ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Title of Thesis The Theological Thought of John Howe (1630-1705).

This thesis is a study of the theological thought of the seventeenth century theologian, John Howe. Thomas Chalmers called him the greatest of the Puritans. He began life as the son of an ejected minister, and after a thorough education at Oxford and Cambridge he became pastor at Great Torrington. At the age of twenty-six, he was pressed into service as Cromwell's chaplain, and from that point onwards, enjoyed an influence for good scarcely paralleled in the century. He became the adviser of kings, the confidant of bishops, and the acknowledged leader of nonconformist interests in unity. This is all the more striking when we consider the fact that he was totally devoid of political ambition. A prospectus of his thought shows that he was not only a thorough, systematic thinker, but also an authority in classical philosophy. This unusual combination aided him especially in reaching the cultivated, irreligious minds of his day, although it is dubious if his secret rationalism would commend itself to our age.

Four distinctive elements in his thinking are discussed; his doctrine of the Holy Spirit, his use of reason, his doctrine of Providence, and his view of Christian unity. As one of the seventeenth century pioneers in the doctrine of the Spirit, Howe's exposition is of interest both because of its comprehensiveness and its acceptance of the radical principle of the Spirit's personal indwelling. His unique view of anthropology stems from the tensional strain which his ambivalent attitude toward reason forces him to adopt. Puritan thought based on Calvinism urges him to say 'no' to the claims of autonomous reason while Cambridge Platonism insists that he say 'yes' Thus his 'yes' and 'no' are held together in a coherent philosophical-theological system. Howe's doctrine of Providence is contrasted to, and compared with, that of Oliver Cromwell. Here the issues dividing the sectaries and the Calvinistic Puritans are most clearly seen. Howe is at his best in his attempt to teck between the two positions and abstract the truth from both. The final chapter shows: (1) that Howe's life could be characterized as one great appeal to all warring Christians to unite in love and fellowship, (2) that the principles underlying this ecumenicity originate primarily from the Scriptures, and secondarily from the philosophical postulates ruling the structure of his thinking. In his passion for unity, and unremitting efforts to obtain it, he probably speaks with the greatest sense of timeliness to our present theological situation. Philosophical systems rise and fall, but Christ's prayer for unity remains constant.

It lies beyond the province of this thesis to indicate the type of thinking which was to dominate the century that followed, but it does show that Howe's pioneering helped to set the theological stage for the next era. In the final analysis, however, Howe's claim to greatness lies not in his scholarship, although he was almost certainly the greatest pagan authority among the preachers, nor in his role as crown prince of unity, although he was that for many, nor in his system of thought, which is the product of an original mind, nor in his preaching, which earned him a position among the three greats of his day, but in his complete and absolute dedication to the Kingdom of God.

Use other side if necessary.

THE THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT OF JOHN HOWE (1630 - 1705)

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN THEOLOGY
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BY
CHARLES FARAH, JR.

1956

TO MY FAMILY;

MY FATHER AND MOTHER, MY BR THERS;

DAVID, GEORGE WESLEY, AND ROBERT, AND

MY SISTERS; GRACE, EVANGELINE AND

ORIANA IN HUMBLE APPRECIATION OF

THEIR LOVE AND ENCOURAGEMENT.

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Introduction

Occasionally a student is rewarded by discovering a pearl of great price buried in the dust of history. Such was the good fortune of the writer. John Howe, the chaplain of Cromwell, was one of the most influential leaders of English church life - one of the most stimulating thinkers of his century. Thomas Chalmers termed him first among the Puritan divines. Alexander Whyte called him the "Plato of the Puritans." Yet today the name of John Howe is almost totally unknown. Even in the chronicles dealing with seventeenth century church life he is seldom mentioned.[1] This undeserved obscurity is one of the misfortunes of history because he greatly enriched his own age by his contributions in thought and life.

I am indebted to my two professorial advisers - Principal Charles S. Duthie, for introducing me to John Howe and for giving invaluable suggestions throughout the study; and to The Very Reverend John Baillie for his help. Others who have aided in this work include: Mr Dawson Trotman, who recommended my coming to Edinburgh; The Reverend John A. Lamb, Librarian of New College; Miss Erna R. Leslie, Assistant-Librarian, New College; Librarians and Staff of the National Library of Scotland, and a special word of thanks to Miss Joan King and Miss Jan Gellaitry who carefully typed the manuscript. The Reverend Stuart H. Merriam made valuable suggestions and constructive criticisms. Miss Susan Hawthorn also

1. For instance, in Jordan's four excellent volumes on Puritanism, the name of Howe does not occur.

helped. An expression of gratitude should go to Mrs Hester Lawrie who gave constant help and encouragement and made her house a home. To all these, I am deeply grateful.

April, 1956. C.F. Jr.

Chapter One

CATHOLIC PURITAN

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Chapter One

Eph. 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

John Howe, son of John and Anne How, was born at Loughborough, Leicestershire on May 17, 1630. He was given his father's name, and baptised on the third day after his birth at the parish church. Archbishop Laud had appointed John How, senior, as minister at Loughborough,[1] but How's Puritan inclinations and Laud's predilection to a high church position were destined to clash. Matters soon reached a crisis between the bishop and the minister, when King Charles encouraged his people to "The desecration of the Lord's day, by 'dancing, archery, may-games, whiston-ales, morrice dances, or any such harmless recreations'",[2] and when the pastor of Loughborough dared to pray in his pulpit, as the bishop himself reports it, "that God would preserve the prince in the true religion, of which there was cause to fear," Laud was outraged. The case was brought into the high-commission court, and on the 6th of November 1634, Mr How, as an "irregular curate," was sentenced to be "imprisoned during his Majesty's pleasure, suspended from every part of his ministry, fined five hundred pounds, required to make a public recantation before the

1. Edmund Calamy, Memoirs of the Life of the Late Reverend Mr John Howe; London: 1724, pp. 5,6. Calamy lists several others in the family who were also ministers.
2. Rev. W. Urwick, D.D., Works of the Puritan Divines: John Howe, London: 1846, p. v.

court, and condemned in cost of suit."[1] The fine was reduced to twenty pounds on 19th February, 1635.[2] How escaped with his family to Ireland, which however, failed to provide the needed haven. Calamy states that the town in which refuge was sought was besieged by the rebels, though without success.[3] Urwick thinks it must have been Drogheda, a considerable sea-port, about thirty miles from Dublin.[4] Driven from Ireland by the war, How returned to the county palatine of Lancaster where his young son was trained in the rudiments of learning and in the "Knowledge of Tongues." His instructors are not known, but presumably his father took great pains with his education.

