin, *Innocencies Triumph*, (1644), p. 12; Thomason's annotation is Oct. 26.

⁵⁸ Valerie Pearl, "London's Counter-Revolution," in *The Interregnum*, ed. G.E. Aylmer (London, 1972), pp. 36-42; U.R. Diss. 127-135.

Against this background parliament took steps to restore religious order. In June 1646 it authorized the institution of Presbyterianism throughout England. In September news leaked that the House of Commons was studying an anti-blasphemy bill which would punish "damnable" heresy by death.⁵⁹ Goodwin protested immediately. The ensuing debate, which lasted until May 2, 1648 when the bill became law, took up two questions, the extent of religious toleration and the proper role for the magistrate in enforcing it. By this time Goodwin was the head of a separatist church and without any ties to his former parish.⁶⁰ He had come to believe that the magistrate ought to stay out of matters of individual conscience.⁶¹ It would appear that a long-running controversy between Goodwin and the fanatical anti-Independent William Prynne (whose advice to the Committee on Plundered Ministers had helped eject Goodwin from his living) fueled his resolve to keep the magistrate's influence at a minimum.⁶²

Significantly, 1646 marked the high point of cooperation between Goodwin's followers and the more radical Levellers. Association between members of the two groups began at least as early as 1643 and continued on and off until Goodwin's people broke with them for the last time late in 1648. Publication of the defamatory pamphlet *Walwyn's Wiles* signaled the final break.⁶³ Despite their ultimately incompatible political visions Goodwin and the Levellers shared a belief in religious toleration during most of the 1640s. Goodwin's followers contributed fifty shillings toward publication of William Walwyn's *A Word in Season*, a pamphlet opposing the pro-Presbyterian, pro-peace policies of the London city government. Moreover Goodwin and Walwyn used many of the same arguments to justify their position on toleration. They both drew on the parable of the tares and the words of Gamaliel.⁶⁴ When Goodwin's tolera-

⁵⁹ Jordan, III, p. 91.

⁶⁰ In 1649, Goodwin was reinstated by his former parishioners until his final ejection in 1660. Kirby, p. 71, 72.

⁶¹ See John Goodwin, *Hagiomastix*, Preface, p. 118; in a grudging, near-Hobbesian tone he conceded, "I look upon [the magestrate] as the only preventive appointed by God to keep the world from falling foul upon itself."

⁶² William Prynne, *A Full Reply to Certain Brief Observations* (1644); John Goodwin, *Anapologesiates Antapologesias* (1646); John Goodwin, *Calumny Arraigned and Cast* (1645).

⁶³ William Walwyn, *Walwyn's Just Defense* (1649), pp. 13, 14. Walwyn's contacts with Goodwin went back to 1642. The authors of *Walwyn's Wiles* were William Kiffin, David Lordell, John Price, Richard Arnald, Edmund Rosier, Henry Foster, and Henry Burnet. Lordell, Price, Arnald, and Rosier were all followers of Goodwin.

⁶⁴ *Walwyn's Just Defense*, p. 31. Cf. Walwyn, *The Compassionate Samaritane* (1644), p. 6, to many similar passages in *Theomachia*, published several months later: "Since there remains a possibility of error ... one sort of men are not to compel another, since this hazard is run thereby, that he who is in an error may be the container of him who is in the truth." But cf. the following passage from Walwyn, *A Whisper in the Ear of Mr. Thomas Edwards* (1646), p. 10, "Nor do I take upon me preemtorily to determine what is truth and what is error amongst [the Anabaptists, Antinomians, Seekers, Presbyterians, or Independents]. All have a possibility of error." Here Walwyn's tolerance is broader than Goodwin's. See n. 66 below.

tionist tract *Hagiomastix* was attacked during a parliamentary fast day sermon in 1646, Walwyn went into print to defend it.⁶⁵ The following year Goodwin may have assisted Walwyn in defending the Socinian Paul Best, whose death sentence Commons was considering even while continuing the debate over the proposed anti-blasphemy bill.⁶⁶

