

THE DIVERSITY OF ARMINIAN SOTERIOLOGY:

THOMAS GRANTHAM, JOHN GOODWIN, AND JACOBUS ARMINIUS

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Introduction

Thomas Grantham, the foremost English General Baptist of the latter half of the seventeenth century, is the quintessential representative of Arminian Baptist theology, combining classical Arminian soteriology with a distinctly Baptist view of church and state.^[1] To say, however, that Grantham's or his General Baptist contemporaries' soteriology was *Arminian* requires much qualification, not because it differed exceedingly from Arminius's own soteriology, but because of the shape Arminian theology took in the early part of the seventeenth century and in the centuries that followed. A study of Grantham's soteriology serves not only to enable us to understand the nuances of that unique Arminian Baptist stream of theology, but also to help us grasp the diversity of Arminianism (or, as some have quipped, "Arminianisms") as a theological phenomenon. To study Grantham's Arminianism in the context of the whole of Arminian theology prior to him would be a daunting task. But to examine it in the context of a representative English Arminian in the half-century that preceded Grantham would serve at least two purposes. It would not only uncover Grantham's unique middle ground between orthodox Calvinism and what has come to be known as Arminianism since the time of Arminius, but would also serve as a starting point for the discussion of doctrinal Arminianism in the seventeenth and succeeding centuries. This study will comprise an exposition of Grantham's soteriology with reference primarily to John Goodwin (d. 1665), the Arminian Independent, and Jacobus Arminius (d. 1609), the first Arminian.^[2]

Thomas Grantham: A Historical Sketch

Thomas Grantham was born in 1634 in Halton, near Spilsby, in eastern Lincolnshire, the son of a farmer and tailor.^[3] Grantham made his living, like his father, as a tailor and farmer. Grantham recalled that the "Lord wrought faith and repentance" in his heart when he was around fourteen or fifteen years of age, and at age nineteen (1653), he joined a small General Baptist church in Boston, Lincolnshire, and was baptized by immersion, as had been the custom of the General Baptists since approximately 1640. Three years later, in 1656, Grantham was chosen as pastor, which involved him in preaching in his own town as well as neighboring villages. This activity brought persecution upon Grantham and others.

In 1660, after the restoration of the monarchy, Grantham and a fellow believer, Joseph Wright, presented a plea for toleration to King Charles II. This plea included a statement of General Baptist loyalty to the crown as well as a confession of faith, which later became known as *The Standard Confession, 1660*. (Grantham subsequently reprinted it with annotations in his *Christianismus Primitivus*.) The crown was not receptive, and many General Baptist leaders soon found themselves imprisoned. Grantham himself was in and out of jail during the 1660s, which occasioned his tract, *The Prisoner Against the Prelate* (1662). In 1666 he was elected a messenger "by the consent of many congregations, and ordained . . . by those who were in the same office before [him]," in essence an itinerant preacher who advised and assisted in the business of local churches. Grantham then began to establish himself as an author, debater, and pamphleteer. He debated Roman Catholics, Conformists, Quakers, Presbyterians, and Particular Baptists, and gained a reputation as an able and articulate spokesman for the General Baptists. His most monumental work was *Christianismus Primitivus, or, the Ancient Christian Religion*, published in 1678, of which the church historian Adam Taylor said: "From the universal approbation it received, [it] may be considered almost a public document." In this massive work, Grantham aimed to restore primitive Christianity, which he said had been abused and neglected for centuries. Like

Grantham's other works, *Christianismus Primitivus* is the product of a well read theologian who cited numerous contemporary authors but relied primarily on the Bible and the early Christian fathers.

Grantham's work as an author, messenger, and church planter made him the foremost leader of the General Baptists in the latter half of the seventeenth century, and he also gained the respect of many outside the General Baptist community. He died on January 17, 1692. Grantham was to be buried in the yard of St. Stephen's Cathedral in Norwich. Upon rumors that the body would be dug up, John Connould, the vicar of St. Stephen's, with whom Grantham had previously debated and become friends, had Grantham's body interred "before the West Doors, in the Middle Aisle" of the building. Connould conducted the burial service. A plaque in the General Baptist chapel in Norwich contains the following inscription:

When at closing the Book he [Connould] added
This day is a very great man fallen in our Israel:
For after their epistolary dispute in sixty letters, ended
That very learned Vicar retained,
The highest esteem and friendship for him while living,
And was at his own desire buried by him, May MDCCVIII.

The Shape of Grantham's Theology

Grantham's theology can accurately be described as Arminian because it was almost identical to the soteriology of Jacobus Arminius. But Grantham was not fond of the label "Arminian," just as he did not like the title "Anabaptist," not because he was unsympathetic with either of these doctrinal positions, but because of "the negative connotations attached to these names. While "Anabaptist" conjured up images of raving revolutionaries at Munster, "Arminian" invoked notions of semi-pelagianism (if not outright Pelagianism), works-righteousness, synergism, Romanism, rationalism, and even Socinianism. Grantham lamented that he was accused of preaching "Arminianism, the life and Soul of Popery"; yet in another place in a polemic against the "dangerous and impious Doctrines of those of *Calvin's Way*," he asserted the "purity of the Doctrine of those called *Arminians*, concerning the sinful Acts of Men."⁴¹

Grantham had read many contemporary Calvinist and Arminian theologians, including John Goodwin, but his General Baptist soteriology was unique among the thinkers of his day. Grantham differed from the Calvinists in his doctrines of election, the extent of atonement, the resistibility of grace, and the perseverance of the saints. On these subjects he agreed with his fellow Arminians. Yet he differed substantially with his Arminian counterparts on the doctrines of sin and depravity, human inability, the nature of atonement and justification through faith, and the perseverance of the saints. Grantham stridently avoided a semi-pelagianism which would take the focus off the sovereign grace of God and place it on humanity's own merit. Hence he differed from traditional Reformed theology in his view of predestination and the resistibility of grace, but not in his understanding of how redemption is accomplished by God in Christ and applied to the believer.