On May 19, 1647, when seventeen years of age, Howe was admitted as a sizar into Christ College, Cambridge. Entering as a "sizar" implies that Howe's parents were in humble circumstances, and most probably Howe underwent a severe examination before pro-:curing the "sizarship." There he made the acquaintance of the celebrated Cudworth and More, from whom he received "that Platonick tincture which so remarkably runs through the Writings which he drew up and published in his advanced years."[6] Howe later enjoyed an intimate friendship with More which continued until the death of the learned professor. Willey rightly

1. Ibid.
2. Dictionary of National Biography, edited by Sidney Lee, London: 1908, X, 85.
3. Calamy, op.cit., p. 7.
4. Urwick, op.cit., p. v. The D.N.B. states it was Coleraine, X, 85.
5. Henry Rogers, The Life and Character of John Howe with an Analysis of His Writings, London: 1836, p. 21. Although Calamy does not give the date, Rogers ascertained it through a friend's examination of the register at Cambridge.
6. Calamy, op.cit., pp. 7,8.

points out that the Cambridge Platonists "were mainly Puritan in affinity, as indeed the connection of several of them with Emmanuel College ... shows clearly enough."[1] There is no doubt that the influence of Hobbes and Bacon had permeated university life by the time Howe entered Cambridge, but it was Plato who dominated the philosophy department. It is no wonder then that Howe used Platonic forms, with a content which was thoroughly biblical. He could never agree with some of the emphases in the Cambridge Platonists which seemed to make the appeal to human reason exclusive.[2] He was too deeply involved in the thought content of Reformed theology not to know the limits of reason. From Calvin, he received as did other Puritans, two religious phrases which were the main spring of his theological thinking: the all-sufficiency of Scripture, and a thorough theological understanding of the consequence of original sin.[3] In general, Howe stood squarely in the Calvinist tradition, within the structures of Platonic thought forms. His debt to the Lutheran emphasis in Anglican theology is little, for the Lutheran thought which heavily influenced Anglican theology is almost totally absent from his writings. Davies is probably right when he says, "Luther will have what is not specifically condemned by Scripture, while Calvin will have only what is ordained of God in the Scriptures."[4]

1. Basil Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background, London: 1934, p. 135.
2. G.R. Cragg, From Puritanism to the Age of Reason, 1950, pp. 40-43.
3. Horton Davies, The Worship of the English Puritans, 1948, pp. 3-12.
4. Davies, op.cit., p. 16.

Howe's writings show sympathy with the position Calvin took in this matter.

However, in fairness to his professors, More and Cudworth, Howe would almost certainly challenge the statement of Basil Willey about the Cambridge Platonists.

> Their whole emphasis was upon the power of the individual to raise himself increasingly towards perfection by living after the Spirit ... To be saved is to be good.[1]

The implication that salvation and goodness are to be equated is a proposition few of the Cambridge Platonists would accept, mostly because their debt to Puritanism was essentially too deep to permit such a deviation from biblical theology. Notwithstanding this, and despite the fact that Horton ranks Howe among the Cambridge Platonists because of the spirit of his writings,[2] his scripturalism, as we shall see, saved him from the general optimism concerning the nature of man which characterized that school.

He took the degree B.A. in 1648, and then removed to Oxford. There he became Bible-clerk of Brasenose College in Michaelmas term, and then was made "Demy" - a scholar raised to the rank of "half-fellow" in Magdalen College, by the parliamentary visitors. In 1649 he took his B.A. at Oxford. Here he formed life-long friendships with other Dissenters who were also destined to be ejected from their positions.[3]

1. Willey, op.cit., p. 137.
2. R.F. Horton, John Howe, London: 1895, p. 6.
3. Calamy, op.cit., pp. 9,10.

A.S. Woodhouse aptly summarizes the political unrest in this period of Howe's maturing.

> A Parliament insecurely, but until Pride's purge fairly constantly, dominated by the Presbyterians; an Army increasingly dominated by the Independents; the City, where the Presbyterian interest prevailed; at a distance the Scots, and at home a vast but relatively unorganized mass of Royalist and Anglican discontent, and a smaller but more articulate body of popular and radical discontent; and finally, the endless and futile machinations of Charles - this ... is the general scene presented by the two years between February, 1647, and January, 1649.[1]

When Howe first responded to the Gospel is not known. Mr Spademan, in his funeral sermon, mentions "his very early and growing exemplary piety."[2] His conversion was probably the gradual fruit of parental prayers, but that he was early known for his piety is demonstrated by an incident related by Calamy. Dr Thomas Goodwin, president of the college when Howe was there, formed a church for the students which Howe had not joined. One day when alone with Howe, he expressed his surprise that one of such "serious piety" had not embraced this opportunity for Christian fellowship. Howe expressed his dislike of what he understood to be some 'peculiarities' of the membership, but when Goodwin assured him of their catholicity, Howe became a member.[3]

Howe graduated M.A. July 9, 1652. By this time he had mastered the heathen moralists, the writings of the schoolmen, the Reformers, and the scholastic divines who followed. Hewlett states his preference for the pagan philosophers to the more

1. A.S. Woodhouse, Puritanism and Liberty, London: 1951, p. 20.
2. Works, i, 398.
3. Calamy, op.cit., pp. 10,11.

"arid" schoolmen.[1] The acuteness of this remark is immediately apparent to the reader, for in Howe's writings Plotinus looms larger than Jerome, and the spirit of Marcus Aurelius breathes more freely than the shades of Athanasius and John of Occam. The thoroughness of his acquaintance with the pagan writers is seen in his first publication, The Blessedness of the Righteous. Horton notes that Plato and Aristotle are referred to nine or ten times. Homer, Horace, Vergil, Cicero and Pliny are also quoted.[2] The works of Seneca are used twenty times, while Tacitus, Epicurus, Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus are also interwoven. Perhaps more important to his later life, about this same time he drew up a personal "body of divinity" from which he deviated but little during the rest of his life. This early maturity of thought accounts for the fact that there are no singular signs of growth in Howe's writings, and there seems to have been no great change in his general outlook, except for a gradual, but perceptibly growing emphasis on biblical exegesis.

Howe was ordained by Mr Charles Herle at Winwick in Lancashire. The same Mr Herle later became Prolocutor of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster. In Herle's parish, there were several chapels at which other ministers served, and these assisted Herle at Howe's ordination. Afterwards Howe always stated that Herle was a primitive bishop, and the assistants were his clergy; and they laying their hands on him as well, gave him

1. J.P. Hewlett, The Works of the Rev. John Howe, London, Cheapside, 1848, vol. xi.
2. Horton, op.cit., p. 8.

cause to think that few in modern times had so primitive an ordination as he.[1] The English Puritans of this period asserted that ordination by the presbytery was at least as valid as ordination by a bishop,[2] to which Howe rejoined that he had been ordained by a primitive bishop and presbytery, with the same understanding of the Scriptures on this point as the venerable Mr Baxter.[3]

His first parish was in the town of Great Torrington in the county of Devon, where his predecessor had been Lewis Stukely, an Independent. One of the first fruits of his ministry was the healing of the breach between two parties in the church, "through God's blessing on his endeavours."[4] Several others were disjoined from the congregational church at Bidiford, being "disposed to sit down under Mr Howe's ministry."[5] In addition, he succeeded in establishing a regular meeting of "neighbouring ministers of different persuasions." These were straws in the wind, indicating his growing interest in the cause of Christian unity. Although he began his ministry as a Presbyterian, and never disavowed his denomination, he became almost indistinguishable from a broad Independent or Congregationalist in his later views.[6] Dr Increase Mather does not scruple to call Howe, "pastor of a Congregational church at Great Torrington," but

1. Calamy, op.cit., pp. 12, 13.
2. C.E. Whitney, Studies in English Puritanism From the Restoration to the Revolution 1660-1688, New York and Toronto: 1931, p. 47.
3. Geoffrey F. Nuttall, The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience, Oxford: 1946, p. 10.
4. Rogers, op.cit., p. 33.
5. Calamy, op.cit., p. 13.
6. Horton, op.cit., pp. 55,56.

Rogers correctly takes issue with the implication that Howe was a strict congregationalist.[1] That his own opinions and practices, especially in all matters of discipline, more nearly coincided with those of the congregationalists than any other group, is perhaps true, but he was always willing to sacrifice his personal prefer-:ences in order to promote the greater unity of the church when no great principle was at stake. One proof of this is seen in the fact that he wrote a tract, defending the right of occasional con-:formity.[2] His service in the cause of church unity during his de-:clining years further attests to the catholicity of his views. Hewlett summarizes the basis of this toleration for other Christians.