Thus the politics of religious toleration combined with intellectual commitment to encourage Goodwin's insistence on a broader standard of religious truth. In his earliest reply to the anti-blasphemy bill, *Some Modest and Humble Queries* (1646), for example, he asserted that no biblical proof could possibly justify the death penalty for "damnable" heresy when no one was able to define it.⁶⁷ As he argued the next year in *Hagiomastix, or the Scourge of the Saints*, most men neither knew of nor could read the most authentic accounts of God's word, the original Hebrew and Greek testaments. He reminded the members of parliament that even in scholarly translation, "words and phrases from other languages lose their primitive and ancient force."⁶⁸ Even those who could read the original texts could not agree on their meaning in all particulars. The fundamentals of the gospel might be clear from Scripture, but one could hardly make that claim for most of its contents. Clearly it must not serve as the single standard of spiritual truth or error.

Such sentiments gave Goodwin's opponents the opportunity to accuse him of skepticism and, more specifically, of denying the divine authorship of Scripture. This was dangerous because the Blasphemy Act under consideration made the denial of the divine authority of Scripture a capital offense. As part of the hue and cry against this measure Goodwin joined Samuel Hartlib and John Dury in publishing an English translation of the first four books of Acontius's *Stratagemata*.⁶⁹ In addition, as a means of defending himself from the charges elicited by *Hagiomastix*, Goodwin wrote *The Divine Authority of Scripture Asserted*. As the title would suggest, he did not deny God's authorship of the Bible. Never-

⁶⁵ Haller, p. 266; W. Walwyn, *A Demurre to the Bill for Preventing the Growth and Spreading of Heresy* (1646); William Haller, *Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution* (1955; rpt. New York: Columbia Paperback, 1963, 1977), p. 284, n. 48.

⁶⁶ McLachlan, pp. 152-56; Hill, *Milton*, p. 290. Dr. Leo Solt very kindly drew my attention recently to a tract titled *The Humble Petition of John Fielder* (1651). Dr. Solt suggests that tract contains evidence of Goodwin's having pitted himself against the Leveller, John Lilburne, and Gerrard Winstanley who were engaged in the defense of the sectary, Fielder. If so, it would certainly cast doubt on Goodwin's reputation for tolerance. It is indeed true that Goodwin, paradoxically perhaps, often insisted that the educated ought to guide the unlettered in scriptural interpretation. Moreover, in *Redemption Redeemed* (1651), p. 192, he argued against antinomianism. However, the John Goodwin referred to by Fielder is not, I believe, the John Goodwin of the present discussion, but an M.P. (Haslemere, Surrey) of the same name. I am indebted to Dr. Solt for alerting me to the existence of this pamphlet, the subject of his forthcoming article in the *Huntington Library Quarterly*.

⁶⁷ John Goodwin, *Some Modest and Humble Queries* (1646), p. 5.

⁶⁸ *Hagiomastix*, p. 39. Cf. Chillingworth, p. 83.

⁶⁹ See above, n. 43.

theless, he did cast doubt—as he had not in *Theomachia*—on the belief that methodical exegesis and orderly debate would yield agreement on the fundamentals of faith. The Bible's essential message was, in Goodwin's Platonic metaphor, "as so many divine characters printed and stamped (as it were) on the body or face of the Scriptures bewraying their original and descent from God." What Goodwin called the "matter of substance" of the Bible lay not in the letter of Scripture but in the spirit of the divine stamped on its inert form. It was this substance, not the words themselves, that amounted to the divine element of Scripture.⁷⁰

