



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## **Unity in diversity : English puritans and the puritan reformation, 1603-1689**

Pederson, R.J.

### **Citation**

Pederson, R. J. (2013, November 7). *Unity in diversity : English puritans and the puritan reformation, 1603-1689*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/22159>

Version: Corrected Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/22159>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/22159> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation

**Author:** Pederson, Randall James

**Title:** Unity in diversity : English puritans and the puritan reformation, 1603-1689

**Issue Date:** 2013-11-07

## Chapter 5

### Tobias Crisp (1600-1642/3)

#### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we will assess the “radical” Puritan Tobias Crisp, whose life and thought illustrates both *unitas* and *diversitas* within Puritanism.<sup>1</sup> As a representative of the antinomian strain, his teachings and emphasis on non-introspective piety illuminate internal tendencies within Puritanism to come up with an alternative to the precisianist strain.<sup>2</sup> Within the literature, Crisp has been called “an antecedent of the Ranters,” “the great champion of antinomianism,” the “arch-Antinomian” and “a stimulator of religious controversy.”<sup>3</sup> In his own time, Crisp was accused of both “Antinomianisme” and “Libertinisme,” the latter title of which he fully embraced because, for Crisp, at the heart of the theological debate that characterized his ministry was one’s freedom (*libertas fidelium*) in Christ,<sup>4</sup> and the attainment of assurance.<sup>5</sup> Crisp remains one of the most

---

<sup>1</sup> As we saw in Chapter 1, identifying a Puritan as either “orthodox” or “radical” is not always easy, nor are the terms always mutually exclusive. As with Rous, Crisp typifies elements of Reformed orthodoxy and more “radical” notions associated with antinomianism.

<sup>2</sup> David Como, “Crisp, Tobias (1600-1643),” in *Puritans and Puritanism in Europe and America: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia*, ed. Francis J. Bremer and Tom Webster (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 1:64; Victor L. Nuovo, “Crisp, Tobias (or Crispe: 1600-43),” in *The Continuum Encyclopedia of British Philosophy*, ed. A.C. Grayling, Naomi Goulder, and Andrew Pyle (London: Continuum, 2006); Roger Pooley, “Crisp, Tobias (1600-1643),” *ODNB*; Christopher Hill, *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill, Vol. 2* (Malden: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), 141-61; *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century, Vol. 1 A-F*, ed. Richard L. Greaves and Robert Zaller (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1982), 191-92; Benjamin Brook, *The Lives of the Puritans* (London: Printed for James Black, 1813), 2:471-75; Tobias Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, ed., John Gill, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London, 1791), 1:v-xii; *A Biographical History of England, from Egbert the Great to the Revolution*, ed. James Granger, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: T. Davies, et al., 1775), 2:179-80.

<sup>3</sup> James G. Turner, “The Properties of Libertinism,” in *’Tis Nature’s Fault: Unauthorized Sexuality during the Enlightenment*, ed. Robert P. Maccubbin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 86 (n. 21); Robert Rix, *William Blake and the Cultures of Radical Christianity* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 30; Tim Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 299; Pooley, “Crisp, Tobias,” *ODNB*. For a helpful study on the rhetoric of seventeenth-century language, see Conal Condren, *The Language of Politics in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994), 140-68. The best analysis of Ranter mythology is J. C. Davis, *Fear, Myth and History: The Ranters and the Historians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Davis correctly challenges the assumption of a “Ranter” existence in the seventeenth century. It is noteworthy, however, that Laurence Clarkson, a supposed Ranter, listed Crisp as one of his mentors. Christopher Hill, *The World of the Muggletonians* (London: Temple Smith, 1983), 167.

<sup>4</sup> Crisp said, “To be called a libertine, is the most glorious title under heaven; take it from one that is truly free by Christ.” Quoted in Rix, *William Blake and the Cultures of Radical Christianity*, 33; Nicholas McDowell, “The Beauty of Holiness and the Poetics of Antinomianism: Richard Crashaw, John Saltmarsh and the Language of Religious Radicalism in the 1640s,” in *Varieties of Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century Religious Radicalism in Context*, ed. Ariel Hessayon and David Finnegan (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 43. William Lamont sees Crisp’s “libertinism” as the apotheosis of Puritan commitment to liberty. See Lamont, “Puritanism, Liberty, and the Putney Debates,” in *The Putney Debates of 1647: The Army, the Levellers, and the English State*, ed. Michael Mendle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 250-51. While we must consider such labels within the context of a hot-tempered seventeenth-century rhetoric, they

vilified and misunderstood personas of the early modern period, having been credited, among other things, with the rise of Ranterism and Hyper-Calvinism.<sup>6</sup> That the Westminster Assembly recommended his sermons be burnt is indicative of the atmosphere and general disfavor with which the antinomian strain, whether genuine or merely perceived, was met with.<sup>7</sup> Crisp's sermons, despite suggestions of some of the assembly's members, were issued in various editions (1643, 1644-46, 1690, 1755, 1791), and brought his life and work to the forefront of late seventeenth-century theological debate in a second wave of the English Antinomian crisis.<sup>8</sup> While alive, Crisp ministered in relative

---

nonetheless are useful classifications for the purposes of historical inquiry. Though Crisp never embraced the term "antinomian" (and his defenders constantly repudiated its use), Crisp can cautiously be classified "antinomian," if, by this, we contrast with the prevailing "legal" strain or precisianism within English practical divinity. Further, it is indeed interesting that seventeenth-century antinomians were wont to cite Luther, Calvin, Zanchi, and Augustine. For contemporary accusations against Crisp, see Robert Lancaster, "The Preface to the Christian Reader," in Tobias Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted in Fourteen Sermons Preached in and neere London* (London, 1644).

<sup>5</sup> That the doctrine of assurance was of paramount importance to English Puritans has been demonstrated, chiefly, in Joel R. Beeke, *Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991). Cf. David Hoyle, *Reformation and Religious Identity in Cambridge, 1590-1644* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 88-130, esp. 106-15.

<sup>6</sup> Robert J. McKelvey, "'That Error and Pillar of Antinomianism': Eternal Justification," in *Drawn into Controversie: Reformed Theological Diversity and Debates Within Seventeenth-Century British Puritanism*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and Mark Jones (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 233-37; Curt Daniel, "John Gill and Calvinistic Antinomianism," in *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697-1771). A Tercentennial Appreciation*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 172-75. Peter Toon sees Crisp as a major contributor to the rise of hyper-Calvinism. Peter Toon, *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity* (London: The Olive Tree Press, 1967), 49-50, 82-3, 96. Crisp's connections to the Ranters are suggested in that Laurence Clarkson, their alleged founder, sat for a time under Crisp's ministry in London c.1640 before moving on in his spiritual pilgrimage.

<sup>7</sup> In 1646, William Gouge and John Ley brought up the subject of Crisp's books before the Assembly. Chad B. Van Dixhoorn, ed., *The Minutes and Papers of the Westminster Assembly, 1643-1652* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2:452; 3:750; Chad B. van Dixhoorn, "Reforming the Reformation: Theological Debate at the Westminster Assembly, 1643-1652" (PhD diss., Cambridge University, 2004), 2:26-35. The Independent divine Joseph Caryl was appointed in 1643 to a committee of the Westminster Assembly to consider the spread of antinomianism. In his report, he referred to the "unhappy differences...that had lately broken out afresh amongst us." See Robert S. Paul, *The Assembly of the Lord: Politics and Religion in the Westminster Assembly and the "Grand Debate"* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), 180. For the clash between the precisianists and antinomians, see Theodore D. Bozeman, "The Glory of the 'Third Time': John Eaton as Contra-Puritan," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 47 (1996): 638-54.

<sup>8</sup> Victor Nuovo, *Christianity, Antiquity, and Enlightenment: Interpretations of John Locke* (New York: Springer, 2011), 32; Hans Boersma, *A Hot Pepper Corn: Richard Baxter's Doctrine of Justification in Its Seventeenth-Century Context of Controversy* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 1993), 62-3. For histories of English Antinomianism and its various stages, see David R. Como, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); Theodore D. Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Barry H. Howson, *Erroneous and Schismatical Opinions: The Question of Orthodoxy Regarding the Theology of Hanserd Knollys, c. 1599-1691* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 79-132; Norman B. Graebner, "Protestants and Dissenters: An Examination of the Seventeenth-Century Eatonist and New England Antinomian Controversies in Reformation Perspective" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1984). For an older, though still useful history, see Gertrude Huehns, *Antinomianism in English History with Special Reference to the Period 1640-1660* (London: The Cresset Press, 1951).

obscurity, was respected by his peers, and had a popular following of London Puritans; it was only in his final year, and later, with the posthumous publication of his sermons, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1643-1646), that he grew to immense fame, popularity, and controversy.<sup>9</sup> This posthumous collection, prefaced by Robert Lancaster, an antinomian, and publisher of John Eaton's controversial *The Honey-combe of Free Justification by Christ Alone* (1642), presented a somewhat radical interpretation of the absolute, unconditional consequences of Christ's atonement, and the grounds of assurance for the converted;<sup>10</sup> so much so that over the next hundred years following Crisp's death, his thought (dubbed "Crispianism" by his critics)<sup>11</sup> remained a strong and contentious system within English divinity, culminating in the later eighteenth-century debates among the English Particular Baptists.<sup>12</sup> "Crispianism" in the winter of 1694-5 also caught John Locke's attention, and drew him into a closer inquiry into the question about justification.<sup>13</sup> The infectious nature of antinomianism within the seventeenth century, first as an "underground" in the 1630s, but which then emerged to public attention, and some form of acceptance and credibility in the 1640s, through the English Revolution, should not be underestimated. Indeed, not only did it catch ire from William Gouge at the Westminster Assembly, but it also forced the hand of Latitudinarians to "formulate one of the most thorough moral programmes in the history of the Church of England."<sup>14</sup> Further,

---

<sup>9</sup> Alan P. F. Sell, *Philosophy, Dissent, and Nonconformity, 1689-1920* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2004), 20; Nuovo, *Christianity, Antiquity, and Enlightenment*, 32; Carl R. Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 114; Peter Lineham, "Antinomianism," in *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism Vol. 1: A-C*, ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand (New York: Routledge, 2004), 128-29; Knud Haakonssen, ed., *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 25.

<sup>10</sup> Crisp's attackers vilified his theology as inducing all sorts of wickedness; Crisp, however, always maintained that free grace and holiness were irrevocably tied.

<sup>11</sup> E. F. Kevan, *The Grace of Law: A Study in Puritan Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 26; Robert J. McKelvey, *Histories that Mansoul and Her Wars Anatomize: The Drama of Redemption in John Bunyan's Holy War* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 61.

<sup>12</sup> Howson, *Erroneous and Schismatical Opinions*, 168-70; Curt Daniel, "John Gill and Calvinistic Antinomianism," 171-90; Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780, Volume 1: Whichcote to Wesley* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 98.

<sup>13</sup> Locke said that it was the "noise" and "heat" of the controversy rather than any substantive statement about justification that caught his attention. John Locke, *Vindications of the Reasonableness of Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 34. Cf. Victor Nuovo, ed., *John Locke and Christianity. Contemporary Responses to The Reasonableness of Christianity* (Bristol: Thoemmes, 1997), xviii-xix, 111-48; Nuovo, "Locke's Proof of the Divine Authority of Scripture," in *Philosophy and Religion in Enlightenment Britain: New Case Studies*, ed. Ruth Savage (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 70; Nuovo, "Locke's Theology, 1694-1704," in *English Philosophy in the Age of Locke*, ed. M. A. Stewart (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 195-6; Nuovo, *Christianity, Antiquity, and Enlightenment*, 32-33; Patrick Muller, *Latitudinarianism and Didacticism in Eighteenth-Century Literature: Moral Theology in Fielding, Sterne, and Goldsmith* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 67-8.

<sup>14</sup> Patrick Müller, *Latitudinarianism and Didacticism in Eighteenth Century Literature: Moral Theology in Fielding, Sterne, and Goldsmith* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 67-8; Tim Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England: Richard Baxter and Antinomianism* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2001), 22; Alan D. Strange, "The Imputation of the Active Obedience of Christ at the Westminster Assembly," in *Drawn into Controversie: Reformed Theological Diversity and Debates within Seventeenth-Century British Puritanism*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and Mark Jones (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 31-51, esp. 38-39.

the later heated debates on antinomianism often occurred within a churchly framework, being a dispute between Independents and Presbyterians, and on more than one occasion threatened the *unitas* between “the godly.”<sup>15</sup>

While Crisp had several precisianist defenders, and was revered during his lifetime, many prominent divines, such as Thomas Bakewell, Richard Baxter, Isaac Ambrose, John Edwards, and Daniel Williams, all sought to discredit Crisp for allegedly teaching licentious doctrine and a perverted form of justification.<sup>16</sup>

In 1643, Bakewell published *A Short View of the Antinomian Errovs*, in which charged that antinomians teach (1) that a person is justified “as soon as he hath a being in the sight of God, before they had any faith or calling;” (2) that God “cannot see their sinne;” (3) that this they know by the witness of the Spirit in the soul, in contrast to “our legall Teachers, which goe by marks and signes;” (4) that God does not chide them for sin; and (5) that they are free from the “commanding power of the law of God,” and free from any duty to it as a rule for life.<sup>17</sup> Bakewell blasts the antinomians for willfully misrepresenting the teachings of the precisianists, since they knew that none of “those worthy Divines” ever taught that anything causes one’s salvation other than the grace of God, apart from works.<sup>18</sup> Though Bakewell does not name any of the antinomians in his first tract, he has no reservation in stating, in a second, *The Antinomians Christ Confovdnd and the Lord’s Christ Exalted* (1644), that Crisp and Lancaster did “rake out of Eatons *dunghill*,” the belief that a Christian is justified in God’s sight before faith.<sup>19</sup>

Baxter’s entrance into the debate was his *Aphorisms of Justification* (1649), which postulated some conditionality in the doctrine of justification; he would later rise to the occasion when Crisp’s sermons were published in their definitive form in 1690 with his *A Defense of Christ and Free Grace* that same year.<sup>20</sup> Samuel Rutherford launched his attack

---

<sup>15</sup> For example, the Presbyterian Thomas Edwards lists “Independents” first in his heresiography, next to Brownists, Millenarists, Antinomians, Anabaptists, Arminians, Libertines, Familists, Enthusiasts, Seekers, Perfectists, Socinians, Arians, Antitrinitarians, Antiscripturalists, and Skeptics. *Gangraena* (London, 1646), 13. Though many antinomians were Independents, most Independents were not antinomians; indeed Henry Burton denounced antinomianism as a heresy spreading like a canker or gangrene. Quoted in Stephen Foster, “New England and the Challenge of Heresy, 1630-1660: The Puritan Crisis in Transatlantic Perspective,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 38 (1981), 638. Edwards’s source for much of antinomianism was Thomas Gataker’s *God’s Eye on His Israel* (London, 1645); he did not quote from Stephen Gere’s *The Doctrine of Antinomianisme Confuted* (London, 1644), which was the first published attack on Crisp.