> Vital, unsectarian godliness - the religion of the heart - habits of devout contemplation - entire complacency in the character and ways of God - all concurring to produce and maintain, under a divine influence, holiness of life - these were the objects of his deep and constant solicitude, both for himself, and for the people of his charge.[3]

On March 1, 1654, he was married to the daughter of the famous Mr George Hughes of Plymouth. Howe and Hughes kept up a weekly mutual exchange of correspondence in Latin. A letter was one day delivered at Great Torrington from Mr Hughes, concluding with the pious benediction, Sit ros coeli super habitaculum vestrum, "Let the dew of heaven be upon your dwelling!" On that very day, a fire occurred in the house occupied by Howe, which was extinguished by a heavy fall of rain.[4]

1. Rogers, op.cit., p.33
2. Works, vol. v, pp.263-290.
3. Hewlett, op.cit., p.xii.
4. Calamy, op.cit., pp.15,16.

Calamy's report of Howe's engagements on public fast-days, is worth recounting.

> He told me it was upon these occasions his common way to begin about nine in the morning, with a prayer for about a quarter of an hour, in which he begged a blessing on the work of the day; and afterwards read and expounded a chapter or psalm, in which he spent about three-quarters of an hour, then prayed for an hour, preached for another hour, and prayed for half-an-hour. After this he retired and took some little refresh-:ment for about a quarter of an hour or more (the people sing-:ing all the while), and then came again into the pulpit, prayed for another hour, and gave them another sermon of about an hour's length, and so concluded the service of the day at about four o'clock in the evening, with about half-an-hour or more in prayer.[1]

These prodigious labours were conjoined with equally prodigious staying powers on the part of the congregation. Not only were the sermons long; but "Howe ... addressed these weighty and closely packed discourses to his people extempore."[2]

Howe's diligence in performance of his pastoral duties was in no way behind that of Bishop Burnet. Every summer Burnet took a tour for six weeks or two months, through one district of his bis-:hoprick, preaching and confirming daily from church to church so that he went through all his principal livings in three years, thus encouraging his clergy to catechize.[3]

To another great Puritan, Richard Baxter, he also bears a striking resemblance in his discharge of pastoral duties. Baxter was in the habit of catechizing fourteen families a week, besides acting as amateur doctor for the village. He counted his preach-:ing but recreation. He added five galleries to the church at

1. Calamy, op.cit., p.17.
2. Nuttall, op.cit., p.82.
3. Gilbert Burnet, History of His Own Times, London, 1724, ii, 706.

Kidderminster, evangelizing whole streets of the town. He concludes:

> doing all in bodily weakness, as a dying man, my soul was the more brought to seriousness, and to preach as a dying man to dying men.[1]

Unfortunately for his biographers, Howe enjoined his son to destroy all his own notes, personal papers, and unpublished manuscripts, so that we have an incomplete picture of his full exercise in the pastoral office.

There are two conflicting accounts of Howe's first encounter with Cromwell. The more romantic account occurs in Calamy's Life of John Howe.[2] There it is stated that Howe went to London on business, and being detained longer than he expected, went to the chapel at Whitehall. As Cromwell gazed about the chapel he "spied out Mr Howe in the auditory", and from the unusual nobility of his face, he took him to be rather an extraordinary individual. At the close of the service discovering that he was a minister by profession, he requested Howe to preach the next Sunday. Howe demurred. Cromwell insisted. Finally, after obtaining Howe's reluctant consent, Cromwell sent a letter and a supply minister to his congregation. After Howe had preached once, he was pressed to preach twice more. This done, Cromwell took him as his household chaplain, although Howe used every means at his command to excuse himself.[3] Rogers accepts this story as authentic.[4]

Another account appears in Calamy's Continuation of the Account of

1. J.M. Lloyd Thomas, The Autobiography of Richard Baxter, London and Toronto, 1925, p.79.
2. Calamy, op.cit., p.14.
3. Calamy, op.cit., pp.16,17.
4. Roger, op.cit., pp.45-47.

the Ejected Ministers. There it appears that Howe was named as one of two candidates for the vacancy at Dartmouth. His friend, Mr Thomas Boon, spoke so strongly in Howe's behalf that Cromwell was anxious to meet him. When he heard he was in Whitehall the next Sunday, he sent a messenger to bring him, and set a date for him to preach. At the appointed time, between the prayer and the sermon, Cromwell changed the text, presumably to test the preacher's recuperative powers. Howe preached for two hours, "and was about to turn the glass again, when Cromwell gave him a sign to desist."[1] This story is probably the more credible of the two accounts,[2] but a problem exists as to why Howe should have considered Dartmouth when God was so obviously blessing his efforts at Torrington. Perhaps the initiative came from Dartmouth. It is not an improbable conjecture that sometime between 1724, when Calamy published his Life of John Howe, and 1727, when he published his Continuation of the Account of Ejected Ministers, Calamy received the second story as a correction of the first. All his biographers, except Rogers, take this view. At any rate, it is certainly true that few ministers at the age of twenty-six have ever been called upon to occupy a position of so much responsibility as that of private chaplain to the Lord Protector.

Of his relations to Oliver Cromwell, relatively little is

1. Calamy, Continuation of the Account of the Ejected Ministers, vol. 1, 1774, pp. 250-1.
2. Horton Davies, op.cit., p. 193. Davies comments that this was a "preaching exercise" and not to be expected from an ordinary sermon. However, in comparing this to Howe's customary services on feast-days, it is not to be considered as a rare experience in his life to preach three hours in a single day.

known. R.S. Paul makes no mention of Howe.[1] He does tell us, however, that Cromwell's favourite chaplain was Peter Sterry, a man who looked for a great cataclysm in 1656 which would usher in the Millenium and the Day of Judgment.[2] Cromwell shared these views to some extent, and it would be of very great interest, if the influence of these apocalyptic ideas on his policy during 1655 could be assessed, and if his foreign policy was formulated with Armageddon in prospect. To such views Howe was a stranger, and the whole tenor of his theology was so far removed from this type of millenial interest that it does not come as any great surprise to learn that Howe remained at court only with the most painful personal misgivings. He may have been influenced to join Cromwell at Whitehall through reasons very similar to those which influenced Milton to enter the political arena.[3] It is certain that it was not his personal choice, because the growing parish at Great Torrington had first claim on his love and affection, but Cromwell had his way. Calamy gives another clue as to why Howe left his parish in a parenthetical note to the effect that after Cromwell was made Lord Protector of the Commonwealth, he could never bear to be contradicted.[4] At the same time Howe resumed his new duties

1. Robert S. Paul, The Lord Protector: Religion and Politics in the Life of Oliver Cromwell, London, 1955.
2. Ibid., pp. 333, 334.
3. Douglas Bush, English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century, 1600-1660, Oxford, 1947, p. 376. He quotes the following passage from the Areopagitica.

> "I cannot praise a fugitive and cloister'd vertue, unexercised and unbreath'd, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortall garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather: that which purifies us is triall, and triall is by what is contrary. That vertue therefore which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evill, and knows not the utmost that vice promisesto her followers, and rejects it, is but a blank vertue, not a pure; her whiteness is but an excrementall whiteness."