An examination of Grantham's similarities with Calvinism and his differences with the Arminianism of his day defies the contrived classifications usually assigned to Protestant soteriological positions and gives one insight into the complexities of soteriological thought in the post-Reformation period. Consequently, it moves beyond the simplistic "Calvinism-Arminianism" debate so often discussed in studies of historical theology.

John Goodwin: A Historical Sketch

The distinctiveness of Grantham's soteriology becomes most evident when compared to that of the better known English Arminian, John Goodwin. While Grantham and Goodwin were both known as Arminians, they were far apart on many issues. Grantham was more radical than Goodwin on matters of ecclesiology, yet Goodwin moved much further from Calvinist orthodoxy than Grantham did. Goodwin was the chief advocate of what has been referred to as the "New Arminianism" or "Radical Arminianism" which took root during the Cromwellian era. Though some scholars have assumed that Goodwin's soteriology exerted great influence over other Arminian sectaries, such as the General Baptists, a comparison of the thought of Grantham and Goodwin demonstrates the inaccuracy of this assumption.^[5]

Goodwin was educated at Queens' College, Cambridge, and had by 1633 become vicar of St. Stephen's, Coleman Street, London. By this time, Goodwin had become an Independent, under the influence of John Cotton, and from his pulpit at St. Stephen's, Goodwin proclaimed his gospel of nonconformity combined with Arminianism. Precisely when Goodwin embraced anti-Calvinism is a matter of debate, but his magisterial *Imputatio Fidei* (1642) betrayed an understanding of atonement and justification which had moved a great distance from Reformed orthodoxy and even beyond Arminius himself—and was much like that of Hugo Grotius. If Goodwin was not a full-blown Arminian when he wrote *Imputatio Fidei*, he was certainly thought to be one by the more strident Calvinists of the period. Indeed, Thomas Edwards, in his *Gangraena* (1646), described Goodwin as "a monstrous sectary, a compound of Socinianism, Arminianism, antinomianism, independency, popery, yea and of scepticism." At any rate, Goodwin outlined a fully-developed anti-Calvinism in his 1651 work, *Redemption Redeemed*.

Goodwin is best known as a controversialist, in matters not only theological and ecclesial, but also political. As the historian Edmund Calamy said, Goodwin "was a man by himself, was against every man, and had every man against him."^[6] Goodwin's ecclesiological stance was radical enough to result in his ejection from his living in May 1645 for refusing to administer infant baptism indiscriminately (though he continued to serve a gathered congregation at Coleman Street). His political views were perhaps even more radical. These opinions were reflected in such works as *Anti-Cavalierisme* (1642) and *Ossorianum* (1643), which attacked the divine right of kings. He was a stringent supporter of Cromwell, and he applauded Pride's Purge in a 1648 work, *Right and Might Well Met*. Because of his political affiliations, Goodwin was arrested in June of 1660, but was soon indemnified. Goodwin continued his activity as a vibrant preacher and prolific writer until his death in 1665.

Grantham on Original Sin, Depravity, and Human Inability

Grantham's view of original sin and depravity was that which had been articulated by the Magisterial Reformers as well as by Arminius. Arminius had said (contrary to popular belief) that every human being "existed in Adam, and [was] by [Adam's] will involved in sin and guilt" and that "the whole of this [original] sin . . . is not peculiar to our first parents, but is common to the entire race and to all their posterity, who, at the time when this sin was committed, were in their loins, and who have since descended from them by the natural mode of propagation."^[7] These are essentially Grantham's views on original sin. Grantham believed that all humanity sinned in Adam, and that Adam's sin was attributed to the entire human race. He articulated

that the Sin of Mankind is either *Original* or *Actual*. The first is come upon all, even the very Infant State of Mankind lie under it; of whom that saying is true, *Rom. 5. They have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's Transgression*. Yet Death reigning over them, proves the Transgression of Adam to be upon them. This is the Root Sin, called *the Sin of the*

World, John 1.29, whereof none are free We also may say, Our Father hath sinned, and we have borne his Iniquity.^[8]

Thus *original* sin consists in Adam's transgression being imputed to all humanity, the end result being that no human being is free of Adam's "root" sin and guilt. In another place, replying to those who said his doctrine of infant salvation was a denial of original sin, Grantham declared, "I do not deny Original Sin, for I know it is come upon all *Adam's* Posterity, and Death passeth upon them, for that all have sinned in him."^[9]