Human reason and "discursive abilities" were the means by which man ascertained the meaning of most things in Scripture. As he wrote in *Hagiomastix*, a man must not believe "anything but what he hath reason and ground for in the word of God. From there it follows that reason ought to be every man's leader, guide, and director in his faith. This is sound divinity indeed."⁷¹ In cases where a doctrine transcended human reason (Goodwin here provocatively cited the Trinity), "as by my reason I neither do nor can comprehend or conceive the particular mode or manner of [it], so neither do I...believe anything at all concerning [it]; save only its incomprehensibility." He did not deny the Trinity; he concluded that the doctrine lacked the intellectual clarity required of any standard of religious orthodoxy. He conceded that it was in the "spirit of error" to deny the Trinity but concluded, too, that this was an intellectually plausible error. Where reason fails, conscience must be the only test.⁷²

III

Thus by 1648 Goodwin was already committed—firmly, if unsystematically—to a form of rational theology. The statements in *The Divine Authority of Scripture Asserted* are a far cry from the biblicism of his earlier work including even *Theomachia*. They are evidence of the theological rationalism that would be a striking feature of his major Arminian works of 1651, *Redemption Redeemed* and *The Pagan's Debt and Dowry*. Yet, as noted earlier, Goodwin's conversion to Arminianism was not completed until after *Divine Authority* was written, if the testimony of his followers is to be believed. These rationalistic elements would infuse his Arminianism. They must, however, be distinguished from Arminianism per se; they, as much as anything, are what distinguished Goodwin's Arminianism from any previous variety. Goodwin became committed to Arminianism precisely at a time when his public and political life were taken up with the momentous questions of religious

⁷⁰ *Divine Authority*, pp. 13, 31.

⁷¹ Goodwin, *Hagiomastix*, p. 108.

⁷² *Hagiomastix*, p. 108. This passage plus Goodwin's insistence on the clear ideas of reason in exegesis (not to mention the accusations of contemporaries) have misled some historians into calling him a Socinian. As McLachlan notes, Goodwin was consistently anti-Socinian but did maintain their right to publish freely. Cf. Hill, *Milton*, p. 224.

and political rights raised by the Army's victory, the Whitehall debates, and the founding of the Commonwealth. It is, perhaps, not overly speculative to suggest that Goodwin adopted Arminianism largely to accommodate his already well developed conception of the role of individual reason and conscience in religious life.⁷³

In this context one wishes there were evidence of a firm connection between Goodwin and the Cambridge Platonists in the late 1640s. Unfortunately none has come to light thus far, although this is a subject in which much more work needs to be done. There is however, evidence for some degree of cross-fertilization of ideas between the Cambridge Platonists and Goodwin. Benjamin Whichcote in fact was accused of imbibing too much from Goodwin, a charge he evaded rather than denied. For Goodwin's part, his only explicit reference to them occurred in 1651 when he dedicated *Redemption Redeemed* to Benjamin Whichcote, the Heads of the Colleges and the students at Cambridge. Nevertheless, the Cambridge group made an impression on Goodwin much earlier. One example must suffice. In *The Divine Authority of Scripture Asserted* Goodwin considered the plight of men who "are fallen from a dead faith to a lively denial of the divine authority of Scripture." He concluded that the Lord withdraws his blessings from those who "shall turn their backs upon that 'candle of the Lord' (as Solomon calls it) which by the hand of Christ is lighted up in every man's soul; especially after the light and shining of it have been augmented and enriched by the additional light of the Gospel."⁷⁴ One can, to be sure, make too much of the Cambridge Platonists' impact on Goodwin's thought. It is true that he was well informed about the nature of their enterprise. Moreover his *Dedication to Redemption Redeemed* suggests he accorded them a preeminent place among contemporary English thinkers. However, while Goodwin and the Platonists concerned themselves with many of the same problems, in the end they arrived at very different results. Goodwin's "Dedication" is a gesture of respect and, one might say, intellectual diplomacy; when he wrote that he did not expect a favorable reading from them but hoped they would be indulgent toward his few "excesses," he displayed one of the few examples of intellectual humility ever to moderate his usually self-confident tone.⁷⁵

Goodwin and the Cambridge Platonists both stressed the validity of internal assent to spiritual fundamentals over external signs of religiosity. Whichcote, Henry More, or Ralph Cudworth, for example, were

⁷³ Jordan, III, 402-03, comes to the same conclusion although he dates Goodwin's conversion to Arminianism somewhat earlier.