Howe was certainly alive to the trials awaiting him at Cromwell's court. He must have felt it a duty he could not refuse.
4. Calamy, op.cit., p.17.

as chaplain to Cromwell, he became lecturer of St. Margaret's Church in Westminster. Three months after Howe removed with his family to Whitehall, he wrote a letter to Richard Baxter, asking for his advice in urging redress of public evils upon the government. Baxter's letter, which seems like a reply to this letter of Howe is dated "April 3, 1658", more than a year afterwards. In it Baxter urges Howe to be "very tender and cautelous in publishing any of the neglects of governors."[1] Baxter also advised him to keep a sharp watch over all suspected to be secret papists who, according to reports, were highly placed in Cromwell's government. While Howe was in Cromwell's service, he advanced the cause of many of his friends, without seeking his own interests. Finally, so Calamy was informed, Cromwell asked Howe when he was going to ask a boon for himself.[2]

After this incident, a minor rift developed between Cromwell and Howe. An opinion prevailed at the court that if a pious man prayed with a particular faith, his request would be assuredly answered. Prayer with fervour was attended with certain results, and future events were sometimes foretold to the petitioner. Howe could not let such an erroneous opinion prevail without attempting to put it right. After hearing a sermon defending this position, which so well accorded with Cromwell's own views,[3] Howe preached a sermon, strenuously denying its tenets. He reported to Calamy

1. Urwick, op.cit., p.xiii.
2. Calamy, op.cit., p.21.
3. R.S. Paul, op.cit., pp.384-386.

that Cromwell, knitting his brows, displayed great uneasiness during the address, and afterwards was noticeably cooler towards him.[1] Accounts of Cromwell's deathbed show that he cherished these views to the last, firmly convinced that when he prayed with "particular faith", his request would be certainly answered.[2] It is to the mutual credit of Howe and Cromwell that Howe had the integrity to preach so pertinently, and that Cromwell had the grace to accept the rebuke without bearing a lasting grudge against his forthright chaplain.

In a later letter to Baxter, dated June 1, 1658, Howe seems to have well-nigh lost all heart for the chaplaincy. The chicanery, deceit, flattery, ambition and extravagance of the court went against his training and natural bent. Two days later another letter followed, suggesting a drastic change. The new plan provided for a chaplain to reside at the court and enjoy all the emoluments that had been Howe's, while he spent one quarter of the year with his congregation at Great Torrington. Cromwell agreed to this plan, and Howe remained in office until Oliver's death on September 3, of the same year.[3]

Wood tells us that Increase Mather returned to England in 1658 where he was "for some time" minister to Howe's congregation at Great Torrington as Howe was engaged in "close waiting" as chaplain to the protector in the county of Devon,[4] thus corroborating Calamy's account.

1. Calamy, op.cit., p.23.
2. Hewlett, op.cit., pp.xv,xvi.
3. Urwick, op.cit., p.xviii.
4. Anthony Wood, Athenae Oxonienses, edited by Philip Bliss, iii,834.

In October of that year, he was present, but not as a member, at the Savoy Conference when the Westminster Confession was re-edited on congregational principles.[1]

While he continued in Cromwell's service, Howe was often sent upon secret "though honourable missions." Nowhere does he give a clue as to their significance. After Cromwell's death he continued in the same relationship to Richard that he had enjoyed with Oliver. He was one of Richard's few supporters at court, and a lasting friendship was formed between them.[2]

After the Restoration in 1660 a charge was brought against Howe by two accusers for preaching "seditiously" from Gal. vi, 7,8. On the evidence of twenty-one respectable and "judicious" witnesses, he was acquitted. One of his accusers cut his own throat, and the other left town.

In 1662 the Act of Uniformity passed the two houses of Parliament with a very small majority in the Commons. When it went into effect on August 24, Howe preached his final sermons to a tearful congregation and became a "silenced Nonconformist."[3] Hewlett lists four reasons why Howe could not conform: (1) He would not submit to reordination, (2) He desired a stricter discipline than was likely in the Church of England, (3) He could not endure the absolute enforcement of religious duties not expressly enjoined in Scriptures, (4) His own catholicity of spirit forbade the exclusivism of the Establishment.[4] Upon the same principle, he would, of course,

1. D.N.B. x, 86.
2. Calamy, op.cit., p.226.
3. Ibid., p.29.
4. Hewlett, op.cit., p.xix.

refuse to submit to exclusivist nonconformist notions. He rarely entered into religious controversies, but when he did, it was almost always to protect the bruised and beleaguered church from the ravages of exclusivists in both parties. The main argument Howe used in a discourse with Dr Wilkins, later Bishop of Chester, as to why he could not submit to the Act of Uniformity, was the lack of latitude allowed in the Act.[1]

Howe continued to preach privately in the homes of friends and was again cited. The bishop from whose court the process issued, was the Dr Seth Ward that Howe had previously aided. The case was hastily dropped.[2]

In 1665, the Five Mile Act was passed. In Devonshire, Howe was one of the twelve ministers to sign the oath, though with some misgivings. In this same year Calamy was informed of Howe's imprisonment for two months at the Isle of St. Nicolas with his relatives, George and Obadiah Hughes.[3] This was a doubtful rumour, since Howe makes no mention of such an imprisonment in any of his extant writings or letters. In 1668 Howe published one of his most popular works, The Blessedness of the Righteous. Perhaps to the success of this book may be attributed the proposal he soon received to enter the family of Lord Massarene of Antrim Castle, on the banks of Lough Neagh, in Ireland, as domestic chaplain. He accepted the proposal gratefully, and left for Ireland in the beginning of April, 1671. While he was waiting to embark from Wales, probably in

1. Calamy, op.cit., p.32.
2. Ibid., pp.39-40.
3. Calamy, op.cit., p.43.

Holyhead, the wind proved contrary. Through the kind permission of the local vicar Howe preached in the morning and afternoon services with great effect. The next Lord's Day, when the people of the village observed that the vessel had not departed, they crowded out the church to hear the stranger again. In great consternation, the vicar sent for Howe who was indisposed. Immediately, despite his illness, Howe donned his clothing and preached with unusual freedom. Afterwards he commented, "If my ministry was ever any use, it must be then."[1]

Shortly after Howe's arrival in Ireland, his family joined him at the beautiful castle of Antrim. Antrim Castle was among the few erected in pursuance of the injunctions of the grant of James I, for the protection of the colonies. It was unusually well wooded and provided with deer land extending two miles along the edge of Loch Neagh. The view looks toward the distant Tyrone and Derry Mountains on the west, and the near woods of Shane's Castle.[2]

More tolerant ecclesiastical circumstances obtained in Ireland. Through the influence of Usher's theology and his personal moderation in ecclesiastical matters, the "Irish Church" was much more liberal in dealing with nonconforming ministers. At the Restoration, the ministers who conformed were not required to repudiate their former orders, but simply to submit to Episcopal ordination. The Antrim Castle family influenced the country for further freedom in regard to nonconformity.[3] Thus the account Calamy gives of

1. Ibid., pp.51-53.
2. W. Major Scott, The Life of John Howe, 1911.
3. Urwick, op.cit., p.xxvi.

Howe's warm reception among the Anglican clergy is explained.[1] While in attendance on Lord Massarene at his Dublin residence, Howe preached also at the Presbyterian meeting-house on Cook Street.

In 1674, he published Of Delighting in God, which was the essence of some sermons he had delivered at Great Torrington twenty years before. His shorter discourse, The Vanity of this Mortal Life was published upon the occasion of the death of Anthony Upton. Rogers proclaims this the "most admired and most read of all his small pieces."[2] While at Dublin, he also laboured together with Thomas Gowan in a training school for Presbyterian divines, presumably teaching theology.[3]

In 1675, upon the death of the famous Presbyterian, Dr Lazarus Seaman, Howe received an invitation to become pastor of his Dissenting congregation in London. There was some discussion among the congregation as to choice - some were for Charnock, and some for Howe. Nothing would do, but that Howe must go to London for the final decision. The night before sailing he drew up a remarkable treatise on the journey at hand - an almost morbidly minute introspective scrutiny of all his motives in taking the journey.[4]

Howe accepted the call to the church in London, finding favour among Anglican clergymen Whitchcot, Kedder, Fowler and Lucas as well as among the Dissenters. In 1676 Howe published The Living Temple, his greatest philosophical work, a manly attempt to prove

1. Calamy, op.cit., pp. 53,54.
2. Rogers, op.cit., p. 177.
3. D.N.B., x, 86.
4. Calamy, op.cit., pp.59-60.

the existence of God, and his "conversableness with man."[1] The second part, not published until a quarter of a century later, attempts to refute atheism. In 1677, there appeared his On the Reconcileableness of God's Prescience of the Sins of Men, with the Wisdom and Sincerity of his Counsels and Exhortations, and whatever other means he uses to prevent them, which was written at the instigation of Robert Bryce.