<sup>16</sup> Thus, David Parnham sees Crisp as a critic of the precisianist *ordo salutis*. David Parnham, “The Humbling of ‘High Presumption’: Tobias Crisp Dismantles the Puritan Ordo Salutis,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 56 (2008), 50-74.

<sup>17</sup> Bakewell further comments, “These things I have gathered both from their Sermons, and by conference with them, as also out of their books, which have passed privately among themselves.” This gives possible credence to the theory that antinomian tracts, such as Eaton’s *Honeycombe*, and possibly Crisp’s sermons, were circulated among London “antinomians” prior to the permissiveness of the presses during the 1640s. Bakewell, *A Short View of the Antinomian Errovs* (London, 1643), Sig. A2v.

<sup>18</sup> Bakewell, *A Short View of the Antinomian Errovs*, 33.

<sup>19</sup> Bakewell, *The Antinomians Christ Confovdnd, and the Lords Christ Exalted* (London, 1644), Sig. A1. The occasion for this second tirade was Bakewell’s borrowing of the first edition of *Christ Alone Exalted* for two days, presumably borrowed from Lancaster (1-2).

<sup>20</sup> Thus the antinomian crisis, as Baxter saw it, gave his life-work symmetry. Mendle, *Putney Debates of 1647*, 250-51. See also Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity*, 74-82; and Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth Century England*, 87-191.

on the antinomians with his massive *A Survey of the Spiritual Antichrist* (1648), which thrashed the dissenting radicals as proponents of a damnable heterodoxy, which “stretched strict Calvinist theologies of grace to heretical lengths.”<sup>21</sup> Isaac Ambrose, known as a proponent of a “contemplative-mystical piety,” called Crisp “our open adversary” in his manual of affectionate divinity, *Prima, Media, et Ultima* (1650).<sup>22</sup>

John Flavel chimed in during the second phase of the debate with his *Planelogia* (1691), which charged Crisp with adhering to the contentious doctrine of justification from eternity. Robert Traill strategically published his *Vindication of the Protestant Doctrine Concerning Justification* (1692), which also comprised a tempered criticism of Crisp, to combat the perceived ragings of antinomianism.<sup>23</sup> The Anglican-Calvinist John Edwards published *Crispianism Unmask’ed* (1693), aimed at dismantling the “pernicious doctrines” maintained in Crisp’s sermons; and, finally, Daniel Williams wrote his *Gospel Truth* (1693), which not only hinted at carrying out Gouge’s earlier wish to burn Crisp’s books, but provided a side-by-side comparison between Crisp’s teachings and that of the assembly.

Thus, as with other hotly contested doctrines of the seventeenth century, there was a plethora of pamphlets published from both sides of the antinomian question, and a long, protracted, “orthodox” war ensued over who had the correct doctrine of justification.<sup>24</sup> While Crisp was often associated with other antinomian “radicals,” including Eaton, Saltmarsh, Denne, Traske, and Gerrard Winstanley, among others, Crisp more effectively “sought to establish the doctrine of free grace on a respectable intellectual basis.”<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland’s Past: Scottish Wig Historians and the Creation of an Anglo-British Identity, 1689-c.1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 58. Rutherford equates Crisp with John Saltmarsh, Henry Denne, John Traske, and other “radicals,” and makes no distinction between their theologies.

<sup>22</sup> Isaac Ambrose, *Prima, Media, and Ultima: The First, Middle, and Last Things, in Three Treatises* (London, 1657), 14; Tom Schwanda, *Soul Recreation: The Contemplative-Mystical Piety of Puritanism* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2012).

<sup>23</sup> Traill actually, in a sense, vindicated Crisp. He credits the rise of antinomianism not to Crisp’s sermons (or their republication) but to the ragings of Arminianism in the 1630s. While he distances himself from Crisp (“Let not Dr. Crisp’s Book be looked upon as the Standard of our Doctrine”), he also confesses, “there are many good things in it; and many expressions in it that we generally dislike.” Traill, *A Vindication of the Protestant Doctrine Concerning Justification, And of its Preachers and Professors from the Unjust Charge of Antinomianism* (London, 1692), 1, 10, 16-17. Charles Pastoor and Galen K. Johnson erroneously cite Traill’s work as a posthumous publication and mistakenly see it as an attack on Crisp’s theology. See their “Traill, Robert (1642-1716),” in *Historical Dictionary of the Puritans* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 321.

<sup>24</sup> The “antinomian” Robert Lancaster, who also published Eaton’s *Honeycombe*, wrote the initial hagiographic preface to Crisp’s *Christ Alone Exalted*. In fact, “Crisp was damned as an apostle of ‘his Master Eaton, from whom he hath borrowed most of his new Divinity;” yet, it is not so certain whether Crisp had in fact read Eaton, or was even a frequenter of Eaton’s parish in London. However, given the tight-knit “free grace” community, it is reasonable to assume that Crisp knew of Eaton, but he also distanced himself from the latter in several important ways (e.g. Crisp could be classified as “Reformed orthodox,” but not Eaton). Moreover, Crisp had an extensive collection of books, and may have come to similar ideas as Eaton independently. Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain*, 196; Michael Hunter, Giles Mandelbrote, Richard Ovenden, and Nigel Smith, *A Radical’s Books: The Library Catalogue of Samuel Jeake of Rye, 1623-1690* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1999), xli (fn. 1).

<sup>25</sup> McDowell, “The Beauty of Holiness and the Poetics of Antinomianism,” 43. Though there was a definite “radical godly community,” it is less certain to what degree each thinker relied on the other or who influenced whom. Further, it is difficult to assess where contemporaries drew the borders of orthodoxy

Thus, during the era of English Revolution (1640-1660), the *ordo salutis* became a central point of contention as Puritans attempted to define with greater clarity the subjective experience of salvation, the role of faith in justification, and confessional boundaries and trajectories within which one could express their ideas and still have credibility.<sup>26</sup>

Crisp's social and theological contexts show the elasticity of English Reformed divinity during this time, the popularity of radical doctrines, the perceived weakness of precisianism, and its alleged "navel gazing," and the allure of more radical notions concerning free grace and justification, which appealed to those overly burdened by their fears of hell.<sup>27</sup> While Crisp had an affinity to the radical theologies of the time, he stands out as distinct because of the numerous precisianist divines who came to his defense.<sup>28</sup> This uniqueness makes him an excellent case study when assessing *unitas* and *diversitas* within Puritanism.<sup>29</sup>

Before we turn to Crisp's social contexts it would be prudent to attempt to define antinomianism.<sup>30</sup> In essence, antinomianism can be defined as the "tendency to exalt the transformative power of free grace on believers and to denigrate, or even deny, the role and use of the Moral Law as revealed in the Old Testament in the lives of converted

because there were competing ideas about it. Moreover, Eaton did not believe that he was departing from the normative tradition within Reformed theology.

<sup>26</sup> This was especially the case with the first Antinomian crisis. Rutherford exerted great effort to confute Eaton's claim that he was merely reviving Luther's teachings. Whoever could present a better case for being in harmony with Luther, could show that they stood within authentic Protestantism. John Coffey, *Politics, Religion, and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 132-40; Carl R. Trueman and Carrie Euler, "The Reception of Martin Luther in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England," in *The Reception of Continental Reformation in Britain*, ed. Polly Ha and Patrick Collinson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 76. Though "antinomians" favored Luther and his Galatians commentary, Calvin was a close second. G. A. van den Brink, "Calvin, Witsius (1636-1708), and the English Antinomians," *Church History and Religious Culture* 91:1-2 (2011): 231-2.

<sup>27</sup> Two founders of "radical" revolutionary sects, Laurence Clarkson and Lodowick Muggleton, both credit fears of hell, and doubts about salvation, as primary motives for departing from orthodox Puritanism. See Clarkson, *The Lost Sheep Found; Or, The Prodigal Returned to His Fathers House, after Many a Sad and Weary Journey Through Many Religious Countreys* (London, 1660), 8-10; T. L. Underwood, *The Acts of the Witnesses: The Autobiography of Lodowick Muggleton and Other Early Muggletonian Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 35, 38, 43.

<sup>28</sup> As far as I have been able to discern, Crisp was unique in this, though there are perhaps parallels and similarities in John Cotton's defense of Anne Hutchinson.

<sup>29</sup> While Crisp is ideally situated to test my hypothesis, a similar test case is John Cotton, vicar of St. Botolph's, Boston, Lincolnshire, who immigrated to New England in 1633, and became intertwined in the antinomian controversy there. Cotton's association with antinomianism, especially in view of his later invite as a delegate to the Westminster Assembly, warrants further investigation. See, for instance, Cotton's defense of Anne Hutchinson in David D. Hall, ed., *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 78-151. Perry Miller made the astute observation that Thomas Hooker's preparationism was at the center of the antinomian storm. John H. Ball, *Chronicling the Soul's Windings: Thomas Hooker and His Morphology of Conversion* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1992), 57.

<sup>30</sup> For an outline of antinomian tenets more generally, see Howson, *Erroneous and Schismatical Opinions*, 114-15; William K. B. Stoevers, "A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven": *Covenant Theology and Antinomianism in Early Massachusetts* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1978). See also Ephraim Pagitt, *Heresiography: Or, A Description of the Heretickes and Sectaries of These Latter Times* (London: Printed by M. Okes, 1645), 88-101.



Christians,” either in preaching or in the practice of piety.<sup>31</sup> Thus Ephraim Pagitt wrote, “The *Antinomians* are so called, because they would have the Law abolished.”<sup>32</sup> But this neat definition is not without its difficulties, and is complicated by the fact that very few alleged antinomians embraced the name (one exception was Richard Coore); further, depending on the antinomian there were varying degrees of favorable uses for the law. Thus, a more nuanced definition is warranted.<sup>33</sup>

Second, in the first half of the seventeenth century, when Crisp ministered, British antinomianism was still an emerging phenomenon that defies easy classification, and it is uncertain how widespread these ideas were.<sup>34</sup> What is certain is that “antinomian” tenets were circulating London in the 1630s, as Bakewell attested, possibly being spurred on by recent printings of Luther’s Galatians commentary at that time.<sup>35</sup> It was not until after mid-century when the English presses were less governed, and more antinomian tracts published, that a more cohesive structure or theology emerged. Thus, while Crisp was promoting his brand of antinomianism during the 1630s it was still coming into being. Not long after, John Sedgwick, rector of St. Alphage’s, London Wall, made the distinction between “doctrinal” and “practical” antinomianism.<sup>36</sup>

Third, British antinomianism surfaced in response to particular themes within British practical divinity, and emerged out of its shadows, and should be seen as a reactionary movement; antinomians believed that a legal strain had infiltrated and thus compromised English Puritanism. That antinomians in this period are often identified with Lutheranism, not only for their sharp distinctions between law and gospel, but also for their preference to be affiliated with Luther, is indicative of an English-Lutheran renaissance within the movement.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, as before stated, there were many English reprints and translations of Luther’s Galatians commentary, and at least one new translation of *The Freedom of the Christian*, published in 1636 in London, during these formative years.

Yet, even considering these difficulties, there emerged core beliefs among the proponents of “anti-legal” divinity, which gave it some sense of solidarity and a platform for recurring critiques of precisianist piety. At the center of this belief-set was the idea that the moral law, including the Ten Commandments, had no or little role in the salvation or

---

<sup>31</sup> Como, “Antinomianism,” 305.

<sup>32</sup> Pagitt, *Heresiography*, 88.

<sup>33</sup> Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 325; G. F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (1946; repr. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 179. As with “Puritan,” *antinomian* was a term of abuse that suggested its adherents were lawbreakers or otherwise taught Christians to live immoral lives.

<sup>34</sup> Davis, *Ranters and the Historians*, 21 (n. 20); Huehns, *Antinomianism*, 8, 28, 66, 68, 71.

<sup>35</sup> Thus, on the published edition of John Eaton’s *The Honey-combe of Free Justification by Christ Alone* (1641), which circulated in MS form in the 1630s, is a direct but altered citation from Luther’s commentary on Galatians 2:11. The publisher changed “justification” in Luther’s text to “free justification” on Eaton’s. Cp. Martin Luther, *A Commentarie of Mater Doctor Martin Luther upon the Epistle of S. Paul to the Galathians* (London, 1635), 55v.

<sup>36</sup> Huehns, *Antinomianism*, 40.

<sup>37</sup> Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 325; Van den Brink, “Calvin, Witsius (1636-1708), and the English Antinomians,” 231-2; Tim Cooper, “The Antinomians Redeemed: Removing Some of the ‘Radicals’ from Mid-Seventeenth-Century Religion,” *Journal of Religious History* 24 (2000): 247-62; Baker, “The Battle for Luther in Seventeenth-Century England,” 115-33.

lives of believers and that its integration (to varying extents) compromised true spirituality. Implicit in this denunciation was a critique of what was seen as the precisianist's obsession with sanctification or fierce self-examination, which, in turn, often led to crises in assurance. Thus, the origins and defining characteristics of British antinomianism, and its early contexts, have to be equated with an early-modern religious crisis of conscience.<sup>38</sup> But we will now move on to consider Crisp's social contexts, and will later return to Crisp's antinomianism and assess its relation to the orthodoxy circulating among the mainline.

## 5.2 Social Contexts

Relatively little is known about Crisp's life, other than that he was born into a wealthy London family and instigated a hotly contested theological crisis.<sup>39</sup> He was born in Bread Street, London, the third son of Alderman Ellis Crisp and his wife, Hester, and the younger brother of Sir Nicholas Crisp. Educated at Eton and Cambridge, Crisp took up livings successively at Newington Butts (Surrey) and Brinkworth (Wiltshire), the latter of which royalist soldiers ejected him from in 1642 because of his Parliamentarianism.<sup>40</sup> Having earned several degrees—BA (Cambridge, 1621); MA (Oxford, 1627); DD (Cambridge, c. 1638)—Crisp was one of the more educated Puritans at the time and one of the few to have earned a Doctor of Divinity degree.<sup>41</sup> He was known to have entertained up to 100

---

<sup>38</sup> Michael P. Winship, *Making Heretics: Militant Protestantism and Free Grace in Massachusetts, 1636-1641* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 12-27; Howson, *Erroneous and Schismatical Opinions*, 89; Como, "Antinomianism," 305-7.