Not only is humanity guilty of original sin itself, but original sin, for Grantham, is the root which makes humanity wholly depraved and dead in sin and hence unable to desire or perform the things of God without divine aid. In his section on depravity in *Christianismus Primitivus*, Grantham says:

Nor is it convenient to extenuate or lessen this [original] Sin, either in its nature, or the punishment it brings with it; It being indeed the *filum certissimum*, or leading Thred to all other Iniquities, Mankind being hereby corrupt . . . and wholly deprived of the Glory of God, without the intervening Mercy of a Saviour. And hence we find *David*, when complaining of his sinful State, looks back to his corrupt Original, *Psal. 51.5. Behold I was shapen in Iniquity, and in Sin did my Mother conceive me*. Knowing (as *job* saith) none can bring a clean thing out of an unclean thing.^[10]

Original sin is the root of or thread to all other sins and brings about corruption and depravity in the human soul, indeed deprivation of the glory of God, and finally, except for the intervention of a Savior's mercy, eternal death. The result of original sin for Grantham is a depravity that is total and complete. Even the human will is depraved, wretched, and entirely corrupt, unable to subordinate itself to the will of God. "*The Will of Man*," says Grantham, is *corrupted, and as such, made the Rule of his Actions*." Grantham ardently disagreed with the doctrine that human reason is not fallen. Though God desires that the human will should be subject to reason and to the law of God, "Men are actuated by the impulse of their desires, without regard to the Will of God, or Rational Principles, as regulated by the Will of God."^[11] Though Grantham's doctrines of original sin and the resultant depravity of humanity are basically Reformed and in essential agreement with Arminius, they differ radically from the English Arminianism of his day as well as from later Arminianism, which betrays a conspicuous departure from the "Reformed Arminian" theology of Arminius.

Goodwin on Original Sin, Depravity, and Human Inability

Goodwin did not drift as far from the Reformed shore as some Arminians before and after him (indeed his theology was quite conservative compared to that of some Arminians of the seventeenth century), yet he nonetheless self-consciously departed from Reformed thinking in his understanding of the imputation of Adam's sin. In his *Imputatio Fidei*, Goodwin stated unequivocally that the "sinne of *Adam* is no where in Scripture said to be imputed to his posterity."^[12] He continues, "the Scriptures wheresoever they speake of *Adams* sin, and the relation of it to his posterity, wholly abstaine from the terme of imputation, neither doe they use any other word or phrase in this Argument of like signification."^[13] Though Goodwin does not deny that Adam's posterity were *in Adam* when he committed his sin, he makes clear that "*Adams* sinne comes to relate or to have reference to his posteritie, in matter of pollution and defilement."^[14]

That which is borne of the flesh (corrupted and weakened by sinne) is (by the course of nature, whereunto God himselfe hath righteously consented) *flesh*, a creature or thing of the same sinful and weake nature and condition with it The Apostle, *Rom. 5.19.* expressly affirmeth, that *by the disobedience of one* (meaning Adam) *many were made sinners*: not by the imputation of the Act of his sinne to them . . . but by corrupting and defiling his owne person, by reason whereof, all that are born of him in a way of naturall dissent and propagation, must needs be borne sinners.^[15]

Goodwin's theory of original sin is unique in its claim that, though humanity sinned in Adam, it had not, as Grantham stated, "borne his iniquity." The reason for this interpretation seems to be Goodwin's concern to create a disjunction between the method of one's becoming sinful and the method of one's being redeemed: "Though justification and salvation came unto the world by Christ the second Adam, as condemnation and death came by the first Adam; yet are there many different considerations and circumstances, between the coming and bringing of salvation by the one and of condemnation by the other."^[16] Goodwin spends a great deal of time on details, but the end result of his doctrine of sin is something less than the total depravity of which the Reformers spoke. Though the differences between Grantham's and Goodwin's doctrines of original sin and depravity may appear subtle, the contrasts between the two regarding the nature of redemption-atonement and justification-are stark.

Grantham on Atonement and Justification

It goes without saying that Grantham and Goodwin, as Arminians, held passionately to a general atonement; this theme resounds throughout both men's works. Yet the crucial differences arise with regard to the nature of atonement and, consequently, the nature of justification. Grantham again aligns himself with the Reformers and with Arminius. As a Reformed theologian, Arminius believed that God must punish sin with eternal death unless one meets the requirement of total righteousness. God is portrayed as a judge who must sentence individuals to eternal death if they do not meet his righteous requirements. In typical Reformed fashion, Arminius employs the analogy of "a judge making an estimate in his own mind of the deed and of the author of it, and according to that estimate forming a judgment and pronouncing sentence."^[17] The sentence pronounced on the sinner who cannot meet the requirements of God's justice is eternal death. Yet, since no one has this righteousness, it must originate from someone else. It can only come from Christ, who undergoes the penalty for sin on the cross, paying "the price of redemption for sins by suffering the punishment due to them."^[18] For Arminius, this emphasis on justice does not militate against God's mercy, as some later Arminians held. God never had to offer Christ for the redemption of humanity in the first place. If God had not made a way of satisfaction for his justice (through mercy), *then*, Arminius says, humanity would have truly been judged according to God's "severe and rigid estimation."^[19] This view has been called the penal satisfaction theory of atonement, and these were Grantham's sentiments exactly.