In London, on May 27, 1676, Howe began morning lectures once a week in Cordwainer's Hall, all of which were based on the text, "He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen"? In 1677-78 the weekly lecture at Cordwainer's Hall was devoted to an elaborate exposition of the work of the Holy Spirit. In 1677, a controversy on predestination arose out of Howe's recent publication on The Reconcileableness of God's Prescience of the Sins of Men. Theophilus Gale, his old friend and schoolmate, attacked it in the concluding part of his Court of the Gentiles. After Gale's attack, Danson continued the criticism, but Howe was wittily and ably defended by the clever Andrew Marvell. It was because of this that Wood mistakenly wrote, "he is a great and strict Arminian" having been "opposed in that point by some of his own way."[2]

1. Thomas Chalmers says in his "Introduction" to The Living Temple, And thus it is, that men become themselves living temples of God, and that God's living temple, his spiritual kingdom, is established and extended throughout the world. And we cannot better reply to the question, What is the best instrument for promoting and extending the Kingdom of God in the world? than by referring our readers to the following treatise of John Howe 'The Living Temple, or a Good Man the Temple of God.' p. xxxii.
2. Wood, op.cit., iv, 589.

In 1680 at court, Dean Tillotson preached a sermon from John xxiv (sic.) which contained the peculiar notion that no man could preach against the religion of his country, even though a false one, unless he was able to work miracles. Howe remonstrated successfully with the zealous but inadequately prepared dean, who according to report, wept freely over his error.[1]

The sermon Charity in Reference to Other Men's Sins arose out of a painful circumstance. Howe was assisted in his work by an ejected minister, named Daniel Bull. The unfortunate man fell into immorality; "a single instance," says Calamy among the nonconformists of that year. Fortunately it was not a hopeless case, for afterwards Bull repented and was restored in his service as a useful and respected minister.[2] The sermon, however, is an excellent example of Howe's forgiving and gracious nature towards his brothers of the cloth.

In 1681, persecution against the Dissenters broke out afresh, when several lapsed laws were put into severe execution. Burnet observes that any who refused to join the hue and cry "were cried out upon as the betrayers of the Church, and as secret favourers of the Dissenters."[3] The years 1682-1683 saw a steady increase in persecution, and in 1683 an order issued from the justices of peace at Eton, allowing a reward of forty shillings to any person that apprehended a Dissenting minister. The thirty-fifth resolution of Elizabeth was again brought into force, penalizing

1. Calamy, op.cit., pp. 76-78.
2. Horton, op.cit., p. 149.
3. Burnet, op.cit., 1, 501.

any nonconforming minister with imprisonment, abjuration of the realm or death. Edward Bury, who assisted at a fast, was fined £20; he refused to pay and his goods, books and bed were distrained. Philip Henry was seized and fined £40, and "the sheriff's men carried off 33 loads of hay which lay cut upon the ground." For five inoffensive sermons Richard Baxter was fined £195, and was "dragged out of his sick bed" by the constables. His physician rescued him, but his beloved books were seized. In the village of Hackney, fines of £1460 were issued for distraints among the laity.[1] The same year, there appeared in The Continuation of the Morning Exercise, a sermon by Howe on Col. ii, 2 upon this question, What way Most Hopefully to Allay Animosities among Protestants, that our Divisions may not be our Ruin. In it he urges a generous love, which would "extinguish or abate the unhallowed fire of our anger and wrath towards one another."[2] On July 20, William Lord Russell was beheaded, under the most painful circumstances. To his grieving lady, Howe wrote anonymously, one of the most able letters of condolence ever to leave his pen. Montgomery, in his Christian Correspondence, distinguishes this above all the remaining 422 letters inserted in his three volumes, by pronouncing it "one of the noblest and most pathetic pieces of epistolary composed in the language."[3]

In this long letter which Calamy quotes in full, Howe challenges the unfortunate lady to a position of Christian joy

1. Scott, op.cit., p. 46.
2. Calamy, op.cit., p. 81.
3. Urwick, op.cit., p. xxxiii.

in sorrow. He points out that even sorrow over sin is to have its limits[1] and that each tragedy is only a means to joy. The causes of sorrow are admittedly great, but the causes of joy in the Lord are incomparably greater.[2] Although the letter was sent anonymously, the style soon disclosed its authorship to the lady, and Howe received her thanks and later became her life-long friend.

During these years of persecution, many other treatises flowed from his pen. In 1681 he published Discourse on Thought-:fulness for the Morrow, in 1682, Self-dedication, discoursed in the Anniversary Thanksgiving of a Person of Honour for a great deliverance; in 1684 the lyric and compassonate, The Redeemer's Tears wept over Lost Souls, and in 1685 a letter addressed to his London congregation after he had left them.[3]

Horton acutely observes that The Redeemer's Tears wept over Lost Souls, was printed in the year of severest persecution, just before Howe's flight to the Continent.[4] It was Howe's own tears, mingling with those of the Saviour, which enabled him to express the pathos, sorrow and love in the heart of the Master for his lost sheep.

Bush gives a suggestion as to why Howe's many sermons and

1. Nehemiah 8: 8-10 ... "They read from the book, from the law of God, translating as they went and explaining the meaning, so that the people understood what was read. Then Nehemiah the governor and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who instructed the people, said to all the people, This is a day sacred to the Eternal your God; do not mourn and do not weep (for all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law). Ezra added, Come, eat the dainty pieces and drink sweet wine, for this is a day sacred to our Lord, do not be downcast, for to rejoice in the Eternal is your strength." James Moffatt, The Old Testament, London, n.d.
2. Calamy, op.cit., pp. 83-102. 3. Ibid., pp. 78,79,80,103.
4. Horton, op.cit., p. 158.

books were so widely read compared with the limited reading similar writings of the present time would receive,

> More than two-fifths of the books printed in England from 1480-1640 were religious, and for the years 1600-1640, the percentage was still higher ... Religion was a main and often intense concern of greater multitudes of people during our period than in any other before or since, and in many ways it profoundly affected the lives of those who were not especially devout.[1]

The year 1684 was a difficult one for the Dissenters. Not only were they punished for going to private meetings, but they were also punished for not going to the Established Church and for not receiving the sacrament. This same year Bishop Barlow of Lincoln wrote a warm and angry letter against the Dissenters, which Howe answered with his usual dispassionate calm in the following fashion. If an obedient child found it impossible to eat a type of sauce that his father provides, will his father starve him rather than yield to his inclination? Such is the case with the non-essentials of the church. Some scruple at kneeling. Must they perdere substantium propter accidentia? How would his Lordship give account of himself before the Lord who said, "Him that is weak in the faith, receive, but not to doubtful disputations"?[3]

Despite efforts of the moderates, pressure against the Dissenters increased universally, and when Lord Wharton invited Howe to travel with him abroad, he accepted the invitation with alacrity. From a letter he wrote to his congregation after departure, it seems he had no time to seek formal release. Evidently for some time, it had not been safe for him to appear in the streets of London.[4] The first consideration of the letter,

1. Bush, op.cit., p.294.
2. Burnet, op.cit., 1, 591.
3. Calamy, op.cit., pp. 104-109. 4. Ibid., p. 115.

is that the congregation should put into practice their knowledge of the Gospel. Whatever grievous persecution awaits, there is "kindness at the bottom." Wrath and bitterness only grieve the Spirit of God, so exemplary gentleness and love must win the heart of the persecutors.[1]

During the course of his travels abroad, Howe discoursed with Papists as well as Protestant scholars. News from England grew steadily worse, and so in the year 1686, Howe settled in Utrecht, where he purchased a house to which many of his exiled contemporar-ies resorted. He was selected as one of the four preachers in the English church of the city, the others being Mead, Woodcock and Cross. Here Howe also busied himself hearing and teaching the orations and disputations of English students residing in the city. Perhaps it was Howe's example that later led Gilbert Burnet, who visited Howe at Utrecht, to begin a small seminary of students of Divinity at Salisbury, whom he kept at his own expense.[2] In a conversation with Howe Burnet frankly declared for occasional communion, and just as frankly declared that when the present lead-ers of nonconformity were dead, he thought the movement would die of its own weight. Howe replied that the matter rested with heaven, but he hoped due liberty would be given to lay aside the "needless clogs" that gave rise to debate. Otherwise, others would rise to take the place of those who passed off the stage, since the matter was one of principle, and not of persons.[3] Events proved Howe right.