<sup>39</sup> The two most substantial accounts of Crisp's life are John Gill's "Memoirs of the Life, &c. of Tobias Crisp, D.D.," prefaced to his 1791 republication of Crisp's sermons, and Christopher Hill's "Dr. Tobias Crisp (1600-1643)," in his *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill, Volume Two: Religion and Politics in Seventeenth Century England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), 141-61. Shorter accounts can be found in Roger Pooley, "Crisp, Tobias (1600-1643)," *ODNB*; and David Como, "Crisp, Tobias (1600-1643)," in *Puritans and Puritanism in Europe and America*, ed. Francis J. Bremer and Tom Webster (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 1:64.

<sup>40</sup> Crisp was deprived of his Newington post because of accusations of simony, that he had bought the living with his substantial wealth. However, he purportedly "swore on the Holy Evangelists" that he was innocent. See John A. Vern, *Biographical Register of Christ's College, 1505-1905* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), 337.

<sup>41</sup> Pooley, "Crisp, Tobias" *ODNB*; Daniel, "John Gill and Calvinistic Antinomianism," 172. Pooley has Crisp earning a B.D. from Oxford in 1638, based on his reading of Joseph Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses* (1891), which seems unfeasible. Crisp likely proceeded D.D. directly from M.A. (in the seventeenth century there was a statute at Cambridge that a master of arts could be admitted to the degree of D.D. had he been a master of twelve years and had a teaching position). This is further attested in Wood's *Athenae Oxonienses*, where Crisp is said to have earned only three degrees: B.A., M.A., D.D., and "was admitted to proceed in [Oxford's] faculty" in 1626/7.

There also appears to be some confusion in the literature whether Crisp earned his doctorate from Oxford or Cambridge. Several older sources have Crisp earning the degree at Oxford, but Pooley has cited Cambridge based on J. A. Venn's *Alumni Cantabrigienses* (1922), and here I concur. I have not been able to discover the subject of Crisp's thesis. On the "Doctor of Divinity" degree in the seventeenth century, see G. D. Henderson, *Religious Life in Seventeenth-Century Scotland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), 40-43. Other noted D.D.'s were William Twisse, George Downname, John Preston, Joseph Hall, John Everard, John Wallis, Robert Harris, and James Ussher. Edward Wells states that the conferring of the degree to Crisp

guests at a time at his estate, and had a reputation for being generous; he raised a large family, having thirteen children.<sup>42</sup>

Though Crisp was imbued with the Arminianism that was sweeping through the English churches in the 1620s-1630s, he drifted toward doctrinal antinomianism likely in response to either personal or pastoral difficulties associated with the intensive introspection and moral imperatives of Stuart Arminianism, and the perceived inadequacies of precisianist Puritanism.<sup>43</sup> He frequented London in the 1630s during the height of the first Antinomian crisis, and likely had contact with the famed “antinomian heresiarch” John Eaton, though there were important doctrinal differences between the two, specifically that Crisp acknowledged that true believers experience sin.<sup>44</sup> Crisp later preached his “controversial message” in London after leaving the rectorship of Brinkworth, but does not seem to have garnered severe criticism until shortly before his death from smallpox in February 1642/3.<sup>45</sup>

Historian Anthony Wood notes that it was a dispute in London against 52 famed ministers, which Crisp “eagerly managed,” which brought about his last illness.<sup>46</sup> As said before, Crisp also favored parliamentarianism in the English Civil Wars, which may

---

was “to the Scandal and Reproach of [the] Faculty.” Wells, *An Help for the Right Understanding of the Several Divine Laws and Covenants* (Oxford, 1729), 140.

<sup>42</sup> Crisp married Mary Wilson in 1626, daughter of Rowland Wilson, a London merchant and activist in the Civil War. Brook, *Lives of the Puritans*, 471-72; Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, Vol. 3, 50-51; Hill, *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill*, Vol. 2, 141.

<sup>43</sup> Samuel Rutherford, *A Survey of the Spirituall Antichrist*, Part I, 193; Cooper, *Richard Baxter and Antinomianism*, 27; Hill, *Collected Essays*, Vol. 2, 141-2; Benjamin Brook, *Lives of the Puritans* (London: Printed for James Black, 1813), 2:473; Daniel Neal, *The History of the Puritans, or Protestant Non-Conformists, from the Battle of Edge-Hill, to the Death of King Charles I*, Vol. 3 (Boston and Newburyport: Charles Ewer and William B. Allen & Co., 1817), 44-45. Rutherford comments that “Crisp, a godly man...who having builded much on qualifications and signes, fell to the other extremity of no signes of sanctification at all.” Brook states that Crisp’s “ideas of the grace of Christ had been exceedingly low, and he had imbibed sentiments which produced in him a legal and self-righteous spirit. Shocked at the recollection of his former views and conduct, he seems to have imagined that he could never go far enough from them.”

<sup>44</sup> In current scholarship various individuals have been dubbed the “antinomian heresiarch,” including Crisp, Anne Hutchinson, and John Everard. Consequently it is difficult to trace the precise origins of who first disseminated antinomianism within England or British North America. Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 29; Peter W. Williams, *Popular Religion in America: Symbolic Change and the Modernization Process in Historical Perspective* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 107; William Hunt, “Civic Chivalry and the English Civil War,” in *The Transmission of Culture in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Anthony Grafton and Ann Blair (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 227.

<sup>45</sup> Como, “Crisp, Tobias,” 64; Alison Jasper, “Female Genius: Jane Leade (1624-1704),” in *Literature and Theology: New Interdisciplinary Spaces*, ed. by Heather Walton (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 84-85. See also Parnham, “The Humbling of ‘High Presumption,’” 50-74. Crisp’s wife, Mary Wilson, died September 20, 1673, and left her estate to be divided among her children and grandchildren, with the exception of “my grandson Tobias...[who] opened and read this my will contrary to modesty and ingenuity...” Henry F. Waters, *Genealogical Gleanings in England*, Vol. 1 (Boston: New-England Historical Genealogical Society, 1901), 835.

<sup>46</sup> Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses: An Exact History of All the Writers and Bishops Who Have Had Their Education in the University of Oxford, to which Are Added The Fasti, or Annals of the Said University*, Vol. 3, ed. Philip Bliss (London, 1817), 50-51.

possibly explain his popularity among its regiments; but as Robert Rix states, “he never supported the execution of the monarch or other extreme solutions.”<sup>47</sup>

Though his life was cut short in his forty-third year, he proved to be immensely influential not only among the Civil-War chaplains, and various seventeenth-century radicals, such as Jane Leade, but among Christians well into the eighteenth century.

The mystic Leade, who went to London “chiefly in order to find a religious context for and deepening of her visionary experience,” was disillusioned until she met with Crisp. He was able to “resolve all her doubts and give her a much clearer understanding of what had happened to her.”<sup>48</sup> Though she later went beyond “orthodox” bounds, Leade often reminisced of her time with Crisp, and even wrote that Crisp’s “free-grace sermon was quite different from the others I had heard so that I decided to tread no other path.”<sup>49</sup> Indeed, Crisp had such a formative influence on Leade’s theology that such themes as the freeness of God’s redemptive love and the blotting out of sin were more impressionable than the doctrine of predestination. Leade would later, from the mid-1680s, embrace the idea that everyone would eventually be saved.<sup>50</sup>

But Leade was not alone in attributing influence to Crisp. The Ranter founder Laurence Clarkson says that he “went to” Tobias Crisp, having heard of his ministry, and sat “under Doctor Crisp’s Doctrine, in which I did endeavor to become one of those that God saw no sin.” It is not certain whether Clarkson actually attended Crisp’s London parish, or whether he merely read Crisp’s books, which he “seriously perused.”<sup>51</sup> In 1644, John Coulton gives evidence of the influence of *Christ Alone Exalted* within the Parliamentary forces. Henry Pinnell, an army radical, vindicated Crisp and ascribed to Crisp a formative influence in shaping his own religious identity.<sup>52</sup> In 1646, Mary Greaves, an avid reader of “radical” writings, lent her copy of Crisp’s sermons to Adam Eyre.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> Robert Rix, *William Blake and the Cultures of Radical Christianity* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 30. Regarding Crisp’s books in the army, Samuel Rutherford wrote, “It shall never be well with England, till the like abjuration of the doctrine of... Wil. Del. Joh. Saltmarsh, of Town, Eaton, Den., Crispe... be tendered to most of the Army of Sir Thomas Fairfax, and all the Sectaries in England.” Idem, *A Survey of the Spiritual Antichrist* (London, 1648), Part I, 354. See also Leo F. Solt, *Saints in Arms: Puritanism and Democracy in Cromwell’s Army* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), 25-42.

<sup>48</sup> Arthur Versluis, *Wisdom’s Children: A Christian Esoteric Tradition* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 58; Julie Hirst, *Jane Leade: Biography of a Seventeenth-Century Mystic* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 18-19; E. P. Thompson, *Witness Against the Beast: William Blake and the Moral Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 41.

<sup>49</sup> Leade, *Lebenslauff*, 417. Quoted in Hirst, *Jane Leade*, 19.

<sup>50</sup> Alana Vincent, “Two (and two, and two) Towers: Interdisciplinarity, Borrowing, and the Limits of Interpretation,” in *Literature and Theology: New Interdisciplinary Studies*, ed. Heather Walton (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 84-5; Douglas H. Shantz, *Between Sardis and Philadelphia: The Life and World of Pietist Court Preacher Conrad Broske* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 130-31.

<sup>51</sup> Laurence Clarkson, *The Lost Sheep Found: or, The Prodigal Returned to his Father’s House* (London, 1660), 9.

<sup>52</sup> Hill, *The Collected Essays*, Vol. 2, 142; John Barnard and D. F. McKenzie, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, 1557-1695* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 414-15. According to Richard Baxter, antinomianism was the predominant infection in the army, and books by Crisp, Paul Hobson, John Saltmarsh, and Walter Cradock were there in abundance. See N. H. Keeble, “Take Heed of Being Too Forward in Imposing on Others’: orthodoxy and heresy in the Baxterian tradition,” in *Heresy, Literature and Politics in Early Modern English Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 287; Richard L. Greaves, *Saints and Rebels: Seven Nonconformists in Stuart England* (Macon: Mercer University

It is not surprising then that when Crisp's works resurfaced in the 1690s, and *ad hominem* attacks became common fare, that a number of testimonies were quickly sent to the press to show how Crisp had lived an exemplary life, and transformed the lives of others. One supporter opined that, "There has been a great deal of Talk about *Dr. Crisp*, but I look upon him to have been a Godly, Holy Man, and that he was Sound and Orthodox, and that he brought in more Souls to Christ than any of us."<sup>54</sup> This later testimony echoes William Twisse's earlier observation that the only reason Crisp's sermons were opposed by many of the orthodox was because "so many were converted by his preaching, and so few by ours."<sup>55</sup>

Those opposing Crisp were Richard Baxter and Daniel Williams, among others; those defending were Isaac Chauncey, Increase Mather, and others, thus illustrating the theological diversity of English Reformed thought.<sup>56</sup> Long before, John Saltmarsh, an alleged antinomian, had ridiculed Baxter for his views on grace on the charge that it failed to separate free grace from works.<sup>57</sup> Just prior to his death in 1691, Baxter launched a campaign against antinomianism that resulted in hotly contested pamphlet wars.<sup>58</sup> Keeble states that Baxter's attack on antinomianism and Crisp was at odds with Baxter's conciliatory efforts and reputation as an "irenical Reconciler," in his later writings. This bitterness is suggestive of how much Baxter hated the doctrine of antinomianism, and its tendency to belittle the law, and, in his mind, Christian conduct.<sup>59</sup>

The prolific millenarian Thomas Beverley defended the republication of Crisp's sermons by stating that "as the Preaching of these Sermons was before a notable Breaking out of Gospel Light...So I cannot but hope, The Reprinting of these Sermons is order'd by Providence, as a Fore-Running of a much Clearer opening of that Kingdom of

---

Press, 1985), 136. Tim Cooper states that Crisp became Baxter's chief antinomian boogeyman. Cooper, *Richard Baxter and Antinomianism*, 27.

<sup>53</sup> Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1990), 159. This is further evidence of Crisp's popularity among the laity. Further, John Jones remarked how Crisp popularized the grace of God for the laity. See John Jones, *Balliol College: A History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 109.

<sup>54</sup> Hananiel Philalethes, *Christ Exalted and Dr. Crisp Vindicated in Several Points called Antinomian* (London, 1698), sig. Alv. See also Thomas Beverley, *A Conciliatory Judgment Concerning Dr. Crisp's Sermons, and Mr. Baxter's Dissatisfactions in Them* (London, 1690); and Beverley, *A Conciliatory Discourse upon Crisp's Sermons, on the Observation of Mr. Williams's Dissatisfactions in Them* (London, 1692). Beverley, who had been imprisoned along with Baxter in 1686, attempted to arbitrate between Baxter and Crisp's supporters. He argued that both Baxter and Crisp reflected the two sides of the same coin and that their differences lay only in emphasis. Beverley's support of Crisp alienated him from Baxter and his efforts proved unfruitful. See Cooper, *Richard Baxter and Antinomianism*, 174-77.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in McKelvey, "Eternal Justification," 242.

<sup>56</sup> Baxter called Crisp the "most eminent Ring-leader whose books took wonderfully with ignorant Professors." Baxter, *A Treatise of Justifying Righteousness* (London, 1676), I, 21.

<sup>57</sup> John Saltmarsh, *Free-Grace: Or, the Flowings of Christs Blood freely to Sinners* (London, 1646), [find source]; William M. Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium: Protestant Imperialism and the English Revolution* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 308.

<sup>58</sup> R. K. Webb, "The Emergence of Radical Dissent," in *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 25-26.

<sup>59</sup> Keeble, "Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Baxterian Tradition," 295. One can understand Baxter's opposition to antinomianism because it was, in the end, and if carried to its logical extreme, a repudiation of his life work.