In *St. Paul's Catechism*, Grantham, in a discussion of justification, explains the nature of atonement to clarify why the righteousness of Christ must be imputed to the individual for the latter to be saved. His reasoning is almost identical to that of Arminius: "God having made a Righteous Law, it must be fulfilled; and none was able to do this but Christ, and he did fulfil it in our behalf. *Heb. 10.5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Psal. 4.5, 6, 7.* and thus the Righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in the Children of God, because Christ's righteousness is made theirs through believing. *Rom. 10.3, 4. Phil 3.9.*"^[20] Grantham taught that, since no one could satisfy God the judge's requirement of absolute righteousness, the only way for individuals to be freed from the penalty of sin and justified before God was for God to provide a righteousness by which people could be saved. "The justice of God cried against us for Sin committed; and Sin must be purged

by the Blood of Christ; He bare our sins, that is, the punishment of our Sins, in his own Body on the Tree, I Pet. 2.24.”^[21]

Grantham’s theory of atonement is summed up in the title of Section V in book two, chapter three of *Christianismus Primitivus*, which reads, “According to the Will of God, and his Eternal Wisdom, Christ did, in the place and stead of Mankind, fulfil that Law, by which the whole World stood guilty before God.”^[22] In this section Grantham explains “how deeply Mankind stood indebted to the Righteous God of Heaven and Earth, and how unable he was to pay that score; and how consequently he must inevitably undergo the eternal displeasure of God, with the malediction of his Righteous Law.”^[23] Humanity is subject to the harsh judgment and wrath of God, says Grantham, on account of “fall[ing] short” of the Law of God. Yet God in his wisdom has “designed to magnifie his Mercy in Christ, as the only Physician to Cure the Malady of Mankind,” providing a

Plaister commensurable with the Sore, that none may cry out and say, I am undone, I am wounded with the unavoidable wound of Mankind: And there is no Balm for me, the Physician hath made the Plaister so narrow, that Thousands, and ten Thousands, cannot possibly have Healing by it; nay, he hath determined to see us perish without Remedy. Alas! there is none to save us, neither could we come whole and sound into the World; we are born to be destroyed, and destroyed we must be. To quell which hideous (and indeed most just) complaint . . . we are bid to behold the Lamb of God.^[24]

For Grantham, Christ, the Lamb of God, is the only individual who can “pay the score” or the debt of sin which men and women have accrued to God.

Grantham held that there are two aspects of atonement, passive and active obedience. Passive obedience refers to Christ’s submission to the wrath of God for the sins of humanity—the satisfaction of the penalty for sin—while active obedience refers to Christ’s satisfaction of the justice of God in meeting the standards of God’s righteous law. Christ obeys God the Father passively through his death on the cross to satisfy the penalty for the violation of God’s law. Christ obeys God the Father actively by fulfilling the righteous law in a sinless life. Grantham noted that “it is true, he was born under the Law, and so stood bound to keep the Law, yet for our sakes he was so born; and consequently all that he did in that capacity [active obedience], was on our account also, as well as his Sufferings [passive obedience]: For the Transgressions committed against the Law, was he crucified in our place and stead.”^[25] Grantham’s penal satisfaction theory of atonement resulted in a penal satisfaction view of justification. This doctrine of justification, like that of the Reformers, held, as Luther averred, that the believer is justified by grace, through faith, in the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. This was Arminius’s doctrine of justification, namely that the righteousness of Christ is “made ours by gracious imputation.”^[26]

Grantham explains in *St. Paul’s Catechism* that there are two kinds of righteousness, the one “imputative,” the other “practical.” The first, he says, “is called the *Righteousness of God*, Mat. 6.33. or *God’s Righteousness*, Rom. 10.3. . . . It is a Righteousness to us *without the Law* It is the Righteousness of Christ, who is the Lord our Righteousness, *Isa. 45.24, 25. Christ made of God unto us Righteousness*, I Cor. 1.30.”^[27] This “imputative righteousness” is to be sharply distinguished from “practical righteousness”: “though it is true, that Practical Righteousness wrought by the People of God, is a comely, yea, and a necessary Ornament Yet this I further say, that it is not so immediately signified . . . as Righteousness Imputative; because the Righteousness there mentioned, is said to be *granted to the Saints* (whereas Practical Righteousness is acquired by Industry).”^[28] Practical righteousness, for Grantham, is associated with sanctification, and hence is progressive in nature, but imputative righteousness is the righteousness that saves believers. Since men and women cannot by their own works of righteousness save themselves, they can only be saved by the righteousness of God in Christ.