1. Calamy, op.cit., pp. 113-127.
2. Burnet, op.cit., ii, 709.
3. Calamy, op.cit., p. 127,128.

While in Holland, William, Prince of Orange, invited Howe several times into his presence and freely discoursed with him, particularly about matters pertaining to his old master Cromwell. From that time, he retained a great respect for Howe, which continued after William took the throne in England.

In 1687, King James published his Declaration for Liberty of Conscience upon which the Dissenters were freed from their bonds and worshipped in public places without molestation. Howe's flock in London urgently requested his return, and he immediately complied. Before leaving, he waited on the Prince of Orange, who wisely advised him to be very cautious in his use of the liberty King James promised. There seems to be but little doubt that the show of toleration King James made was for the secret purpose of fostering Romanism in England. Most of the Dissenters, including Howe, saw this clearly. This is undoubtedly why Howe neatly side stepped a request from King James to countenance "addresses" to him from the Dissenters. But perhaps Bishop Burnet goes too far when he declares that the King's sole desire was to strengthen the Papists until they were strong enough to persecute.[1] Even James would see that this course of action could not be successful. When the King ordered his Declaration for Liberty to be read in all the churches, the bishops consulted and decided this would be to acknowledge the "Dispensing Power," so they begged to be excused. The King promptly packed them off to the tower on a charge of libel.[2]

1. Burnet, op.cit., ii, 702.
2. Calamy, op.cit., p. 139.

When the "Bloodless Revolution" of 1688 was completed, and the Prince of Orange had come to St James' Palace, the dissenting ministers waited on him in a body while Howe delivered the address. The new King pledged himself to uphold the Protestant religion, and shortly afterwards on May 24, made good his promise by granting indulgence to the Dissenters. Burnet regarded it a good sign that the seal of London was recovered from the Thames when William and Mary came to rule.[1]

Howe was one of the most influential men in the movement towards amalgamation of the Presbyterians and Congregationalists into one body. In 1672 they had established the Merchant's lectures on Tuesdays at Pinners Hall; in 1677 Howe succeeded Thomas Morton there. In 1689 when the two bodies originated a common fund for educating students, Howe was again one of the founders. In 1690 the Heads of Agreement, which was largely Howe's work, was published and formed the basis for similar unions throughout the country. This union was broken in London by a controversy arising out of a book by Tobias Crisp. Baxter assailed its antinomian flavor, and only with great difficulty did Howe succeed in restraining him from publishing a damaging reply. In exchange, Howe prefixed his name to an attack by Flavel on the antinomianism of Crisp in a book called, A Blow at the Root, or the Causes and Cures of Mental Errors.[2] Crisp's views were then attacked by Daniel Williams in Gospel Truth published in 1691.

The controversies which arose among diesenting ministers soon

1. Burnet, op.cit., ii, 16, 17.
2. Edward Calamy, An Historical Account of My Own Life with Some Reflections on the Times I have Lived In. 1671-1731. London:1829 i, 322, 323.

after the settlement, may be dated from 1691 when the Heads of Agreement, assented to by the Body of the United Ministers, were published. It was their design to bring the Presbyterian and Congregational churches together under a common agreement, but some of the Congregationalists were so vocal and fierce in their opposition that the proposal came to nought. Other debates and controversies raged. Jealousies burned fiercely; ruptures occurred frequently, and as Calamy puts it, "the world was wearied out with pamphlets and creedmaking."[1]

In these troubled times, Howe did everything in his power to still the stormy waters of contention. He affixed his name to a document with the hopeful title, The Agreement in Doctrine among the Dissenting Ministers. This came to nothing. Then he published The Carnality of Christian Contention, in 1693. The preface breathes such a spirit of Christian charity and concern that, as Spademan observes, a very eminent divine of the Established Church professed willingness to lay down his life, if such conditions might obtain among Christians.[2] He describes carnality as that working of the church against itself which is manifest in controversy without and strife within. It has brought the church to a low estate, "excluding those whom Christ would admit," and "admitting those whom he would exclude." Both parties held the substantials of the case, why then, could they not live together in love? In many instances the champions of orthodoxy have defended

1. Ibid., p.184.
2. Works, vi. 404.

truth with such bad temper that it stirs up the depths of depravity in the hearts of others. We are "to contend earnestly for the faith" keeping back "nothing that is profitable", but we are also enjoined to speak "the truth in love."[1] It is commanded that "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth."[2] These sermons are also important as they reveal Howe's theological conception of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. He writes,

> The Lord's table certainly ought to be free to his guests, and appropriate to them. And who should dare to invite others or forbid these?[3]

This was a direct frontal attack on the exclusivists of both Dissenter parties. He indicates that there are several evidences of carnality. One is when Christians exaggerate minor differences into major questions. Another is the tendency to superimpose philosophical terms upon scriptural doctrine. Another is the all too human attempt to judge gospel truths and doctrines by man's measuring stick. Another is the exaltation of one doctrine of the Bible beyond all others.

The section that deals with ecumenicity is too fortunately worded to avoid quoting in its entirety.

1. Eph. 4:15.
2. II Tim. 2:24.
3. Works, iv. 309.

> It were a happy omen if good men could once agree what in particular to pray for. One would think it should not be difficult to men of sincere minds, upon serious considera-:tion of the present sad state of things, to agree to pray that the Church of Christ may be more entirely one, and that unity might be preserved in the bond of peace, and this in order to its growth to the measure of the stature of a per-:fect man in Christ. For who sees not, that the Christian interest is naturally obstructed in its extensive growth by the visible disunion of the Christian community?[1]

Horton observes that the greatest ambition of his life was this pas-:sion for Christian unity.[2]

Between the years 1690 and 1694 several courses of sermons were delivered which form the latter part of the sixth and the whole of the seventh and eighth volumes, in the octavo edition of his works by Hunt & Brixton.[3]

In 1694, there was a design to exclude Williams from the lec-:ture at Pinners Hall, and so Howe and Dr Bates accompanied Williams to the new Tuesday lecture at Salters Hall. This ended attempts at coalition, but as time passed, a friendly correspondence sprang up between the two groups and animosities abated.[4] In a letter to his intimate friend, Spilsbury, Howe confessed to a great weariness of the continual bickerings and contentions among the men at Pinners Hall.[5]

In June 1694, Calamy asked Howe to take part in his ordination, but after consulting Lord-keeper Somers, he declined. Calamy wished to be ordained to the Church Catholic and to no particular church. Howe would have concurred in a private ordination, but evidently felt

1. Calamy, op.cit., p.190.
2. Horton, op.cit., p. 187.
3. Hewlett, op.cit., p. xl.
4. Calamy, op.cit., pp.194,5.
5. Ibid., pp.195-198.

that in such times and under such circumstances, it would be better to have a private rather than a public ordination.[1] It is to Calamy's credit that he bore Howe no grudge afterwards for his refusal. The growing prosperity of Howe's church in both numbers and influence is amply attested by the fact that his congregation was enabled to move to a large new meeting-house in Silver Street, Cheapside in December.