Redemption.”<sup>60</sup> Beverley supported Crisp’s notions of righteousness by grace alone and sought to defend these against Baxter’s, and Williams’s, criticisms by stating that Crisp “had simply concentrated his expositions on the doctrines of election and imputed righteousness through Christ.”<sup>61</sup> The antinomian strain, so long as it was expressed within orthodox rubric, was an acceptable, alternative position, and matter of emphasis, so long as it was not too “successful” to impinge upon the sensibilities of less popular clergy.

Thus, in sum, Crisp ministered during a pivotal time during the Post-Reformation period, in the years immediately prior to the English Civil Wars, when radical theologies were surfacing in response to precisianism, and spreading like wildfire. Crisp was alive during the second antinomian crisis, and would have been familiar with the heresiarch John Eaton, though the extent to which they may have conversed has been lost to history. While he may have been conversant with Eaton, and possibly read the latter’s MS on free justification, the major distinction between the two are: (1) Crisp was a well-known and well-liked cleric among the “orthodox;” it was only during the final year of his life that his teachings brought forth controversy due to his “success;” and (2) Crisp, as we will see, distanced himself from Eaton’s “rigid” antinomianism, in that God could see no sin within the believer.<sup>62</sup>

### 5.3 Crisp’s Writings in Historical Context

We come now to consider Crisp’s sermons in their historical context. Though better educated than many of his peers, Crisp’s entire corpus rests not in technical works of theology, but in the sermons he preached during his ministry, which were taken in shorthand and posthumously published. Crisp’s sermons reflect the bias in Puritan divinity towards more practical works or handbooks; and while some noted Puritan theologians wrote systems or manuals of more technical divinity, as Edward Leigh’s *A System or Body of Divinity*, the far majority of Puritan tomes can be classified as published “sermon-cycles,” on issues of current pastoral or controversial importance, which, when published, became part of the theological literature.<sup>63</sup> John Preston’s *Breastplate of Faith and Love* (1630), Richard Sibbes’s *Soul’s Conflict* (1635), and Joseph Caryl’s *An Exposition with Practicall Observations upon...the Chapters of...Job* (1643-66), are cases in point. Edward Fisher’s *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1645) was another popular work that

---

<sup>60</sup> Thomas Beverley, *A Conciliatory Judgment Concerning Dr. Crisp’s Sermons and Mr. Baxter’s Dissatisfaction in Them* (1690), 11. See also Warren Johnston, *The Apocalypse in Later Seventeenth-Century England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), 97.

<sup>61</sup> Warren Johnston, “Beverly, Thomas (d. 1702),” *ODNB*.

<sup>62</sup> Isaac Chauncy, Crisp’s foremost defender during the third antinomian crisis, said that Crisp was an antinomian “falsely so called.” Chauncy, *Neonomianism Unmask’d: or, The Ancient Gospel Pleaded* (London, 1692), 2, 14-15.

<sup>63</sup> William K. B. Stoevers, “Nature, Grace and John Cotton: The Theological Dimension in the New England Antinomian Controversy,” *Church History* 44 (1975), 24.

sought to restate traditional federal theology in more practical garb, but was readily accused for its “antinomian” tendencies.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, it is no surprise that Crisp’s sermons were quickly disseminated, purchased, and read by all sorts of godly citizens; nor is it surprising that almost as soon as the first edition of *Christ Alone Exalted* issued from the press in 1643, two notable texts were published to confute its doctrines. Stephen Gere’s *The Doctrine of the Antinomians* (1644) was published “in an answer to divers dangerous Doctrines, in the seven first sermons of Dr. Crisps fourteen.” That Gere only addressed the first half of this printing of *Christ Alone Exalted* is suggestive of the sense of urgency that some of the “orthodox” felt. Indeed, Gere writes, “Having sadly considered how busie *Satan is to sow Tares*, where the precious seed of Gods saving truth has been sowne, I thought it necessary for every Seeds-man to hinder the growth thereof, by word or writing, by conference or calling on the name of God, by one means or other, according to our occasions and abilities, lest Satans vigilancy rise in judgement against us for our negligence.”<sup>65</sup>

Thomas Bakewell’s *The Antinomians Christ Confounded, and the Lords Christ Exalted* (1644) also charged Crisp and Lancaster with teaching eternal justification, a tenet in which he believed “they did but rake out of Eatons dunghill;”<sup>66</sup> Bakewell further sought to show how Crisp had offended orthodox sensibility on regeneration, faith, adoption, union with Christ, and assurance of faith.<sup>67</sup> For Bakewell, as for some other orthodox writers at the time, Crisp and the antinomians had constructed “a false Christ.”<sup>68</sup>

Precisianist reaction to Crisp was fueled, in part, by the earlier controversy with Eaton and the Eatonists. Indeed, a whole slew of “anti-Eaton” works were pushed from the press in the 1630s, such as Henry Burton’s *Law and the Gospel Reconciled* (1631), and Thomas Taylor’s *Regula Vitae: The Rule of the Law under the Gospel* (1631). That both Crisp and Eaton were clerics further compounded the problem. Gere complained, “I did not clearly see that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is absolutely overthrown by this *Antinomian* [Crisp], or rather Anti-evangelicall Doctrine, under very faire and specious pretences, (even as that false Apostle and traitor *Judas* killed Christ when he betrayed him) I had help my peace at this time, and saved myself a great deal of paines. But finding that these foure last yeers, this *gangrene* hath eaten very sore into many poore soules, who looke upon the guilded or sugared bait, but see not the poysoned and dangerous hook, I have ventured into the battell.”<sup>69</sup>

In spite of precisianist criticisms and objections, two more collections of Crisp’s sermons were published between 1644-1646, both introduced by Robert Lancaster. Crisp’s grandson, Samuel, compiled and published the definitive edition of *Christ Alone Exalted* in 1690, comprising the previously printed sermons, as well as new transcriptions from his

---

<sup>64</sup> David C. Lachman observes, however, that the *Marrow*’s stress on the absolute, free, and gracious nature of the covenant avoids antinomianism. Lachman, *The Marrow Controversy, 1718-1723: An Historical and Theological Analysis* (Edinburgh: Rutherford Books, 1988), 38.

<sup>65</sup> Gere, *Doctrine of the Antinomians*, sig. A2.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas Bakewell, *The Antinomians Christ Confounded and the Lords Christ Exalted* (London, 1644), sig. A1.

<sup>67</sup> Bakewell, *Antinomians Christ*, 29-30.

<sup>68</sup> Bakewell, *Antinomians Christ*, 1-26.

<sup>69</sup> Gere, *Doctrine of the Antinomians*, sig. B3.

grandfather's own handwritten manuscripts.<sup>70</sup> We will now look at this edition more closely, then examine Crisp's theology, to see whether orthodox criticisms were justified, and then conclude this chapter.

5.3.1 *Christ Alone Exalted: Being the Compleat Works of Tobias Crisp, D.D. Containing XLII Sermons on Several Select Texts of Scriptures (1690)*

This third and enlarged 1690-edition of the previously printed *Christ Alone Exalted* (1643-1646) contains all of the formerly printed forty-two sermons and adds ten more, eight of which were never before printed and which were collected from manuscripts; the 1690 text swells to 726 pages. The forty-two sermons, which were printed between 1643-1646, were compiled from shorthand and compared with Crisp's own notes. The 1690 edition (which was printed at the behest of the London bookseller William Marshall)<sup>71</sup> contains an attestation by twelve nonconformists that the newly transcribed sermons were authentic reproductions of Crisp. The twelve were George Griffith, George Cokayn, Isaac Chauncy, John Howe, Vincent Alsop, Nathaniel Mather, Increase Mather, Hanserd Knollys, Thomas Powell, John Turner, Richard Bures, and John Gammon.<sup>72</sup> While many of these divines would also endorse or defend Crisp's work, seven would later testify that they merely attested to its authenticity.<sup>73</sup> Whatever the intent, the list would inevitably be seen as an endorsement of the contents of *Christ Alone Exalted*, born by its strategic placing before prefatory material.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, in Samuel Crisp's defense of his father's

---

<sup>70</sup> Roger Pooley, in his entry on Crisp in *ODNB*, states incorrectly that the 1690 edition of Crisp's *Christ Alone Exalted* contains a life by John Gill. Gill's life of Crisp was first prefaced to the annotated 1755 edition, which was reprinted with corrections in a fourth edition in 1791.

<sup>71</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, sig. A3. The Marshall bookshop, located at the Bible in Grace-Church Street, London, had a thriving Puritan trade. See Frederick Joseph Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), 70. Peter Toon incorrectly refers to Marshall as an undertaker. Cp. Toon, *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity*, 49, with *Elizabethan Non-Conformist Texts, Volume 3: The Writings of Henry Barrow, 1587-1590*, ed. Leland H. Carlson (New York: Routledge, 2003), 60.

<sup>72</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, sig. A2.

<sup>73</sup> Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 63 (n. 317). John Fesko incorrectly states that the signers endorsed the republication of Crisp's work. Rather, they were merely attesting to the fact that Volume 4 was, in fact, in Crisp's own hand and never intended their signatures as an endorsement of Crisp's theology. Cp. John Fesko, *Beyond Calvin: Union with Christ and Justification in Early Modern Reformed Theology, 1517-1700* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 342-3, with Henry Rogers, *The Life and Character of John Howe, With an Analysis of His Writings* (London: Printed for William Ball, 1836), 390-7. Cooper suggests that given the limited scope of the statement the signatories signed to, their signatures were never intended as an endorsement of Crisp's theology. However, Baxter saw these as endorsements and it seems probable that Samuel Crisp intended their use for such purposes. Cooper, *Richard Baxter and Antinomianism*, 171. John Howe, Vincent Alsop, and Richard Bures, three of the twelve divines who signed *Christ Alone Exalted* (1690), also signed and attested to Williams's *Gospel Truth*, which was an attack on Crisp's theology; cf. Williams, *Gospel Truth*, sig. A2-3.

<sup>74</sup> Whether intentional or not (Howe's biographer believed it was a trick by Samuel Crisp and his publisher), the list of divines was interpreted as fully endorsing Tobias Crisp's theology, and this led to a division in the "Happy Union" of 1691. See C. G. Bolam, et al, *The English Presbyterians: From Elizabethan Puritanism to Modern Unitarianism* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1968); and David L. Wykes, "After the



ministry (“good wholesome Household Divinity”), in his, “To the Christian Reader,” rests, in part, in appeals to the thought of such precisianist divines as William Perkins, Thomas Manton, and Thomas Jacomb, and in “the Testimony of many Eminent Divines...all contending against the Mixture of our Righteousness with Christ’s, in the Matter of Justification...”<sup>75</sup> This strategy is similar to Samuel Crisp’s further defense of his father’s work in *Christ Made Sin* (1691), where he enlists the reputations of Chamier, Perkins, Polanus, Twisse, Reynolds, Manton, and others, as supporting his father’s emphasis on the freeness of justification aside from works.<sup>76</sup>

Samuel Crisp’s appeal to such authorities of the “mainline” tradition show two things: (1) The overwhelming desire of antinomians to be seen as being harmonious with the orthodox tradition; and (2) the existence of an incipient antinomian strain within the writings of precisianist divinity books, especially on the subject of justification, which became magnified, and exaggerated among its “radical” proponents.<sup>77</sup>

Antinomians, whether self-attested or merely accused, were not ultimately desirous to prove themselves systematic theologians, nor even, perhaps, to prove that such authorities as Luther and Calvin, or Perkins and Owen, systematically agreed with them on every point of contention, but rather to show that their assertions were compatible with the orthodox tradition, and could be substantiated from orthodox writings on the doctrine of justification. This is, perhaps, similar in the way the scholastics and reformers used Augustine;<sup>78</sup> regardless, the antinomian desire for continuity, if not replication, warrants a broadening of our understanding of confessional boundaries within the seventeenth century.<sup>79</sup>

The “Compleat Works of Tobias Crisp, D.D.,” consist of four books, the three previously published throughout the 1640s, and a fourth containing the ten previously

---

Happy Union: Presbyterians and Independents in the Provinces,” in *Unity and Diversity in the Church*, ed. R. N. Swanson (Oxford: Ecclesiastical History Society, 1996), 283-96.

<sup>75</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1690), sig. A8r.

<sup>76</sup> Samuel Crisp, *Christ Made Sin: 2 Cor. 5:21 Evinc’d from Scripture, Upon Occasion of an Exception Taken at Pinnors-hall, 28 January 1689, at Reprinting the Sermons of Dr. Tobias Crisp* (London, 1691), sig. B2.

<sup>77</sup> Thus Robert Traill’s vindication of the doctrine against charges of antinomianism.

<sup>78</sup> Here see Arnoud S. Q. Visser’s excellent *Reading Augustine in the Reformation: The Flexibility of Intellectual Authority in Europe, 1500-1620* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), which shows how Augustine was variously portrayed as Lutheran, Catholic, and Calvinist in the early modern period. Cf. Ann-Stephane Schafter, *Auctoritas Patrum? The Reception of the Church Fathers in Puritanism* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012), 65-146, 214-84.

<sup>79</sup> This was truer of the earlier Luther than Calvin. While Calvin was cited as an authority, Luther was more so. Van den Brink, “Calvin, Witsius (1636-1708), and the English Antinomians.” See also Richard A. Muller, “Reception and Response: Referencing and Understanding Calvin in Seventeenth-Century Calvinism,” in *Calvin and His Influence, 1509-2009*, ed. Irena Backus and Philip Benedict (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 182-201; and Muller, “The ‘Reception of Calvin’ in Later Reformed Theology: Concluding Thoughts,” *Church History and Religious Culture* 91:1-2 (2011): 255-74, esp. 273-4.