⁷⁴ John Goodwin, *The Divine Authority of Scripture Asserted*, Intro., A2r, A4v. Goodwin's dedications indicate he wrote this tract through most of 1647 in response to criticism of *Hagiomastix*. I take the phrase "candle of the Lord" to indicate Goodwin's cognizance of Whichcote's Cambridge sermons.

⁷⁵ Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed* (1651), Dedication.

neoplatonists; they reasoned that the soul of every man or woman was infused with the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Goodwin, in contrast, was much more humanistic. His rationalism depended on a theory of God's gift of a "stock of light, reason, judgment, conscience, memory, understanding, etc."⁷⁶ Thus ennobled, man could discover the religious fundamentals through the study of Scripture, the law of nature, and the promptings of conscience. Goodwin emphasized the human capacity to judge, more than an inborn "candle of the Lord" illuminating a stock set of spiritual truths. Their growing hostility to Cartesian materialism (as they perceived it) motivated many of the Cambridge Platonists to look for signs of God's active intervention in the world, a "particular" as well as a "general" providence. Goodwin stressed (albeit in the causal language of Aristotle) a more Cartesian sense of God's passive role, a tendency to act through secondary causes. He thus came to different conclusions from the Cambridge Platonists. Nevertheless he was fully aware of their concerns and the common philosophical universe they all inhabited. He was unmindful neither of their status at Cambridge nor of the stature of their thought.⁷⁷

We are now in a position to examine Goodwin's Arminianism in relation to the wider intellectual context in which it evolved. By the time *Redemption Redeemed* and *The Pagan's Debt and Dowry*, his two most important Arminian tracts, were written his vision had broadened enough to take in the rationalism and latitudinarianism that would mark much of post-Restoration theology. His theology centered on the belief that God intended to save all men; that Scripture and nature both displayed all doctrines necessary for salvation; and that all men possessed the means of acquiring this crucial knowledge. Arminianism and rationalism merged in a coherent system. *Redemption Redeemed* thus considered the process of justification, but in light of a decidedly liberal view of human reason and capacity. Goodwin's was a much more liberal conception than Arminius's. Whereas Arminius believed in the predestination of particular individuals and in "natural" man's utter dependence on God's grace, Goodwin had jettisoned these beliefs even before he adopted Arminian theology.⁷⁸ As he wrote in the Preface to *Redemption Redeemed*, for some time he had "found [them] ever and

⁷⁶ Goodwin, for example, seems not to have posited a set of innate or *a priori* notions as did the Cambridge Platonists. For general works on the Cambridge Platonists, see Gerald R. Cragg (ed.), *The Cambridge Platonists* (New York, 1968); John Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England*, (Edinburgh, 1872); James Deotis Roberts, *From Puritanism to Platonism in Seventeenth Century England* (The Hague, 1968); Ernst Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance in England*, trans. J.P. Pettegrove (Edinburgh, 1953). See also Colie, *passim* and Webster, pp. 54-56, 145-51.

⁷⁷ See esp. *Redemption Redeemed* (1651), pp. 5-13, 16-23; *Imputatio Fidei*, pp. 66-90; Webster, *The Great Instauration*, pp. 144-53; Colie, p. 50. Henry More, for example, wrote of an "inward principle of life and motion," a form of vitalism; see Cragg, *Cambridge Platonists*, pp. 27, 28, 42.