That God imputes Righteousness to Men without Works, is so plain, that it can never be denied. What is thus imputed, is not acted by us, but expressly reckoned as a matter of free Gift, or Grace; and this can be the Righteousness of none but Christ . . . because no other way can the Righteousness of God be made ours there is none righteous, no not one. Except therefore the Righteousness of Christ be laid hold on, there is no Righteousness to be imputed to Sinners.^[29]

Grantham's theory of active and passive obedience as essential aspects of the atonement is brought directly to bear on his doctrine of justification: "Now whether the Passive Righteousness of Christ only, or his Active Righteousness also, be that which is imputed to Sinners, is doubtful to some; but for my part I take it to be both The whole Righteousness of Christ, Active and Passive, is reckoned as ours through believing."^[30]

Another key element in Grantham's doctrine of justification is identification with Christ. Grantham preached that the individual who exercises saving faith is brought into union with Christ, and is hence identified with Christ. In this identification, the active obedience of Christ becomes the active obedience of the believer, and the death of Christ, the payment of the penalty for sin, becomes the death of the believer. In turn, the believer's sin becomes Christ's. As Grantham explains, "Christ was made Sin for us only by imputation, for he had no Sin; and as he was made Sin, so are we made the Righteousness of God in him, which must needs be by the free Imputation of his Righteousness to us."^[31] Thus for Grantham justification is completely by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, apprehended *through* faith; Christ's righteousness is the *ground* of justification, and faith is the *condition*. Against the Romanists on one hand and many Arminians on the other, Grantham's hallmark was *sofa fide*: not by our works, but by God's gracious imputation of the righteousness of Christ which is ours through faith.^[32]

Goodwin on Atonement and Justification

Goodwin's doctrines of atonement and justification differ extensively from Grantham's. Goodwin bears the influence of Hugo Grotius's governmental theory of atonement, which held that God could freely pardon sinners without any satisfaction for the violation of divine law, because such a pardon was within God's discretion as governor or sovereign.^[33] Thus the sacrifice of Christ is accepted by God as governor or ruler rather than as judge. The death of Christ, in this view, is a symbol of the punishment sin may induce. God uses this symbol as a deterrent. The penalty for sin is thereby set aside rather than paid. Therefore, upon faith, the believer is pardoned as a governor would pardon a guilty criminal, and all past sins are forgotten.

Goodwin articulated such a view of atonement and justification in his *Imputatio Fidei*, a book of over four hundred pages whose sole purpose was to disprove the doctrine that Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer for his eternal acceptance with God. Goodwin's disavowal of the penal satisfaction theory of atonement is unabashed. He argues, "The sentence or curse of the *Law*, was not properly executed upon *Christ* in his death, but this death of *Christ* was a ground or consideration unto *God*, whereupon to dispence with his *Law*, and to let fall or suspend the execution of the penalty or curse therein threatened."^[34] Whereas Grantham's whole explanation for *cur Deus homo* is to meet the demands of the "Righteous Law of God," Goodwin's reason for Christ's coming was so that God could dispense with his law. Not until God dispensed with his law, said Goodwin, could he pardon men and women and forgive their sins: "But God in spareing and forbearing the transgressors (who according to the tenor of the *Law* should have bin punished) manifestly dispenceth with the *Law*, and doth not execute it."^[35] It was not absolutely necessary, according to Goodwin, for Christ to die on the cross to pardon sinners, but it was the method that God in his government chose. Goodwin explains:

Neither did *God* require the death and sufferings of Christ as a valuable consideration whereon to dispense with his *Law* towards those that believe, more (if so much) in a way of satisfaction to his justice, than to his wisdom. For (doubtlesse) *God* might with as much justice, as wisdom (if not much more) have passed by the transgression of his *Law* without consideration or satisfaction.

For him that hath the lawfull authority and power, either to impose a *Law*, or not, in case he shall impose it, it rather concerns in point of wisdom and discretion, not to see his *Law* despised and trampled upon without satisfaction, then in point of justice.^[36]

Christ's death was for Goodwin, therefore, an exhibition of public justice, not a penal satisfaction, as Grantham held.

Goodwin's doctrine of justification is rooted in his doctrine of atonement. Inasmuch as God can, in his government, set aside the penalty for sin since it does not of necessity have to be suffered, God can freely forgive men and women, and the imputation of Christ's righteousness is not necessary. Nor is it desirable, for to impute Christ's righteousness to the believer would be to admit that God did not set aside the law after all. Thus Goodwin concluded that justification consists primarily in the forgiveness or remission of sins (the nonimputation of sins).^[37] Goodwin maintained that "the Scriptures constantly speake of this act of God justifying a sinner, not as of such an act whereby he will either make him or pronounce him legally just, or declare him not to have offended the Law, and hereupon justifie him; but of such an act, whereby he freely forgives him all that he hath done against the Law, and acquits him from all blame and punishment due by the Law."^[38]

Consequently, for Goodwin it would be erroneous to assert that Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer, for this would be admitting that God's free acquittal or pardon of the sinner is not enough. Thus Goodwin spends the entire first part of his book arguing against the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer. It is not his righteousness which is credited or imputed to the believer, but faith is counted as righteousness.^[39] Goodwin's emphasis, in the last analysis, is on God's freedom to dispense with the law and freely pardon or forgive the sinner.

The doctrines of atonement and justification are the most apparent disparity between Grantham's and Goodwin's types of Arminianism. The most practical difference is that, for Grantham, salvation consists totally in Christ's righteousness, whereas for Goodwin, it seems to hinge more on the individual's faith. This distinction has dramatic consequences for the doctrines of sanctification and the perseverance of the saints.

Grantham on Perseverance and Apostasy

In Reformation and Post-Reformation theology, one's view of perseverance, or enduring in the faith, was conditioned on other doctrines. Reformed theology had traditionally taught that, because grace is irresistible, the elect or predestined individual will of necessity persevere in faith, whereas Arminian theology posited that God had granted mankind the freedom to resist grace.^[40] It is understandable, then, why an Arminian theory of the resistibility of grace would result in its continual resistibility after conversion. Grantham's doctrine of the perseverance of the saints was an outgrowth of his doctrines of the resistibility of grace and of justification.