I agree with Bozeman that the antinomianism of John Eaton is contra orthodox Puritanism, but I do not believe the antinomian strain to be inherently “contra- and post-Puritan.” Bozeman does not take fully into account the subjective belief of the antinomians that they were merely replicating the theologies of the “common consent of the Learned Orthodox Writers.” Moreover, a case could be made that Eaton, though not “mainstream,” and not “orthodox,” should still be classified as “Puritan.” Bozeman, “John Eaton as Contra-Puritan,” 653-4; John Eaton, *The Honey-combe of Free Justification by Christ Alone* (London, 1642), sig. B4; Benjamin Brook, *Lives of the Puritans* (London: Printed for James Black, 1813), 2:466.

unpublished sermons. Among the hitherto unpublished corpus are the sermons, “Free-Grace the Teacher of Good Works” (Sermons 3-6), and “The Use of the Law” (Sermon 9), both of which serve to confute accusations of antinomianism because Crisp here speaks of the duties of a godly life for the Christian, and a positive use of the law (which the very name of *antinomian* rejects). It is thus not surprising that Samuel Crisp capitalizes on these sermons to combat the indictments of Daniel Williams, and others. Given their subject matter, there seems to have been some dispute as to the authenticity of these sermons.<sup>80</sup> They refute the typical “mainline” idea of the antinomian as a proponent of lawless living. Further, one wonders why these sermons were not published before, in the 1640s. It is possible that Robert Lancaster, who had known Eaton, and published the latter’s *Honey-combe*, chose, for polemical purposes, to only issue those sermons of Crisp which were more congruous with Eaton.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the later eighteenth-century reception of Crisp’s sermons provoked fierce debate between the Congregationalists, who became more and more identified with a “theologically high” Calvinism that could be close to antinomianism, while Presbyterians adopted a more moderate Calvinism closer to Arminianism, the dividing issue here being to what extent human beings are actively involved in their salvation? Antinomians were on one end by denying any appearance of human cooperation, whereas Arminians openly advocated some degree of activity on the human part. Half a century prior, at the time of the Restoration, there was little doctrinal difference between the two groups. Nuovo credits this division to the republication of Crisp’s sermons in 1690, which exposed the tendencies of both groups.<sup>81</sup> The use of Crisp by English Particular Baptists has also been well documented.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, Particular Baptist John Gill’s critical and explanatory edition of *Christ Alone Exalted* was printed at least twice in the eighteenth century (1755, 1791), and, again, defends Crisp from doctrinal and practical antinomism.

#### 5.4 Crisp’s Theology in Historical Context

To date, no exhaustive book-length analysis of Crisp’s theology exists.<sup>83</sup> Though Crisp never wrote a *medulla* or *corpus theologiae*, or with a view to publication, his transcribed

---

<sup>80</sup> This seems to be the reason why Samuel Crisp enlisted the nonconformist authenticators for his father’s work. Daniel Williams had denounced the reprinting of Crisp’s sermons in a lecture at Pinner’s Hall, which further divided the united ministers (Presbyterians and Congregationalists). See Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (New Haven: Harvard University Press, 1953), 218-19, and above (n. 64-66).

<sup>81</sup> Nuovo, “Crisp, Tobias”; David Steers, “Arminianism among Protestant Dissenters in England and Ireland in the Eighteenth Century,” in *Arminius, Arminianism, and Europe: Jacobus Arminius (1559/60-1609)*, ed. Th. Marius van Leeuwen, Keith D. Stanglin, and Marijke Tolsma (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 166.

<sup>82</sup> See Daniel, “John Gill and Calvinistic Antinomianism,” 171-90. John Coffey notes that Crisp was also popular among Wesleyan Methodists. Coffey, “Puritan Legacies,” in *Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, ed. John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 334.

<sup>83</sup> Studies of Crisp’s theology can be found, in part, in G. A. van den Brink, *Herman Witsius en het Antinomianisme: Met Tekst en Vertaling Van De Animadversiones Irenicae* (Apeldoorn: Instituut voor Reformatieonderzoek, 2008), 23-4, 66-86; David Parnham, “The Humbling of ‘High Presumption,’” 50-74;

sermons nonetheless portray a Puritan pastor concerned with the interplay between *dogma* and *praxis*, especially its terms of the former's implication for the attainment of assurance. Throughout his sermons, Crisp shows intricate awareness and sensitivity to such orthodox doctrines as the covenant of grace, election, justification, regeneration, sanctification, and assurance, but he often employs more “radical,” or “unguarded” language when using these categories.<sup>84</sup>

Crisp's chief concern in *Christ Alone Exalted* was not to illustrate or defend a highly scholastic theology, but to confute any notions of a human works-based righteousness and undue introspection. Through four volumes of published sermons, Crisp time and time again combats notions that Christian liberty, free grace, and free justification induce ungodly behavior. However, what infuriated Crisp's attackers was his seeming careless expressions about the forgiveness of God: “There is not one sin you commit, after you receive Christ, that God can charge upon your person.”<sup>85</sup> Crisp did not see holiness as an evidence of grace, as did most precisianist Puritans, but he did not deny the obligations of “the godly” to live godly lives; indeed, says Crisp, “There is no believer who hath received Christ but he is created in him unto good works, that he should walk in them.”<sup>86</sup> Throughout *Christ Alone Exalted*, Crisp emphasizes the beauty of holiness and good works as the believer's duty, but maintains the unconditional nature of salvation: “But I must withal tell you that all this sanctification of life is not a jot in the way of that justified person unto heaven.”<sup>87</sup> The point is that believers are required to live moral lives, and to conduct themselves as citizens of a heavenly world, but none of it matters when it comes to how a person is saved, or whether they remain saved. In the end, works merit nothing, not the cause, and surely not the continuance of justification.<sup>88</sup>

Because of Crisp's clear and repeated emphasis on godly living and the role of the law as the believer's guide in this life, contemporary charges of antinomism seem dubious and can be credited to overreaction to the more extreme statements that Crisp made about free grace and the forgiveness of sins prior to their actual commission.<sup>89</sup>

As with the method in prior chapters, we will now turn to Crisp's comments on (a) Doctrine of God and Humanity (b) Predestination and Assurance; (c) Covenant of Works

---

Parnham, “The Covenantal Quietism of Tobias Crisp,” *Church History*, Vol. 75, No. 3 (2006): 511-43; Stoevers, *A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven*, 143-45, 157-59, 172-73; and Hill, *Collected Essays*, Vol. 3, 142-61.

<sup>84</sup> On the antinomian use of language, see Nicholas McDowell, “The Beauty of Holiness and the Poetics of Antinomianism: Richard Crashaw, John Saltmarsh and the Language of Religious Radicalism in the 1640s,” in *Varieties of Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century English Radicalism in Context*, ed. Ariel Hessayon and David Finnegan (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 1-30.

<sup>85</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1791), 1:7-8, 11, 16, 429-30, 437-40.

<sup>86</sup> McKelvey, *Histories that Mansoul and Her Wars Anatomize*, 62.

<sup>87</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1791), 1:68-69, 76-77, 123.

<sup>88</sup> In stressing this point, Crisp offended “mainline” sensitivity to the Catholic charge that Protestants were just antinomians in theological dress. Further, there were major fears concerning the consequences of actually saying these things from the pulpit, perhaps warranted by the “excesses of the extreme Calvinism prominent among Dutch Contra-Remonstrants...such as Rippertus Sixtus, who taught that a faithful man could commit murder and adultery yet God could not dam him for it.” Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 419.

<sup>89</sup> This is likely what Traill was referring to when he noted some expressions of Crisp that the precisianists disliked.

and Grace; (d) Justification and Sanctification; (e) Law and Gospel; and (f) Christian Life and Piety.

#### 5.4.1 *Doctrine of God and Humanity*

Crisp does not formally articulate a doctrine of God as Downname does. He does, however, believe in the basic Thomist metaphysics that underlie Reformed orthodox opinion at the time, including strong adherence to the Trinity, divine eternity, omnipotence, foreknowledge, decrees, predestination, and high distinctions between Creator and creature.<sup>90</sup> Again, belief in the Trinity is a point of *unitas* among orthodox

---

<sup>90</sup> Paul C. H. Lim, *Mystery Unveiled: The Crisis of the Trinity in Early Modern England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 115, 358 (n. 128), 391 (n. 174). For a Reformed orthodox exposition of the doctrine, see Robert Letham, "John Owen's Doctrine of the Trinity in Its Catholic Context," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to John Owen's Theology*, ed. Kelley M. Kavic and Mark Jones (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), 187-97; and Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man*, 35-66.

It should be noted that there is some scholarly debate as to the identification of Reformed thought as holding to a basically "Thomist" metaphysic. The opposing school identifies Reformed thought as essentially or increasingly "Scotist," and is seen in J. Martin Bac, *Perfect Will Theology: Divine Agency in Reformed Scholasticism as Against Suarez, Episcopius, Descartes, and Spinoza* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 29-33, 497-526; Antonie Vos, "Scholasticism and Reformation," in *Reformation and Scholasticism*, ed. Willem J. van Asselt and Eef Dekker (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 99-119; Vos, *The Philosophy of John Duns Scotus* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 7; Vos and F. Dekker, "Modalities in Francis Turretin: An Essay in Reformed Ontology," in *Scholasticism Reformed. Festschrift Willem van Asselt*, ed. Marcel Sarol, et al (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 74-92; and Andreas Beck, "Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676): Basic Features of His Doctrine of God," in *Reformation and Scholasticism*, 205-26. While Bac correctly sees Scotism in William Twisse and even classifies him as essentially "Scotist" because of Twisse's emphasis on divine agency, he does not give adequate consideration to the influence of Thomism on other Reformed thinkers of the seventeenth century, especially on John Owen, or in certain Reformed categories that seem to have Thomist origins. Vos correctly notes that "Aristotelianism" and "Thomism," in the early modern centuries should not be confused with the *historical* Aristotle, and that "the seventeenth-century Utrecht Aquinas is Reformed," but the same caution should be asserted towards classifications of Scotus. Perhaps early modern Reformed thought is best seen as an eclectic use of medieval strains, both Thomist and Scotist, which were appropriated and used much in the same way that Augustine was. This is in line with Sebastian Rehnman's sympathetic assessment of Vos's work but which also concedes to the strongly Thomistic nature of Owen's thought, for instance, by classifying Owen as holding to a "Scotistically modified Thomism." See Visser, *Reading Augustine in the Reformation*, 94-114; Sebastian Rehnman, *Divine Discourse: The Theological Methodology of John Owen* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 62-4, 181; Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man*, 58; and Christopher Cleveland, *Thomism in John Owen* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2013). Cf. Richard A. Muller, "The 'Reception of Calvin' in Later Reformed Theology: Concluding Thoughts," *Church History and Religious Culture* 91:1-2 (2011): 258-60.

Simon J. G. Burton has argued for Scotist strains in Baxter's metaphysics of the Trinity in his *The Hallowing of Logic: The Trinitarian Method of Richard Baxter's "Methodus Theologiae"* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), and Rehnman has aptly observed that Baxter listed Aquinas among his favorite authors, even before Scotus (Rehnman, *Divine Discourse*, 32). This further evidences the widespread use of both Scotus and Thomas among the Reformed. See Leonard Bacon, ed., *Select Practical Writings of Richard Baxter* (New Haven, 1831), 1:26; John K. Ryan, *The Reputation of St. Thomas Aquinas among English Protestant Thinkers of the Seventeenth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press of America, 1948); Maarten J. F. M. Hoenen, "Scotus and the Scotist School: The Tradition of Scotist Thought in the Medieval and Early Modern Period," in *John Duns Scotus, 1265/6-1308: Renewal of Philosophy*, ed. E. P. Bos (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 197-210. Cf. Henry G. van Leeuwen, *The Problem of Certainty in English Thought, 1630-1690*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Hague: Kluwer, 1970).

divines in the seventeenth century.<sup>91</sup> Though Crisp does not provide an elaborate discussion of the order of the divine decrees, as Twisse does, he nonetheless seems to confuse primary and secondary causes.<sup>92</sup> In fact, Williams criticizes Crisp on this point, “The Doctor mistakes the Nature of God’s Decree, because a Decree ascertains a thing shall in time be, therefore he thinks it gives a thing a present subjective Being.”<sup>93</sup> For Crisp, the paradox is that while God, from all eternity, looks on his people with love, he, at the same time, comprehends their sins which alienate them from him; yet, because God sees Christ’s satisfaction at the same time that he sees their sins, there is never a moment when the elect are at enmity with him. This is not because God sees no sin, but because at the same eternal moment God comprehends both sin and satisfaction.<sup>94</sup>

Crisp’s point of continuity with the mainstream is seen in that they agree that (a) God has *eternally* decreed that certain persons elected by him shall be justified and adopted; (b) that these elect are the objects of God’s love of good-will, even while they are sinners; (c) God continues his gracious purpose to do them good in his appointed time; (d) Christ has made full satisfaction for sin and merited eternal life for the elect; (e) that there is a significant difference between the elect sinner and others as to what they shall be in time.<sup>95</sup> Their differences have to do with how God sees the elect prior to the moment they believe, and whether they are children of wrath.<sup>96</sup> Further, Crisp harmonizes on the nature of the fall into sin, and its ramifications for posterity. At no point does he suggest, as Eaton seems to, that Christians are wholly without sin.<sup>97</sup>

Criticisms of Crisp’s doctrine of God in the seventeenth century centered on his understanding of the nature of the divine decrees, and how they were executed in time. The mainstream of Puritans saw this as an important distinction because it had implications for preaching the gospel, the use of the law in that preaching, and the moral conduct of the believer.<sup>98</sup>

---

On the question of Scotus and Calvin, see Richard A. Muller, “Scholasticism in Calvin: A Question of Relation and Disjunction,” in *Calvinus Sincerioris Religionis Vindex: Calvin as Protector of the Purer Religion*, ed. Wilhelm Neuser and Brian Armstrong (Kirkville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1997), 247-65; and Heiko A. Oberman, *Initia Calvini: The Matrix of Calvin’s Reformation* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 1991), 10-19.

<sup>91</sup> Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man*, 47. For a history of the decline of the Trinity, see Philip Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes: The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventeenth Century* (London: T&T Clark, 2003). See also William Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence: How Modern Thinking about God Went Wrong* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996). While Placher correctly sees the emergence of modernity and Enlightenment rationality as eclipsing classical Christian theism in the seventeenth century, he incorrectly sees the doctrine of Scripture as eclipsing the Trinity within Puritanism.

<sup>92</sup> Van den Brink, *Herman Witsius en het Antinomianisme*, 69-70.

<sup>93</sup> Williams, *Gospel Truth*, 6-7.

<sup>94</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1791), I, 325-27.

<sup>95</sup> Williams, *Gospel Truth*, 3. Cf. Van den Brink, *Herman Witsius en het Antinomianisme*, 69-71.

<sup>96</sup> Williams, *Gospel Truth*, 4-7; Rutherford, *Spirituell Antichrist*, 2, 208-9; cf. Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 80-87, 114-118.

<sup>97</sup> Van den Brink, *Herman Witsius en het Antinomianisme*, 75-77.

<sup>98</sup> In Rutherford’s *Spiritual Antichrist*, where Crisp is cited more than twenty times, the majority of criticisms have to do with the doctrine of justification, the experience of faith, and the relation between law and gospel. See idem, *Spiritual Antichrist*, Part I, 14, 105; Part II, 3, 17-19, 24, 27, 30, 39, 47, 49, 55, 63, 80, 87, 115, 158, 170-71, 174, 176, 220, 234.