⁷⁸ Bangs, *Arminius*, pp. 338, 352.

anon gravellish in my mouth, and corroding and fretting in my bowels.”⁷⁹ Much of the Arminianism in *Redemption Redeemed* rested on the philosophical apprehension of the passive nature of providence. He considered the entire question of the role of faith in justification, a subject also central to the much earlier *Imputatio Fidei*, as a matter of defining God’s role as a “cause.” God was indeed a cause of one’s salvation or damnation, but a remote cause. More immediately, one’s fate rested on one’s own decision to have faith.⁸⁰

In its overall conception *Redemption Redeemed* was designed to “redeem” the power of the atonement from the encroachment of high Calvinist predestinarianism. Like Arminius, Goodwin described the relationship between God and man as one in which both parties retained some freedom. Like Perkins or Preston, he continued to imagine a covenant binding the relationship. He explicitly envisioned the atonement as God’s pledge to mankind, redeemable (as it were) through the act of faith. God chose the elect “according to his own pleasure.” Yet it was the “reasons and understandings of men themselves that must apprehend, discern and understand these things.” Notwithstanding the assistance of divine grace it was man—not God—who must believe and have faith.⁸¹

Goodwin’s God was merciful but also just. The atonement proved God’s intention to save all mankind; God therefore must have given all men the capacity to apprehend the Gospels’ promise. That was the message of Goodwin’s next work, *The Pagan’s Debt and Dowry*. Even “those many millions of all ages who never heard the Gospel,” could know its message of hope through the operation of their reason and senses.⁸² All men and women had this capacity. If they chose not to use it a just God would consign them to everlasting, and deserved, damnation. Unlike Goodwin, Arminius maintained that God knew the identity of the elect; their salvation was tied to the assistance of divine grace by an explicit theological connection. Goodwin’s vision was much more open-ended, resembling Acontius more than Arminius. Acontius had written of man’s capacity to discern the Gospel message that “He has in him [an] ability, from things, perceived by the sense to arrive [at] the knowledge of the divine Nature itself. He hath some suspicion that there shall be a life after this, which shall ever last, attended with happiness to the good, with misery and torments to the wicked.”⁸³ Likewise, in words that echoed Acontius and at the same time looked forward to the rational theology of the Restoration, Goodwin wrote:

⁷⁹ As quoted in Jordan, III, p. 402.

⁸⁰ *Redemption Redeemed*, pp. 1-40.

⁸¹ John Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed* (1651), Preface, pp. 114-15.

⁸² *Redemption Redeemed*, p. 506; John Goodwin, *The Pagan’s Debt and Dowry* (1651), p. 9, 29, 60. Such an assertion goes well beyond what Arminius would have claimed for man’s natural capacity; U.R. dis., p. 174.

⁸³ Acontius, *Darkness Discovered*, p. 6.

For God being by the light of nature known, or at least...knowable, to be infinitely just, infinitely bent in hatred against sin; when notwithstanding he shall express himself in goodness and patience and bountifulness towards those who know themselves to be sinners, hereby he sufficiently testifieth and declareth unto them that his justice and severity against sin have been...satisfied.⁸⁴

IV

Goodwin's theology stands at the crossroads of English intellectual history where Puritanism and latitudinarianism met. In his polity and politics he fairly can be placed in the tradition of Puritanism. His theology is more difficult to locate. It combined covenant theology, Protestant rationalism, and Arminianism. Goodwin's thought thus looked back to the Puritanism of the 1620s and forward to the rational theology of the post-Restoration era.⁸⁵ Goodwin founded no school nor left any direct theological heirs.⁸⁶ Yet it may be that by linking the culture of Puritanism to the culture of latitudinarian rationalism he helped prepare the way for the theology of the English Enlightenment.

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⁸⁴ Goodwin, *The Pagan's Debt*, p. 9.

⁸⁵ See Margaret Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution* (Ithaca, New York, 1976) for a discussion of the ideological ramifications of post-Restoration latitudinarianism. Also see Pocock, "Post-Puritan England and the Problem of the Enlightenment," *passim*.

⁸⁶ Bernard Semmel, *The Methodist Revolution* (New York, 1973), p. 89, notes that 19th century Methodists memorialized Goodwin for his defense of liberty of conscience as much as for his Arminianism.