Because the grace of God is resistible, taught Grantham, it must of necessity continue to be so throughout one's life.^[41] Yet one cannot comprehend his understanding of perseverance outside the context of his doctrine of justification. Grantham's teaching that the believer is justified solely by the righteousness of Christ, apprehended by faith, necessitated a view of perseverance consistent with the *sola fide* principle: One could not fall from grace because of failure to be righteous or do righteous works

because the believer stood justified before God based solely on the righteousness of Christ rather than his own merits. As long as saving faith is intact, the believer remains justified on account of Christ's righteousness. Grantham's emphasis in perseverance was enduring *in faith* and hence in Christ. As long as one maintains faith, one will remain in Christ; one falls from grace only when one "destroys a state of faith."^[42] Grantham cannot be viewed as teaching a semi-pelagianism in which the believer maintains salvation by works of righteousness which he or she performs. Rather, only when the believer again becomes an unbeliever will he or she, fall from the salvific grace of God, for the believer is, as the *Standard Confession, 1660* repeats, "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Peter 1.5). Falling from grace is for Grantham a much more serious affair than merely committing sin or drifting from God. It amounts to a reversal of the *ordo salutis*: after one renounces faith in Christ one is no longer a partaker in Christ and hence loses the benefits of salvation. Thus, with reference to the fourth and sixth chapters of Hebrews, he describes falling from grace as that state in which "Men have destroyed a state of Faith (in respect of themselves) trodden under foot the Son of God; counted the blood of the Covenant wherewith they were Sanctified an unholy thing, and thus [done] despite to the Spirit of Grace."^[43]

Grantham also viewed apostasy or falling from grace as an "irrevocable Estate" from which the apostate can never return.^[44] Those who have once been in Christ but who have resisted and rejected the grace of God and fallen from grace are, Grantham says, "Trees *twice dead, plucked up by the Roots*: and consequently incapable of bearing fruit in Gods Vineyard for ever." Thus Grantham rejected the doctrine some have called "repeated regeneration," which holds that, if believers sin enough they will lose their salvation and must repent to regain it. On the contrary, Grantham states that those who have committed such apostasy "cannot, (as *Chrysostom* notes upon the place) be twice made Christians; and there being but one Sacrifice for Sin, there remains no more for such . . ."^[45]

Goodwin and Perseverance and Apostasy

Goodwin's view of the perseverance of the saints differs substantially from Grantham's. Though there is fundamental agreement on the possibility of a believer's apostasy, significant disagreement exists on how a believer may fall from grace and on the revocability or irrevocability of apostasy. Whereas Grantham's emphasis is on continuance in faith, Goodwin's stress is on continuance in good works. Thus impenitency is the cause of a believer's fall from grace rather than shipwreck of faith. In an extensive treatment of David as an example of a believer who had fallen from grace, Goodwin says, "our Adversaries themselves . . . generally acknowledge him to have bin a man truly godly and regenerate, before the guilt of the two enormous sins mentioned clave unto Him." He further contends: "The Question is, Whether He continued such, truly Godly, under the guilt of the said sins, viz., from the time of the perpetration of them, until the time of His Repentance: They affirm, I deny."^[46] David, says Goodwin, "during his impenitency aforesaid, was cut off from all right of entering the new *Jerusalem*."^[47] Goodwin is not clear just how many or what kind of sins cause one to fall from grace, but he makes it plain that particularly reprehensible sins will bring about apostasy. In his comments on Ezekiel 18.24, he declares: "The Text saith, *In His Trespass* (in the singular number) *that He bath trespassed*, shall he dye; implying, that any one sin, of that kinde of sins, which the Scripture calls, *abominations*, whilst unrepented of, translateth him from life unto death, casteth Him in to the state and condition of an Unbeliever."^[48]

It is clear from Goodwin's treatment of David that he believed apostasy was a remediable state. Yet in his comments on Hebrews 6 he is even more explicit, saying that the biblical author's statement that it is impossible for the one who has fallen away to be renewed again to repentance "was not asserted by him with an eye to the state or condition of ordinary believers . . . as if he intended to conclude them under the heavy doome of such an *impossibility*, but with an eye only to the most deplorable condition of [other believers]."^[49] For Goodwin, most cases of falling away are remediable.

The differences between Grantham and Goodwin on the doctrine of perseverance arise from other elements in their doctrinal systems which touch the nature of justification, its relation to sanctification, and the resultant relationship of faith and works in the Christian life. Whereas Goodwin's Arminian approach to the doctrine is a complete reversal of the Calvinistic system, Grantham's Arminianism retains key Reformed soteriological elements, most notably the solo fide formula.