In this same year there arose a great debate on the doctrine of the Trinity. Sherlock, Wallas, South and Cudworth had already published books on the subject.[2] Howe brought out his contribution; a tract called, A Calm and Sober Inquiry concerning the Possibility of a Trinity in the Godhead, in a Letter to a Person of Worth. In this tract, he waives the question about three persons in the Deity, and confines his inquiry to whether the Father, the Son or Word, and the Holy Ghost, cannot admit of sufficient distinction from one another to answer scriptural demands of the Christian economy and yet, each of them remain God. He accepts the Anselmian formula of God as a Being "necessarily existent." Only the simplicity expressly taught in the Scriptures ought to be ascribed to God. This applies to our knowledge of the nature of the Godhead as well. Where the Scriptures are not clear, we should not speak. Since God has made a union of body and soul, why can He not unite three things of like nature into one? The doctrine of the hypostatic union is no easier to comprehend than the doctrine of the Trinity. The main thing is to ascer-

1. Calamy, on.cit., pp. 343,4.
2. Calamy, op. cit., p. 199.

:tain if there may not be a oneness with a threefold distinction. Here again we note Howe's moderation combined with a clear logic, honed on the sharp edges of biblical truth.

Howe had always declared for "occasional conformity," being perhaps the foremost Dissenter in favour of communion with the Es-:tablished Church. When Sir Thomas Alney, a member of his congre-:gation, went publicly to worship in an Established Church, it was suspected that he did so to protect his office as mayor. An en-:thusiastic Dissenter published an inflammatory pamphlet in which it was insisted that Howe should take his stand for or against the ac-:tion of Alney. Somewhat reluctantly, Howe wrote a short tract en-:titled Some Considerations of a Preface to an Enquiry concerning the Occasional Conformity of Dissenters. In this pamphlet he states that he could not advise either one way or the other as to the lawfulness of "occasional conformity." Since he could not judge, or presume to place himself in the seat of the Most High, he could not give a final answer. One thing is certain, however, the temper of spirit in the tract against occasional visits to the Estab-:lished Church is so unchristian that even if the writer were right, which is not likely, his truth is worse than the other's error. This was the sharpest tone Howe adopted in his written publications.

However, privately he expressed his own opinions more candidly, and with considerably less heat. He argued in this manner. The points of essential unity are important. The points of disagree-:ment are infinitely less significant, and therefore occasional con-:formity is permissible. Thus Howe justified occasional worship

with the Church of England where most of his Puritan contemporaries could not.[1]

In a letter to a noble lord, he sets forth the principle which bound him to this position of toleration. Some lie under a two-fold obligation of conscience: (1) not to cut themselves off tot-:ally from the communion of the Established Church, in which the great articles of the Christian faith are sound, (2) nor to decline other communion which seems "more agreeable to the Christian rule, and to their experience" and more conducible to their spiritual growth.[2]

As he grew older, Howe's powers as a preacher showed few signs of decline. The celebrated antiquary, Ralph Thoresby, visited London in 1695, and made this entry in his diary - "Heard the famous Mr Howe, both morning and afternoon, who preached incomparably."[3]

In 1699 he published The Redeemer's Dominion over the Invisible World. It was a subject suited to his taste, for his friends in toil and suffering, Bates and Mead, Baxter and Adams, were fast dis-:appearing into the better world. Rogers pronounces it "one of the richest and maturest fruits of your author's genius."[4] In it he describes the Saviour's complete control of the "invisible world." Howe speaks with the kind of "privileged familiarity" a man assumes who spends much of his time in the unsullied atmosphere of the heavenlies.

Minor publications include a funeral sermon for Mrs Esther

1. Rogers, op.cit., pp. 435,436.
2. Calamy, op.cit., pp. 214-219.
3. Hewlett, op.cit., p. xli.
4. Rogers, op.cit., p. 566.

Sampson, 1690; a discourse on the subject of the death of Queen Mary, 1695; a sermon preached on the death of Mr Richard Adams, 1698; a Thanksgiving Day sermon, 1697; a funeral sermon for his friend and co-labourer, Matthew Mead, 1699; and in 1701 a two-fold discourse of Man's Enmity against God, and Reconciliation between God and Man.[1]

In 1702, he published the second part of The Living Temple consisting criticisms on Spinoza and a French writer pretending to confute him. His last work was Patience, which came out in 1705, the year of his death.

During his last years he was wasted by various diseases. Throughout his life he was "indisposed" at various and frequent times. Twenty years before, on the occasion of crossing to London, he had written a lengthy treatise describing his inability to walk the streets, disabled ashe was by pain and weakness.[2] At the time of his great preaching success in Wales, he was called from a sick bed.[3]

He entertained no fear of dying, and when his end drew near, remained serene and calm. Calamy says,

> He seemed indeed sometimes to have got to heaven, even before he had laid aside that mortality which he had been long expecting to have swallowed up of life. It was observed ... by some of his flock, that in his last illness, and when he had been declining for some time, he was once in a most affecting, melting, heavenly frame at the Communion, and carry'd into such a ravishing and transporting celebration of the Love of Christ, that both he himself, and they who communicated with him, were apprehensive he would have expir'd in that very service.[4]

1. Calamy, op.cit., pp.123-4.
2. Ibid., p.65.
3. Ibid., pp.52,53.
4. Calamy, op.cit., p.225.

Richard Cromwell, now old and feeble, came to visit Howe with an overflowing heart. Tears were freely shed on both sides. In addition, elder and younger ministers made his room their rendez-vous, discoursing with him on many theological subjects. Some remarked that he "talked like one of another world, which his heart had long been set upon."[1] Just a few days before his death, Howe congratulated Calamy on his excellent treatise, Defense of Moderate Nonconformity and begged him to publish it as an essay towards ecclesiastical settlement.[2] This was the last time Calamy saw Howe.

To his son Howe expressed fear of pain, but none of dying. At length on Monday, April 2, 1705, the end came. He was interred in the Parish Church of St Alhallows Breadstreet where his funeral address was preached by his close friend John Spademan, on the text II Tim. 3:14. The meeting-house was probably robed in black.[3] His burial place is not known.

Mr George Hughes of Canterbury wrote to Howe's eldest son, Dr George Howe, for his father's remaining papers. The doctor replied that in Howe's last illness, after all thought he had lost his power of speech, to their surprise he called to his son and gave him a key. He ordered him to remove all the manuscripts and made him solemnly promise to destroy them immediately, which

1. Ibid., p. 226.
2. Calamy, op.cit., ii, 31.
3. Hewlett, op.cit., p. xlvi.

he did most reluctantly.[1] Why Howe did this is not clear, but Rogers felt it was due to excessive modesty.[2] Hewlett thinks it may have been due to a "fatal sudden impulse" to destroy what he had prepared for his survivors.[3] But it seems that the secret lies hidden in the inner character of Howe. He had participated in many missions under Cromwell; he had been pledged to secrecy on many occasions; he had been drawn into the vortex of politics in Cromwell's period, and was later a leader in Dissenter politics. He knew the machinations of political machinery better than most ministers. Therefore it seems probable that he destroyed these memoirs for several reasons: (1) He may have wished to protect the families of men with whom he associated under Cromwell's regime. (2) Many Dissenting ministers, who had participated in dubious party politics, may have had their ministries irreparably ruined by ill-advised publicity. (3) He may have made a solemn covenant with Cromwell never to disclose, under any circumstances, the political events in which he was involved. These would have been recorded in Howe's private papers, and accordingly, by Calamy's account, destroyed. (4) Or, it may be, as Horton suggests, that Howe's singular modesty prevented the publication of his private papers.[4]