Though Crisp never uses the word “predestination,” as do Downname and Rous, he nonetheless refers to it in substance: “You know well, in respect of men, who are the elect, they are from all eternity in the purpose of God...he had them in his thoughts, as the objects of his love, from eternity.”<sup>99</sup> Further, the sins of the elect were laid on Christ in eternity, as to obligation or covenant, but in respect to the actual execution of this in time was when Christ was upon the cross. Crisp objects to the application of redemption in time, whether while the children are in the womb or at the moment of baptism, because “the Lord loves his people with everlasting love; there is not a moment of time in which iniquity is transacted back again from Christ, and remains upon a particular person.” Crisp avoids scrupulously any pretension that human faith might be a condition of justification; and unlike a contemporary, William Eyre, Crisp does not go so far as to assume that believers are justified before faith on the basis of predestination, but rather on account of the cross.<sup>100</sup>

Crisp’s understanding of assurance, being the testimony of the Holy Spirit to man’s own spirit, was not dissimilar to either Calvin or Perkins.<sup>101</sup> Crisp’s emphasis on the testimony of the Spirit, and the confirmation of the word of grace that one’s sins are forgiven is distinct from the precisianist strain’s emphasis on self-examination for signs and marks.<sup>102</sup> Though Crisp critiqued universal obedience, sincerity of heart, and love for the brethren, as sufficient marks to assess one’s assurance, he did not disregard them altogether. His criticism surrounded their *sufficiency* to bring abiding assurance to the believer.<sup>103</sup> Thus, for genuine assurance, the “voice of the Spirit of Grace” testifies inwardly to the believer that they have been adopted into God’s family.<sup>104</sup> Crisp further distinguishes between “revealing and working evidence,” which is the Spirit’s witness to the believer,

---

<sup>99</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1791), 2:396.

<sup>100</sup> William Eyre, *Vindiciae Justificationis Gratuitae* (London, 1654). Eyre’s work, which sought to prove justification without conditions, was endorsed by Owen and was consonant with the theologies of John Eedes and John Crandon. Michael Bryson, *The Tyranny of Heaven: Milton’s Rejection of God as King* (Cranbury: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 188. See also C. Fitzsimons Allison, *The Rise of Moralism: The Proclamation of the Gospel from Hooker to Baxter* (New York: Seabury Press, 1966), 171-72.

<sup>101</sup> Van den Brink, *Herman Witsius en het Antinomianisme*, 79-82; James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2009), 90-1; Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism*, 69-75; cf. Stoever, *A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven*, 119-37. At times, Perkins speaks of faith as a certain and particular persuasion of one’s own salvation; at other times he identifies this persuasion as the fruit of faith and not to be identified with faith itself. He divides those who have strong faith and who are fully persuaded of their salvation from those of weak faith who have been forgiven but do not yet believe it. See Joel R. Beeke, *The Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 49-50, 108; Robert Letham, “Saving Faith and Assurance in Reformed Theology” (Ph.D. diss., University of Aberdeen, 1979), 1:285. Letham believes that the tensions in Perkins’s statements are suggestive of internal struggles within Reformed theology between two concepts of faith: one that derives from Zwingli, Calvin, Bucer, and other continental Reformed theologians who equate faith with assurance; and the other from Bullinger, Ursinus, and Gomarus, which separates faith from assurance and promotes a subjective discernment of its effects within believers.

<sup>102</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 478.

<sup>103</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 478-9. Crisp does not deny that the believer can gain some comfort from his sanctification. “The Assurance of Faith” (153).

<sup>104</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 483-5.

and “revealing evidence,” which is the faith of the believer. Though the Spirit reveals to men their assured estate, it is not fully resolved until, by faith, they receive it.<sup>105</sup> For Crisp, there is a full assurance available for the believer; one need only to look inside to hear the Spirit’s assuring voice that “your sins are forgiven you.”<sup>106</sup> Thus, for Crisp, the act of faith that joins one to Christ is the medium of certainty; it is one’s trust in Christ that provides the certainty that one is elect and redeemed.<sup>107</sup> This teaching contrasts with precisianist notions of the marks of grace and of reading the inward signs.<sup>108</sup> Crisp writes that though a thousand sureties were set before believers, there would be no comfort in them; indeed, among those attempt to read the inward signs, there is “not one in a thousand” who has actually attained full assurance. This same point was a bone of contention with John Goodwin as well, and numerous other disenfranchised “radicals.”<sup>109</sup>

Related to Crisp’s doctrine of assurance is his understanding of receiving faith. Crisp says that faith results from Christ’s work; being called “the Radicall grace of all graces,” it is not given until Christ himself has been given to the believer. Further, “there is a passive receiving of Christ” that is “just such a receiving of him, as when a forward patient takes a purge, or some bitter physick; he shuts his teeth against it, but the Phisitian forceth his mouth open, and pours it down his throat...the Father does force open the spirit of that person, and poures his Sonne in spite of the receiver.”<sup>110</sup> Though the believer is co-active in his sanctification, “Christ is given to men first, before they doe any thing in the world...Christ is the soule of every believer, that animates, and acts the believer in all things whatsoever.”<sup>111</sup>

This passive nature of receiving faith and assurance is similar to Cotton’s criticisms of the orthodox in New England, who argued that similarly concerning the “sandy ground” of “good qualifications” or religious assurance. Thus Crisp challenges faith based on prayers, tears, humiliation, sorrows, reformation, and obedience. An assured faith is grounded in an objective reality, namely, Christ’s covenant and promise.<sup>112</sup>

Though Crisp does not overtly link predestination with assurance, Wallace is correct in that for most Puritans the doctrine of assurance was tied to predestination.<sup>113</sup> Moreover, for Crisp, the solution to the assurance problem caused by the precisianists was to see that the believer’s apprehension of himself might differ from God’s apprehension of him.<sup>114</sup> This alternative path to an assured state was in direct response to such precisianist manifestos as Thomas Shepard’s *The Sincere Convert* (1640), which argued that “true

---

<sup>105</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 485.

<sup>106</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 489-91.

<sup>107</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 491-4.

<sup>108</sup> Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination*, 195-6; Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain*, 269.

<sup>109</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1791), 2:5, 82. Cp. John Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed* (London, 1651), 108-9.

<sup>110</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 98-9; Scott Paul Gordon, *The Power of the Passive Self in English Literature, 1640-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 39, 45, 47-50, 54.

<sup>111</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1643), 65. Quoted in Scott Paul Gordon, *The Power of the Passive Self in English Literature, 1640-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 45.

<sup>112</sup> Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain*, 255.

<sup>113</sup> Dewey D. Wallace, Jr., *Puritans and Predestination: Grace in English Protestant Theology, 1525-1695* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 91, 195-6.

<sup>114</sup> Stoeve, *A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven*, 45-47.

believers” were scarce, and that there was “great difficulty” in attaining “saving conversion.”<sup>115</sup>

#### 5.4.3 *Covenant of Works and Grace*

Crisp’s discussions on covenant theology are seen in his sermons on the covenant of grace, where he distinguishes between two general covenants that God enters into with humanity.<sup>116</sup> The first covenant is called the “old covenant” or the covenant of works and stood upon the terms “Do this, and live.” The second covenant is the new covenant of free grace. For Crisp, Christ is likely the first covenant given to men, even the covenant of works, and though it is not a covenant of grace as the second covenant is, it may in some sense be called a covenant of grace in reference to creation.<sup>117</sup> The covenant of works differs from the covenant of grace in that it was based on a stipulation with conditions on both sides: on God’s part was the promise of life upon obedience and on man’s part was obedience (“Do this, and live”).<sup>118</sup> However, man broke this covenant and so God was free from giving life and thus humanity lay under the curse of the breach of the covenant.<sup>119</sup> The covenant of grace differs from the covenant of works in that there are no conditions to this covenant. Crisp explains that since the covenant of grace is an *everlasting covenant* that it cannot be tied to conditionality; moreover, since God performs the covenant by uniting himself to his people, purging and cleansing them from their sins, there can be no conditions.<sup>120</sup> Further, faith is not the condition of the covenant and is simply the manifestation of justification.<sup>121</sup>

For Crisp, Christ can be identified with the covenant of grace in a threefold sense: first, Christ is the covenant *fundamentally*, in the sense that he is the one who establishes or originates the covenant with the Father; here Crisp describes Christ as being the maker, undertaker, dispatcher, and author of the covenant who manages the whole affair. Second, Christ is the covenant *materially*, as he both represents God to the people, by becoming human, and the people to God, by being mystically united to them as Head. Third, Christ

---

<sup>115</sup> Thomas Shepard, *The Sincere Convert, Discovering the Pavity of True Beleevers and the Great Difficulty of Saving Conversion* (Cambridge, 1640).

<sup>116</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 74-92, 241-59, 501-47. See Van den Brink, *Herman Witsius en het Antinomianisme*, 85-86; Stoevers, *A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven*, 81-118. Perry Miller states that Crisp began “as an orthodox federalist, basing the Covenant of Grace between man and God upon an anterior Covenant of Redemption between Christ and the Father, but came to the same conclusion as Anne Hutchinson that the Covenant of Grace had nothing to do with moral behavior...therefore no ethical duty could be imposed upon, or any response expected, from mankind.” Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), 219. For an overview of the covenant of grace within Puritanism, see John von Rohr, *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought* (1986; repr., Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2010), esp. 53-86, 155-91.

<sup>117</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 79. See also Kevan, *The Grace of Law*, 148-55.

<sup>118</sup> Other theologically high Calvinists, such as Bunyan, did not believe in the covenant of works. Roger Sharrock, ed., *The Miscellaneous Works of John Bunyan: The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded and I Will Pray With the Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), xxv.

<sup>119</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 80.

<sup>120</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 82-3.

<sup>121</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 84-7.



is the covenant *equivalently* in the sense that once the believer has the “earnest of salvation” (Christ himself) he or she has the whole covenant, even though there is progress in the Christian life.<sup>122</sup> Trueman notes that this latter sense is problematic for those who dismiss Crisp as antinomian “*tout court*,” that is, if there is progress in the Christian life then there is need for a more nuanced understanding of how time and eternity coalesce, which, in turn, affects the timing of justification. Further, Crisp’s notions of the covenant of grace parallel the Christological representations of Owen’s own understanding of covenant theology.<sup>123</sup>

Crisp emphasizes the absolute and unconditional nature of the covenant of grace in that all the benefits that Christ is or that Christ can be to the believer is a gift which is given upon no other consideration than the Father’s good will. Thus, in administering the covenant, God requires nothing from man and will not give Christ to those who not take him freely. Further, there is no vileness or sinfulness that can bar anyone from having a full part and portion in Christ.<sup>124</sup> Rutherford cites and critiques Crisp on this point. Says Rutherford, “But the question is, of Christs order of bringing us to believe and close with Christ; and the question is, whether a damned Pharisee on his high horse of merits and law-righteousness, an *undaunted Heifer*, a *Simon Magus*, a despicable *Atheist*, *Elymas* a Witch never broken, nor convinced by the law, must in that distance to Christ and the Gospel, be charged to believe an everlasting love of election toward himselfe, and without more adoe, be led to the *Kings chamber of wine*, to the flowings of soule-redeeming blood; or must he first bee humbled, convinced of sinne, burdened with everlasting burning due to him, and so led to Christ.”<sup>125</sup> Crisp proceeds to discuss how Christ is the beginning and Head of the covenant in that he precedes and oversees all its gracious effects.<sup>126</sup>

Crisp further differentiated between the covenant of works and two covenants of grace (of the Jews and Christ). The covenant of grace with the Jews was administered by the priests and is not to be equated with the covenant of grace under Christ, which is a better covenant with respect to the remission of sins, the peace of conscience, and freedom from punishment.<sup>127</sup> Finally, the covenant provides tremendous comfort and assurance for the believer as God is forever bound to be their God.<sup>128</sup>

---

<sup>122</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 87-9. See Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man*, 114.

<sup>123</sup> Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man*, 114.

<sup>124</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 90-2.

<sup>125</sup> Rutherford, *Spiritual Antichrist*, II, 3; Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 94.

<sup>126</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 93-110.

<sup>127</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 241-59. See Edmund Calamy, *Two Solemn Covenants* (London, 1647), sig. A2-3, where Calamy notes the various opinions of divines on the number of covenants. Burroughs is said to have held to three covenants but believed in contrast to Crisp that there were two of works and one of grace. Covenant theology within Puritanism often had a highly dispensational structure in how covenants were understood, such as Samuel Mather’s numerous “dispensations,” in which God in the Old Testament reveals the covenant. Karen E. Rowe, *Saint and Singer: Edward Taylor’s Typology and the Poetics of Meditation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 17-23. Crisp’s particular formulation of one Covenant of Works and two Covenants of Grace, as stated here, seems to be unique. Another source on covenantal diversity within Puritanism is Samuel Bolton, *The Trve Boynds of Christian Freedome* (London, 1656), 128-62. Bolton’s work is interesting because printed with it is Bolton’s English translation of John Cameron’s *De Triplici Dei cum Homine Foedere Theses* (1608), which Bolton says, “...is...the best resolver that I have met with all of those intricate Controversies, and Disputes concerning the Law” (Sig. Aa). Cameron’s influence on

With John Saltmarsh, Robert Towne, John Traske, and other “high” Calvinists, Crisp emphasized the absolute and unconditional nature of the covenant of grace; he sought to remove any sense of conditionality from the covenant because he saw such conditionality as compromising the integrity of the covenant with an undue stress on unreliable human activity. Crisp repeatedly stressed that Christ was an absolute and free gift, and was only given to the elect by God’s pleasure and will. This stress on the unconditional nature of the covenant should not be seen as properly antinomian because its burden was to remove any sense of human activity in the free grace of salvation, and to show that God was the sole architect of the covenant.<sup>129</sup>

Thus, a more nuanced understanding of Crisp’s teachings on the covenant shows only partial affinity to high Calvinism. There is no discussion of the order of divine decrees, no doctrine of justification from eternity, and no mention of a Trinitarian covenant. Crisp’s twofold understanding of the covenant of grace and his equating of Christ with the covenant of works is somewhat unique. However, his emphasis on the unconditional nature of the covenant was consistent with Calvin, John Owen, and other Reformed orthodox.<sup>130</sup>

#### 5.4.4 *Justification and Sanctification*

The subjects of justification and sanctification in Crisp’s theology are significant in that he was criticized for teaching justification from eternity and for confusing justification with sanctification in ascribing the perfection of the former with the latter, thus compromising sanctification’s moral urgency;<sup>131</sup> thus Flavel protests that “the

---

Puritanism (e.g. John Preston, Nicholas Byfield, Obadiah Sedgwick), has been well noted, but warrants further investigation. Cf. Richard A. Muller, “Divine Covenants, Absolute and Conditional: John Cameron and the Early Orthodox Developments of Reformed Covenant Theology,” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* (2006): 49-53; Jonathan D. Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism: John Preston and the Softening of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 218-19.