Conclusion

The essence of the disparity between Grantham and Goodwin lay in their respective understandings of the gravity of sin and the nature of divine justice. Grantham viewed sin as such an egregious violation of divine holiness that God, out of justice, must punish it. Goodwin, on the contrary, believed that the law of God (divine justice) “may be relaxed without contradiction to the divine nature.”^[50] Goodwin would have heartily agreed with Grotius's statement that “law is not an internal something in God, or the very will of God, but a certain effect of His will. But it is most certain that effects of the divine will are mutable.”^[51] This is why, as Goodwin stated, God could “dispense with his Law” in pardoning sinners. Grantham would hear nothing of this. For Grantham, the law of God is an outcome of the divine nature, not simply an effect of the divine will. For Grantham, God's holiness demands intolerance of sin. God's holy nature deflects sin like two positive magnetic charges repel one another. Consequently, divine wrath is not a capricious anger at sin as much as it is the necessary outcome of God's nature. Because of this, divine justice must be satisfied. God's requirement of absolute righteousness cannot be met by humanity, so people must undergo, as Grantham put it, “the malediction of his Righteous Law.” This, Grantham held, is why Christ's death and righteousness must be imputed to believers. Christ's sinless life and sacrificial death are the only thing that will satisfy the justice or holy nature of God.

These dissimilarities on the seriousness of sin and the nature of divine justice in turn caused Grantham and Goodwin to come down on different sides of the soteriological debate. For Goodwin, God dispenses with holy law and pardons sinners; for Grantham, God cannot do away with his holy law, so sinners must be imputed the righteousness of Christ through faith to be saved. Accordingly, Grantham held that this righteousness remains the possession of the believer as long as he or she remains in Christ through faith, whereas Goodwin emphasized the necessity of penitence for persevering in salvation, as though the believer must continue to be pardoned over and over again.

The traditional categories of Calvinism and Arminianism on which historians and theologians usually rely are somewhat imprecise and misleading. Calvinists and Arminians alike have been predisposed to understand Arminianism as even more semi-pelagian than Goodwin's version. Yet Grantham and the General Baptists defied such classification, striving instead for a *via media* which, they were certain, was the way of the Bible and the primitive churches.

END NOTES

^[1] The English General Baptists are the forefathers of those now known as Free Will Baptists. The early Free Will Baptists in the American South were influenced by Grantham's *Christianismus Primitivus*, and their confession of faith was the *Standard Confession, 1660*, which Grantham delivered to King Charles II in 1660 and which he reprinted with annotations in *Christianismus Primitivus*.

^[2] The purpose of this essay is not to discuss the five points of Calvinism or the five articles of the Remonstrance, but rather to point up the divergencies that can and do occur within Arminianism. It will be assumed, for the purposes of this essay, that all Arminians disagree with at least the last four of the five points of Calvinism: unconditional election, particular atonement, irresistible grace, and the unconditional perseverance of the saints.

- ^[3] The biographical information in the next three paragraphs is taken from Samuel Edward Hester, "Advancing Christianity to Its Primitive Excellency: The Quest of Thomas Grantham, Early English General Baptist (1634-1692)" (Th.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1977), 9-32.
- ^[4] Thomas Grantham, *A Dialogue Between the Baptist and the Presbyterian* (London, 1691), 27; *The Infants Advocate* (London, 1688), 2.
- ^[5] Cf. Ellen More, "John Goodwin and the Origins of the New Arminianism," *The Journal of British Studies* 22 (Fall 1982): 52.
- ^[6] *Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v.
- ^[7] Jacobus Arminius, *The Works of James Arminius*, 3 vols, trans. James Nichols and William Nichols (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1986), 2:12, 156.
- ^[8] Thomas Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus, or The Ancient Christian Religion* (London, 1678), book II, 7677. Grantham here echoes the sentiments of his General Baptist forebear, Thomas Helwys, who said in *A Declaration of Faith of English People Remaining at Amsterdam* (1611): "Through [Adam's] disobedience, all men sinned (Romans 5:12-19). His sin being imputed unto all; and so death went over all men" (article 2). This document is reprinted in J. Matthew Pinson, *A Free Will Baptist Handbook: Heritage, Beliefs, and Ministries* (Nashville: Randall House, 1998), 123-131.
- ^[9] Thomas Grantham, *The Controversie about Infants Church Membership and Baptism, Epitomized in Two Treatises* (London, 1680), 14.
- ^[10] *Ibid.*, 78.
- ^[11] *Ibid.*, 76.
- ^[12] John Goodwin, *Imputatio Fidei. Or A Treatise of Justification* (London, 1642), Part II, 13. It is interesting to note that John Wesley later reprinted and wrote a preface to this work and was greatly influenced by Goodwin's theology.
- ^[13] *Ibid.*
- ^[14] *Ibid.*, 15.
- ^[15] *Ibid.*, 15-16.
- ^[16] *Ibid.*, 16.
- ^[17] Arminius, 2:256.
- ^[18] *Ibid.*, 1:419.
- ^[19] *Ibid.*
- ^[20] Thomas Grantham, *St. Paul's Catechism: Or, A Brief Explication of the Six Principles of the Christian Religion, as recorded Heb. 6.1,2* (London, 1687), 28.
- ^[21] *Ibid.*
- ^[22] Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, book II, 62.
- ^[23] *Ibid.*
- ^[24] *Ibid.*, 63.
- ^[25] *Ibid.*, 68.
- ^[26] Arminius, 2:256-57, 406.
- ^[27] Grantham, *St. Paul's Catechism*, 28.
- ^[28] Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, book II, chapter 3, 68.
- ^[29] *Ibid.*, 67.
- ^[30] *Ibid.*, 67-68.
- ^[31] *Ibid.*, 68.
- ^[32] Although scholars have historically held this understanding of atonement and justification to be the domain of strict, orthodox Calvinism, Grantham and the General Baptists held to such a view. Even Richard Baxter, who has been described as a "mild Calvinist," rejected the