On covenant theology within Puritanism, see Perry Miller, “The Marrow of Puritan Divinity,” in *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 48-98; Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), esp. 365-462 (see his “Appendix B” which lists the chief seventeenth-century works on the subject); David Zaret, *The Heavenly Contract* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Michael Walzer, *Revolution of the Saints* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965); Christopher Hill, “Covenant Theology and the Concept of ‘A Public Person,’” in *Powers, Possessions and Freedom: Essays in Honor of C. B. Macpherson* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 3-21; William Haller, *Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), esp. ch. 3; John F. Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament: Puritanism during the English Civil Wars, 1640-1648* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969); John von Rohr, “Covenant and Assurance in Early English Puritanism,” *Church History* 54 (1961): 195-203; and Von Rohr, *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought* (1986; repr., Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2010).

<sup>128</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 501-47.

<sup>129</sup> On the question of equating antinomianism with the unconditional nature of the covenant, see McKelvey, *Histories that Mansoul and Her Wars Anatomize*, 58-9.

<sup>130</sup> McKelvey, *Histories that Mansoul and Her Wars Anatomize*, 59; Richard L. Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory: John Bunyan and English Dissent* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 103-15.

<sup>131</sup> Van den Brink, *Herman Witsius en het Antinomianisme*, 71-73; Stoevers, *A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven*, 145.

Antinomian...makes our actual justification to be nothing else but the manifestation or declaration of our justification from eternity."<sup>132</sup> Como notes that the doctrine of justification before faith had cropped up repeatedly in the history of Puritanism, and cites Ezekiel Culverwell's complaint in 1623 that "I see some honestly minded, to imagine that a man may be a true member of Christ, and so be justified, before he thus actually believe, and thereby apprehend Christ;" indeed, adds Como, the idea "appears to have spread with some speed and breath within the puritan community many years before the idea came to be associated with antinomianism proper."<sup>133</sup> Where these ideas originated from is difficult to discern. William Pemble was circulating the idea of justification before faith (but not from eternity) at Oxford in the 1610s in a series of lectures on the nature of grace and justification by faith.<sup>134</sup> William Twisse, the first prolocutor of the Westminster Assembly and an erudite scholar, who advocated justification from eternity, was influential in Oxford in the early-1610s when he was a divinity student there. Twisse earned his D.D. from New College, Oxford, in 1614, and would later write an elaborate defense of supralapsarianism.<sup>135</sup>

While most high Calvinists taught some form of justification from eternity, it is questionable whether Crisp did; nowhere in his published sermons do we find a clear articulation of justification from eternity.<sup>136</sup> Rather, there is some affinity to the work of William Pemble and his *Vindiciae gratiae* (1625), which distinguishes between justification *in foro Dei* ("in the court of God") and *in foro conscientiae* ("in the court of conscience"),

---

<sup>132</sup> Flavel, *Planetologia*, 260; Kevan, *The Grace of Law*, 94-101; Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man*, 114. Fesko, Coffey and Lim all say Crisp taught eternal justification. See Fesko, *Beyond Calvin*, 336 (n. 63); Coffey, *Politics, Religion, and the British Revolutions*, 134; Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 358 (n. 128). For seventeenth-century responses to Crisp's sermons, see Stephen Gere, *The Doctrine of the Antinomians by Evidence of Gods Truth, Plainly Confuted in An Answer to Divers and Dangerous Doctrines in the Seven First Sermons of Dr. Crisps Fourteen, which Were First Published* (London, 1644); and John Benbrigge, *Christ Above All Exalted, As in Justification so in Sanctification, Wherein Severall Passages in Dr. Crisps Sermons are Answered* (London, 1645).

<sup>133</sup> Ezekiel Culverwell, *A Treatise of Faith: Wherein is Declared How a Man May Live By Faith, and Find Reliefe in All His Necessaries. Applied Especially unto the Use of the Weakest Christians* (London, 1623), 16-17. Cf. Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 204.

<sup>134</sup> Remarkable, such mainstream authors as Richard Capel, who was Pemble's divinity tutor at Oxford, and John Gere praised the contents of the lectures and remarked how they were well received by those in attendance, which attests, in itself, to diversity of thought on justification within Puritanism.

<sup>135</sup> E. C. Vernon, "Twisse, William (1577/8-1646)," *ODNB*; Peter J. Thuesen, *Predestination: The American Career of a Contentious Doctrine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 49-54. Remarkably, no extensive study of Twisse's theology and method exists. For fragmentary studies on various aspects of Twisse's theology, see J. Martin Bac, *Perfect Will Theology: Divine Agency in Reformed Scholasticism as against Suarez, Episcopius, Descartes, and Spinoza* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 99-156; Richard H. Popkin, *The Third Force in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 99-103; and Stephen Strehle, *Calvinism, Federalism, and Scholasticism: A Study in the Reformed Doctrine of the Covenant* (New York: Peter Lang, 1988), 104-11.

<sup>136</sup> Trueman comments that Crisp's views are more sophisticated than the term "eternal justification" imports. Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man*, 114. For distinctions between high and evangelical Calvinism, see Ian J. Shaw, *High Calvinists in Action: Calvinism and the City, Manchester and London, 1810-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 10-36. Andrew Fuller called "high Calvinists" those who were "more Calvinistic than Calvin himself; in other words, bordering on Antinomianism." Idem, *High Calvinists in Action*, 10.

distinctions that occur throughout Crisp's sermons.<sup>137</sup> This is not to suggest Crisp teaches that there are two justifications, but rather that there is one active justification before God with its passive receipt in the court of conscience, which is the evidence of faith.<sup>138</sup> Both Pemble and Crisp place the moment of justification before faith, at the time of Christ's death: "Christ justifies a person before he believes; for, he that believes is justified before he believes."<sup>139</sup> In fact, Samuel Crisp defended his father's doctrine of justification before faith by identifying it with Pemble and Twisse: "'Tis well known Mr. Pemble was no *Antinomian*, yet he saith, in concurrence with Dr. Twisse and Dr. Crisp...*In foro Divino...Justification goeth before our Sanctification; for even whilst the Elect are unconverted, they are then actually justified and freed from all Sin by the Death of Christ...*"<sup>140</sup>

Crisp elsewhere describes the *obligation* of justification, which occurs in eternity, and its *execution*, which took place within time on the cross; and its *application*, which occurs in the womb.<sup>141</sup> At the moment of justification the sins of the elect are forever discharged and forgiven and cast upon Christ, and the Covenant of Grace is fulfilled in its substance.<sup>142</sup> Christ's righteousness, in turn, was transferred to the believer, even before he was born.<sup>143</sup> Thus, for Crisp, as for Pemble, justification occurs within time and not from eternity, even though justification has as its foundation God's love for the elect, which is from eternity, but this love is not justification itself.<sup>144</sup> Crisp allowed that in a sense no one is saved until he believes, but this refers to one's awareness of salvation, and not its fact.<sup>145</sup> Further, when one receives Christ one is instantly justified, and freed from all faults that may be laid to their charge: "There is not one sin you commit, after you receive Christ, that God can charge upon your person."<sup>146</sup> Faith is the fruit of union, and the evidence of justification, both union and justification occurring before faith and being the spring or root from which faith flows freely.<sup>147</sup> When one is united with Christ, God cleanses and

---

<sup>137</sup> Crisp writes, "You may consider justification in a double sense, and that, according to the opinion of our divines, there is justification in heaven, and in a man's conscience." Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1791), I, 515-16; Samuel Crisp, *Christ Exalted, and Dr. Crisp Vindicated* (London, 1698), 27. Curt Daniel suggests that Crisp popularized this distinction. "Hyper-Calvinism and John Gill" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1983), 309. See William Pemble, *Vindiciae Gratiae: A Plea for Grace More Especially the Grace of Faith*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, 1629), 21-22. Cf. Fesko, *Beyond Calvin*, 336-7; Boersma, *A Hot Pepper Corn*, 71-72;

<sup>138</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1791), I, 144-7.

<sup>139</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 356-7, 360; Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1791), I, 141, 144-45; II, 345; Flavel, *Planetologia*, 318-19; Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 71-74; Van den Brink, *Herman Witsius en het Antinomianisme*, 77-9. In his 1791 edition, Gill adds a note that "Justification before faith...has been embraced, affirmed, and defended by the divines of the greatest note for orthodoxy and piety, as Twisse, Pemble, Parker, Goodwin, Ames, Witsius, Maccovius, and others."

<sup>140</sup> Crisp, *Christ Exalted, and Dr. Crisp Vindicated*, 27.

<sup>141</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 365-66; G. A. van den Brink, "Impetration and Application in John Owen's Theology," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to John Owen's Theology*, ed. Kelly M. Kopic and Mark Jones (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), 93.

<sup>142</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1791), I, 141, 151-2, 512-16, 569.

<sup>143</sup> Stoevers, *A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven*, 145.

<sup>144</sup> Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 72-4.

<sup>145</sup> Stoevers, *A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven*, 144.

<sup>146</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1791), I, 7-8, 68.

<sup>147</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1791), II, 381.

purges, sanctifies, and refines; indeed, Christ's righteousness is *imputed* to the believer.<sup>148</sup> Faith is the fruit of union.<sup>149</sup>

For Crisp, justification was a distinct act from sanctification and preceded it. Further, while justification is a single act of God and occurs only once, sanctification is a successive act in which God sanctifies the believer again and again.<sup>150</sup> No matter how advanced one might be in the process of sanctification, it can never move one towards heaven, as only Christ is the way to heaven.<sup>151</sup> This is because even the best sanctification is mixed with sin and pollution. Finally, Crisp divides sanctification, which he calls the end of the believer's love toward God, into two branches, mortification and renovation. Christ merited salvation and sanctification for the elect. Crisp cites in support of his doctrines various biblical texts. He does not, as Downname and Rous do, cite authoritative sources from church history or other divines, but he does, at times, refer to "our divines."<sup>152</sup> Later, when controversy resurfaced with Samuel Crisp's publication of his father's work, there was a more concerted effort to identify Crisp's *unitas* with mainline divines, especially in the former's *Christ Exalted, and Dr. Crisp Vindicated* (1698).<sup>153</sup>

Crisp's understanding of sanctification as distinct from justification is consistent with Reformed orthodoxy, though there is some question whether Crisp ascribed the gracious acts of believers to regeneration or the indwelling Spirit.<sup>154</sup> Where contemporaries criticized Crisp was in his deductions drawn from justification and in the way in which he chose to express himself. One of the more prominent critiques had to do with whether God saw sin in his elect.<sup>155</sup> This was a major point in Eaton's *Honey-combe of Free Justification by Christ Alone*, and the doctrine most often associated with antinomianism; however, it is questionable whether Crisp actually held this view, at least as stated by Eaton (Crisp never used Eaton's phrase "God sees no sin"); indeed, Crisp's understanding of the accounting of sin in the divine books seem to be more nuanced than that of Eaton or his protégés. Crisp distinguishes between actual sins, which God sees, and sins thus imputed to Christ; while all of the believer's sins are imputed to Christ (presumably at the moment of Christ's death *in time*), such sins no longer hold a *condemnatory* power over the believer; he or she is truly free from them and the curse they bear. Christ thus bearing all and nailing them to the cross. It is, says Crisp, *as if* the believer had committed no sin.<sup>156</sup>

---

<sup>148</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 270-71, 419-20, 428; Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1791), I, 139. Cf. Van den Brink, *Herman Witsius en het Antinomianisme*, 73-75.

<sup>149</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1791), II, 346, 349-50, 365-86.

<sup>150</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1791), I, 473.

<sup>151</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1791), I, 77.

<sup>152</sup> Contrast this with Eaton's practice of source citing.

<sup>153</sup> The "mainline" Puritan Thomas Cole is reported to have said, for instance, that if he only had £100 in the world, and Dr. Crisp's sermons cost half that, he would willingly spend it than go without them. Further, both John Howe and William Bates are reported to have said that if Dr. Crisp is an antinomian, so are they. Samuel Crisp, *Christ Exalted, and Dr. Crisp Vindicated* (London 1698), 13-14.

<sup>154</sup> Robert Lancaster, one of Crisp's disciples, was purported to have said that faith and repentance are as much graces as food, money, or clothes, the true grace being God's testimony of love to the soul. See Stoeever, *A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven*, 172-73.

<sup>155</sup> Van den Brink, *Herman Witsius en het Antinomianisme*, 82-84; Winship, *Making Heretics*, 264.

<sup>156</sup> Cp. Eaton, *Honey-Combe of Free Justification*, 362-65, with Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1643), 146-47; and Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1690), 286-88; 405-6. See Bozeman, "John Eaton as Contra-Puritan," 638-54. Bozeman sees Crisp's view as a variant of Eaton's. Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain*, 197.