penal satisfaction theory of atonement and the doctrine of justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ through faith. Revisionists such as R. T. Kendall and Alan C. Clifford argue that Calvin and Luther, contrary to received opinion, did not subscribe to the penal satisfaction theory of atonement and its attending doctrine of justification. Ironically, this was also the view of John Goodwin. R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979); Alan C. Clifford, *Atonement and Justification: English Evangelical Theology 1640-1790: An Evaluation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

[33] Grotius also influenced Richard Baxter and John Tillotson with his governmental view of atonement.

[34] Goodwin, *Imputatio Fidei*, part II, 33.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 34-35.

[37] Ibid., 177.

[38] Ibid., part 1, 3.

[39] Ibid., 14. Arminius's enemies at one time charged him with teaching that "the righteousness of Christ if not imputed to us for righteousness, but to believe (or the act of believing) justifies us." Works, 2:42. Arminius replied that he never said that the act of faith justifies a person. He held that Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer and that our faith is imputed for righteousness. He believed both views were held by St. Paul: "I say that I acknowledge, 'The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us,' because I think the same thing is contained in the following words of the Apostle, 'God hath made Christ to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' . . . It is said in the third verse [of Romans 4], 'Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.' . . . Our brethren therefore do not reprehend ME, but the APOSTLE." Ibid., 43-45.

[40] All Arminians agreed on the doctrine of the resistibility of grace.

[41] Thomas Grantham, *A Dialogue Between the Baptist and the Presbyterian*, 19-20.

[42] Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, book II, chapter 2, 155.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid., 154.

[45] Ibid., 155.

[46] Goodwin, '*Apol utrwsiz "Apol utrwszewz or Redemption Redeemed* (London, 1651), 345. It is worthy of note that in a letter to Walter Sellon, John Wesley wrote, "I am glad you have undertaken 'Redemption Redeemed.' But you must in no wise forget Dr. Owen's answer to it: otherwise you will leave a loop-hole for all the Calvinists to creep out. The Doctor's evasions you must needs cut in pieces."

[47] Ibid., 347.

[48] Ibid., 348.

[49] Ibid., 288.

[50] Henry C. Sheldon, *History of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1897), 2:142. This statement is made with reference to Grotius's theory of atonement.

[51] Quoted in Sheldon, 142.

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The Diversity of Arminian Soteriology: Thomas Grantham, John Goodwin, and Jacobus Arminius - J. Matthew Pinson. Calvinism versus Arminianism - Robert Picirilli. The Extent of the Atonement - Robert Picirilli. Arminian Victory Among American General Baptists - Mark Powell. On the Vocation of Men to Salvation - James Arminius. On The Glorious Recovery of Mankind by Christ by Henry Alline with amendments by Benjamin Randal. Chapter 5 from Two Mites Cast Into the Offering of God for the Benefit of Mankind. Faith. Disputation 44 - On Faith in God and Christ - James Arminius. Salvation By Faith Applied ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Jacobus Arminius, served from 1603 as professor in theology at the University of Leiden. He wrote many books and treatises on theology, and his views became the basis of Arminianism and the Dutch Remonstrant movement. Following his death, his challenge to the Reformed standard, the Belgic Confession, provoked ample discussion at the Synod of Dort, which crafted the five points of Calvinism in refutation of Arminius's teaching. ...more. Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), who gave his name to Arminianism. The history of the Calvinist-Arminian debate begins in early 17th century in the Netherlands with a Christian theological dispute between the followers of John Calvin and Jacobus Arminius, and continues today among some Protestants, particularly evangelicals. The debate centers around soteriology, or the study of salvation, and includes disputes about total depravity, predestination, and atonement. While the debate was given its Calvinist-Arminian form in the 17th century, issues central to the debate have been discussed in Christ And he appeals to Thomas Helwys and Thomas Grantham as early General Baptists as precursors of contemporary Reformed/Free Will Baptist Arminianism. He drives a wedge between Helwys and John Smyth, for example, portraying the latter as a defector from the classical Protestantism of the Reformers. Pinson posits that, generally speaking, the Free Will Baptist tradition stuck with Augustinian-Reformed doctrines of original sin and satisfaction-substitutionary atonement and justification as imputation of Christ's righteousness. According to him, Wesley, following certain Anglican Arminians, so amended J. Matthew Pinson, "The Diversity of Arminian Soteriology," unpublished paper, <http://evangelicalarminians.org/the-diversity-of-arminian-soteriology-thomas-grantham-john-goodwin-and-jacobus-arminius/>. J. Matthew Pinson, "Thomas Grantham's Theology of Atonement and Justification," Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry, Spring 2011. With responses by Clint Bass, James Leonard, and Rhyne Putnam. http://baptistcenter.net/journals/JBTM_8-1_Spring_2011.pdf#page=10. Adam Taylor, History of the English General Baptists Volume One, nineteenth century, reprinted by Nabu Pres