Crisp insists that sin is *imputed* to Christ so as to make Christ a sinner; not that he had actually *committed* sin, which was impossible, but only that he bore the sins of the elect by imputation. It was this kind of language which brought disfavor with some of the orthodox, and a point for which Rutherford repeatedly assailed him. Both Daniel and McKelvey believe that Rutherford misrepresents Crisp's teachings on the imputation of sin to Christ, and, in fact, sets forth a position of double imputation similar to Crisp's.<sup>157</sup>

Many of Crisp's statements could be taken in an orthodox sense. This is one reason for the divide among them; and, as later defenders of Crisp would point out, Crisp's enemies would as often misread or misinterpret his meaning as they did properly interpret him. That Crisp endorsed a rigorous spirituality is evidence of his Puritan focus.<sup>158</sup> That he chose to criticize precisianist piety for its introspection is indicative of the discontent then circulating among the more "radical" London clergy.<sup>159</sup>

Whether Crisp was more influenced by Twisse or Pemble is not so certain. J. I. Packer suggests that Twisse had the formative role, but given Crisp's closer affinity to Pemble, and the fact that when Crisp entered Balliol College, Oxford, in 1626, Pemble's *Vindiciae Gratiae* had been recently published, it seems probable that Pemble, not Twisse, had more influence.<sup>160</sup> Whoever influenced whom, the antinomian-like trajectories before the English Civil Wars, which caught the attention of the Westminster Assembly, and which were challenged in the *aula orthodoxae*, were never officially charged "heresy;" that is, outside of Presbyterian heresiographies. Crisp's doctrines, in spite of accusations, did not breach the greater consensus that could be found in Pemble and Twisse, among others. It was disheartening for Samuel Crisp that the same doctrine could be called "orthodox" in one, and "heresy" in another, which suggests that opposition to Crisp was based on more than his idea that justification preceded faith.<sup>161</sup>

In sum, Crisp taught justification before faith but not from eternity. In this context, faith manifests what was before hidden, and declares the presence of the righteousness of Christ which was before faith.<sup>162</sup> Though Crisp writes of the eternal love of God the Father for the elect, he does not by this mean eternal justification. While the mainstay of Reformed orthodox writers repudiated the doctrine of justification from eternity, such as the mature Owen, other noted theologians, as William Twisse, Johannes Maccovius, and Thomas Goodwin, advocated some form of the doctrine that would characterize later generations of theologically "high" Calvinists. Though Baxter equated justification before faith, and from eternity, as being the "pillar" of Antinomianism, the

---

<sup>157</sup> Daniel, "John Gill and Calvinistic Antinomianism," 184; McKelvey, "Eternal Justification," 233; Rutherford, *Spiritual Antichrist*, II, 18.

<sup>158</sup> Peter Lineham, "Antinomianism," in *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism, Vol. 1:A-C*, ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand (New York: Routledge, 2004), 128-30.

<sup>159</sup> Peter Lake and David Como, "'Orthodoxy' and Its Discontents: Dispute Settlement and the Production of 'Consensus' in the London (Puritan) 'Underground,'" *Journal of British Studies* 39 (2000), 34-70.

<sup>160</sup> Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, 50; J. I. Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2003), 250. The Puritan Robert Harris, sometime President of Trinity College, Oxford, was said to do nothing without Pemble "especially in Divinity." William Durham, *The Life and Death of...Robert Harris, D.D.* (London, 1662), 20-21; Stephen Wright, "Harris, Robert," *ODNB*.

<sup>161</sup> Howson, *Erroneous and Schismatical Opinions*, 99-100; McKelvey, "That Error and Pillar of Antinomianism," 237-45, 259-62; Muller, "Diversity in the Reformed Tradition," 17-30.

<sup>162</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 3:225.

correlation is not so simple. Crisp's concern was to remove any sense of human activity being ascribed a *causative* role in justification; faith, therefore, must be subsequent to justification, and correlated with coming to awareness of one's justification before God. Crisp understood justification within a strictly Christological and covenantal framework.<sup>163</sup>

#### 5.4.5 Law and Gospel

The dialectic of law and gospel relates, practically, to the role of the law in the preaching of the gospel and its place as a moral compass in the life of the believer. It was the hinge upon which the antinomian controversies had spun.<sup>164</sup> Within British Puritanism, this distinction traces to the first generation Puritans and earlier, where law and gospel was the governing hermeneutic of the Bible.<sup>165</sup> Calvin, following Melancthon, had proposed three uses of the law: *usus politicus*, to restrain sin within society by the passing of edicts and laws against immorality; *usus pedagogus*, within the church's teaching ministry to lead people to Christ; and *usus normativus*, or as a moral compass for the believer's conduct.<sup>166</sup> Few religious radicals in the seventeenth century denied the first use of the law and thus taught anarchy; however, the second and third uses of the law were often divisive matters among the Reformed, as some believed only the gospel, and not the law, should be preached to believers, such as John Saltmarsh, or that there was an imbalance within precisianist piety with a needless emphasis on the terrors of the law.<sup>167</sup> Within this context Crisp preached to his hearers: "If you be freemen of Christ, you may esteem the curse of the law as no more concerning you than the laws of England concern Spain."<sup>168</sup> In 1646, Anthony Burgess, a delegate from Warwickshire to the Westminster Assembly, critiqued Crisp for this statement and suggested that Crisp here taught lasciviousness or lawlessness.<sup>169</sup>

---

<sup>163</sup> Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man*, 114; McKelvey, "That Error and Pillar of Antinomianism," 261.

<sup>164</sup> Rutherford, *Survey of the Spiritual Antichrist*, 120; David Parnham, "Soul's Trial and Spirit's Voice: Sir Henry Vane against the 'Orthodox,'" *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 70, No. 3 (September 2007): 375-85.

<sup>165</sup> Only later in Puritanism would the covenant supersede law/gospel distinctions. John H. Primus, *Richard Greenham: Portrait of an Elizabethan Pastor* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998), 93; Primus, "Lutheran Law and Gospel in the Early Puritan Theology of Richard Greenham," *Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. VIII, No. 3 (Autumn, 1994): 287-98.

<sup>166</sup> Richard A. Muller, "Ordo docendi: Melancthon and the Organization of Calvin's *Institutes*, 1536-1543," in *Melancthon in Europe: His Work and Influence Beyond Wittenberg*, ed. Karin Maag (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999), 138; Kevan, *The Grace of Law*, 38; John Witte, Jr. *The Reformation of Rights: Law, Religion, and Human Rights in Early Modern Calvinism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 39-80.

<sup>167</sup> Thus John Saltmarsh accused mainstream precisianist divinity for preaching "usually but a Grain or Dram of Gospel, to a Pound of Law." Saltmarsh, *Free Grace: Or, The Flowing of Christ's Blood Freely to Sinners* (London: John Marshall, 1700), 38. Walter Cradock said that Christ had "dissolved those little childish laws, those beggarly Rudiments." Quoted in Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, 107.

<sup>168</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 19; cf. Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, 15; Ariel Hessayon, "The Making of Abiezer Coppe," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (January 2011): 52. Gill notes that Burgess misrepresents Crisp's meaning in that Crisp had meant that Christ's free-man should esteem the curse of the law (not the law itself) as no more concerning him than the laws of England concern Spain.

<sup>169</sup> Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, 15.

Regardless of precisianist criticisms, however, the questions we are here concerned with are (a) to what extent did Crisp believe the law could be used in preaching Christ to sinners; (b) did Crisp believe that the law was a moral compass or guide for believers; (c) in what sense did Crisp believe the law to be abrogated or done away with; and (d) does Crisp share any affinity with the mainstream in his law/gospel distinctions?<sup>170</sup>

Crisp's understanding of the law and gospel is more complex than the simple charge of antinomianism would suggest; he did not throw out every positive use of the law. Rather, for Crisp, there were five distinct ways the law could be understood: First, in respect to the "Rules of Righteousness" the believer is still under the law, else lawlessness prevails; however, the law being the rule of life does not mean that the law *gives* life, as it was in its intent; thus, "A Believer is not tied to seek Life by his Obedience to the Law, but by his Faith in Christ."<sup>171</sup> Second, as to the *curse* of the law the believer is free, Christ being made a curse for them and enduring the wrath which their sins deserved. Third, the law required perfect obedience to every jot and tittle "for matter, manner, measure, time, and end" of every duty; Christ has removed this rigor so that a believer's weak performances, if they are sincere, are accepted by him. Fourth, Christ has abolished the "irritating" or provoking power of the law, so that, with Paul, believers can say, "I am dead unto the Law." Fifth, the law offers no comfort for believers since it is impossible to live to its standard; however, Christ removes the rigor and stress caused by the law and brings comfort to his beloved and empowers them to do what they before could not do.<sup>172</sup>

In sum, Crisp did not deny that the law had some use for believers as they sought to live the godly life, but he did reject the *curse* or *condemnatory* power of the law for believers. Thus, the law could not be used as the glass of righteousness in which one could examine oneself to see if they are in the faith.<sup>173</sup> Further, the law could not give life as eternal life can only be found by faith in Christ. Crisp was sensitive to the charges that his teachings taught waywardness and though he embraced the term "libertine" he did not by it mean lawlessness.<sup>174</sup>

Precisianist criticisms of Crisp centered on the moral *implications* or *consequences* of his teachings; for instance, to disparage the law as Crisp and other antinomians did was believed to remove any sense of moral urgency or motive for good works.<sup>175</sup>

#### 5.4.6 Christian Life and Piety

In spite of precisianist criticisms that Crisp's teachings tended toward ungodliness or lawless living, there is little evidence to support them.<sup>176</sup> Crisp was reacting to what he

---

<sup>170</sup> Stoevers writes, "Formally, much of Tobias Crisp can be derived from Perkins and Ames, if certain elements in the latter's theology are highlighted and others are suppressed." Stoevers, *A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven*, 233. See also Van den Brink, *Herman Witsius en het Antinomianisme*, 84-85; cf. Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, 14-15, 208-10, 212-20.

<sup>171</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, IV, 89-94.

<sup>172</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, IV, 93-95.

<sup>173</sup> Stoevers, *A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven*, 157.

<sup>174</sup> Cooper, *Richard Baxter and Antinomianism*, 33-34.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. Williams, *Gospel Truth*, 120-52, 207-34.

<sup>176</sup> See Cooper, "The Antinomians Redeemed," 251-62.



believed to be a legal strain within mainstream piety.<sup>177</sup> Crisp encouraged an intense spirituality that rose above mere legalism; he taught his parishioners to be active in doing good in church and society.<sup>178</sup> To love God is to deny ungodliness.<sup>179</sup> Further, wherever the grace of God brings salvation the heart is inclined towards new obedience. This necessary obedience exists in three parts: first, there is obedience *ex parte Dei* or obedience before God in that God in Christ has engaged himself to establish and set up obedience in the heart and life of those whom he saves; second, there is a necessary relation *ex parte rei* in that obedience and free grace are proportionate and connatural with each others; and third, obedience is necessary *ex parte nostri*; that is, in regard to oneself, having submitted oneself to God and living a life of gratitude for being set free.<sup>180</sup> With regard to the question whether sin still exists within believers, Crisp writes, “[When the Apostle John] speaks of Gods forgiving freely, he would not have people mistake, as if his revealing of pardon of sin, did intimate, that people did not sin any more...sin we do, but the grace of God stands in this, that when we sin, sin is forgiven, and it is an act of justice for God to forgive these sins that are committed.”<sup>181</sup>

While Crisp’s *Christ Alone Exalted* contains various aspects of the life of piety, such as being active in good works, its main focus, time and again, is to remedy what was seen as a legal strain within English divinity; thus, the majority of sermons confront controversial themes in mainstream piety, such as the implications of one’s sins being cast upon Christ, to what degree God sees or remembers the sins of believers, how faith is to be expressed and assured, and whether forgiveness precedes confession.<sup>182</sup> For Crisp, God casts the sins of believers upon Christ and remembers them no more; that is, the transgressions of the members of Christ “come not into the thoughts of God, so as...to think that such and such a man stands guilty before him.”<sup>183</sup> This divine forgetting of sins occurs from the time believers enter into covenant with God through the Covenant of Grace and forevermore.<sup>184</sup> Crisp believes that a Christian should be sensible of their sin, but should also know that their sins are forgiven before confession.<sup>185</sup> Though Crisp taught that sin can do the believer no harm, Curt Daniel notes that this is to be interpreted in the context of Romans 8:28 in that God overrules sin in believers so that all things, even sin, eventually work out for their own good. Thus, sin cannot condemn those whom God has elected and justified.<sup>186</sup> Further, Gill puts Crisp’s comments within the context of

---

<sup>177</sup> Bozeman calls Crisp a “disillusioned [veteran] of Puritan piety.” Bozeman, “John Eaton as Contra-Puritan,” 641.

<sup>178</sup> Lineham, “Antinomianism,” 129.

<sup>179</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 4:33.

<sup>180</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 4:35-6.

<sup>181</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 548-49.

<sup>182</sup> For instance, Crisp goes so far as to say that God made Christ sin. Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 270. See also Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain*, 84-104, 105-20, 183-210; Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 104-37; Van den Brink, *Herman Witsius en het Antinomianisme*, 71-73.

<sup>183</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 166-7.

<sup>184</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 167. Crisp answers the objection that when believers confess their sins, God then brings it into remembrance by saying this is according to man’s understanding; for God, in mystery, does not bring the believer’s sins to remembrance after he has cast them off forever. Cf. Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 167-74.

<sup>185</sup> Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 325; cf. Van den Brink, *Herman Witsius en het Antinomianisme*, 172.

<sup>186</sup> Daniel, “John Gill and Calvinistic Antinomianism,” 180.

alleviating a distressed conscience, but distances himself from employing their use; God does not see a believer's sin in order to condemn, but he does see sin in a believer because of omniscience and when chastising his children for waywardness.<sup>187</sup> For Crisp, though God sees sin his justified children in the *fact*, he does not see it to condemn.<sup>188</sup>

## 5.5 Conclusion

Within the literature, Tobias Crisp has been called both a “radical” and an “antecedent to the Ranters.” Much controversy has surrounded his ministry, as specially concern his alleged antinomian doctrines, and disparaging of the law as a rule for godly conduct. Though some members of the Westminster Assembly proposed that his books be burned, other members, such as William Twisse, were favorable to Crisp's doctrines and could see nothing unorthodox in them. Crisp's sermons *Christ Alone Exalted* went through numerous editions before their final and definitive edition in 1690. Their content show a Puritan pastor who was thoroughly imbibed in the theological identity of “mainline” Puritanism, but who sought to correct its deficiencies by stressing the highness of God's justification and grace, and the lowliness of human works. He did this as a paradigm for the actual attainment of assurance of faith, as opposed to the mere possibility of it. As such, he influenced numerous radicals who would later emerge during the English Revolution, and carry the antinomian strain to its logical extremities. Crisp's reputation was both vilified and defended. Though Baxter hated him, and the implications of doctrinal antinomism, Twisse, Cole, Mather, among others, believed that there neither was a doctrinal nor a practical antinomism within Crisp. Overall, Crisp's teachings, as seen in the doctrinal themes explored in this chapter, confirm that Crisp had much more in common with the orthodox than many have supposed. They further reveal that “mainline” Puritans were united around common themes as they sought to hammer out the best way to resolve the Puritan crisis of conscience, and though different, exemplified a *unitas* within *diversitas*. We will now turn to this last point in the next chapter.

---

<sup>187</sup> John Gill, *Sermons and Tracts* (London: W. Hardcastle, 1814-15), 3:8-19, 42-49. Quoted in Daniel, “John Gill and Calvinistic Antinomianism,” 180.

<sup>188</sup> Cf. Stoecker, *A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven*, 157-59.