Nothing of his writings was left, but one short sermon and a

1. Of this loss, Rogers says,
   > If these (Howe's manuscripts) had been preserved, we should probably have known more of the history of religion in Howe's time, especially during the Protectorate of Cromwell ... than can be obtained from any existing source. op.cit., p. 2.
2. Ibid., p. 4.
3. Hewlett, op.cit., p. iv.
4. Horton, op.cit., p. 234.

passage in the frontispiece of his Bible in Latin. In this frontispiece he relates in Latin how, on the morning of December 26, 1689, he awakened from a ravishing dream which disclosed to him a wonderful stream of celestial rays from God. His eyes ran with tears, and he was overcome with joy that God should so visit him. It is no wonder that Spademan said that he had received so many gifts and graces that he was not only "a shining light" and "ornament of his age," but "an inviting example of universal goodness."[1]

Howe was tall and graceful with a good presence and a piercing eye. He had a certain dignity which "excited veneration." He was an excellent logician, particularly in abstract thought, but he always brought his penetrating judgment under the scrutiny of the Scriptures. Even Wood, no friend of the nonconformists, says that he was "moderate and calm in the subtler matters of debate," nor did he "once in writing" interest himself in any "fruitless and too busy quarrels".[2] In controversy he was always a gentleman.

Howe's style is difficult and cumbersome, with none of the grace or charm of his age, and all of its faults. The only person who seems to have a good word for his style is, surprisingly enough, Anthony Wood. In a parenthetical statement he says that Howe's writings are "penned in a fine, smooth and natural stile."[3] From this sentence alone, great dubiety can be placed upon the

1. Calamy, op.cit., p. 233
2. Wood, op.cit., iv, 589.
3. Ibid.

extent of reading Wood had done in Howe. Even Calamy admits it is "full of parentheses, making it difficult for the common people to understand."[1] One writer says:

> His spirit is superior to his style; his diction rarely rises to the elevation of his thought; his sentences are negligent, and his punctuation seems designed for the ruin of perspicuity.[2]

Even more bluntly, Horton, before complaining about the "plainness and clumsiness of his writing" states,

> Howe's literary style is on a level with the worst of a bad period. It has all the faults of Milton's without any of the great redeeming qualities ... His style is the main reason for the neglect of his writings.[3]

This is certainly the strongest reason why Howe's name, which was among those of the first rank in his day, on a level with Baxter and Owen, is relatively unknown in this day of rekindled theological interest. Certainly his contemporaries judged him among the greatest of the nonconformists. Even in the political realm in which Howe professed no great interest, he was drawn to the front. It was he who was chaplain to Cromwell at court, and later to Richard. It was he with whom James brooked overtures for consultation on matters of religion. It was he, not Baxter or Owen, who preached the welcoming address to William of Orange. It was he who represented the moderate interests at court. In addition he was an acknowledged prince among preachers, and it is probably the greatest tragedy of his life that he who should have

1. Calamy, op.cit., p. 235.
2. D.N.B., x, 88.
3. Horton, op.cit., p. 228.

won such universal acclaim among the great of his own period, should have lost his hold on modern theological thought, simply because of a bad style. Howe's most diffuse and enthusiastic biographer, Professor Rogers, finds Howe's style equally difficult. He likens it to the same impression the reader would receive if he were walking along a path with great yawning gaps in it, or riding along a "Canadian ... corduroy road."[1] A woman once humorously remarked of Howe's sermonic style that "he was so long laying the cloth that she always despaired of the dinner."[2] One sentence in Howe often occupies half a page or more, and there is at least one sentence that occupies nearly one whole page.[3] But this is not the worst of it. He begins with one thought, doubles back to catch another, and develops a passion for a third and even a fourth thought which he weaves ingeniously into one formidable sentence replete with parentheses, exclamation points, question marks, and finally, that long-sought-for bit of punctuation, a full stop. He seems to be almost indifferent as to how he expresses his greatest thoughts. This has caused present day readers in theology to relegate his works to an undeserved limbo, while Howe's contemporaries, Baxter and Owen, have continued to receive an avid and sometimes adulatory readership.

Notwithstanding the inadequacies of his style, he was an excellent conversationalist, with a gift for repartee. At one dinner party, a certain nobleman praised the excellencies of King Charles I to the disparagement of others, liberally

1. Rogers, op.cit., p. vl.
2. Ibid., p. 475.
3. Rogers, op.cit., pp. 35. 36.

punctuating his words with oaths. Howe readily agreed to the excellencies and remarked that there was one quality of the late king the nobleman had omitted. The delighted courtier pressed for the forgotten virtue. Howe replied that Charles I had never allowed swearing in his presence. The nobleman took the reproof and promised to give up swearing.[1] On another occasion, Howe asked a swearing courtier if he could have the next oath. He had a considerable gift for sarcasm which frequently lighted up his sombre sermons. The famous letter concerning Stillingfleet's sermon is very witty.

> When we are satisfied that we cannot enjoy the means of salvation in Dr Stillingfleet's way without sin, and he tells us we cannot without sin enjoy them on our own, we hope every door is not shut against us, and cannot think the merciful God hath so stated our case as to reduce us to a necessity of sinning to get out of a state of damnation.[2]

Howe preached extemporaneously with as great exactness as though he had notes. His prayers were "unusually apt and flexible." Calamy tells us that his sermons were apt to be deep at the beginning, without oratorial polish, but as they advanced they became clearer until he drove his point home with great pungency, and that his hearers "must be greatly faulty," if they did not leave his services both "wiser and better."[3] He was particularly noted for his wisdom, not being easily swayed in his preaching judgment. Robert Hall confided to Rogers, "As a minister, I have derived more benefit from the works of Howe, than from those of all other divines put together."[4] Dr Watts observed that

1. Calamy, op.cit., p. 242.
2. Horton, op.cit., p. 239. (Calamy strangely omits it.)
3. Calamy, op.cit., p. 237.
4. Rogers, op.cit., Frontispiece.

one of the three greatest preachers in his younger days was John Howe.[1]

The most impressive feature of John Howe's character however, was his surpassing piety. In speaking of men such as Howe, Urwick says:

> Their crowning excellence - the spring and plastic soul of their greatness - was their piety. They brought the fruits of their studies as divines, to bear upon their own hearts as Christians. They daily maintained converse with God in private; and kept their seasons of special devotion. Thus they acquired a calmness and power, a freedom and unction, which no talent, or literary acquirement, or strength of natural character, could impart.[2]

Yet his piety was cast into a Calvinistic frame-work. Or perhaps it is better to say, as Legge puts it:

> Only because Calvinism was a vivid reproduction of scriptural truth was it so vital to the piety of the Puritans ... The Old Testament did much to foster that concept of righteous-:ness, based on the sovereign majesty and holiness of God, which was never far from the Puritan mind, and to promote the ideal of a theocratic society in which the individual fulfils hisspiritual destiny by obedience to the will of God as ex-:pressed in corporate code, involving a moral rigorism remin-:iscent of Hebrew law.[3]

Howe gives the clue to attainment of personal piety, when he declares that if a man intends to delight in God, he must "cast off all other lovers." He must bear himself as "the inhabitant of another country." The "secret of the Divine presence" must engulf him so that it becomes his "very element", in which he lives and moves and has his being. Any excursion, or the "least departing step", must be "painful and grievous" to the man who walks in

1. Samuel Dunn, Christian Theology by John Howe, London, 1836, p.45.
2. Urwick, op.cit., pp. ii and iii.
3. Garth Warren Legge, The Element of Christian Asceticism in Eng-:lish Puritanism and French Jansenism in the Seventeenth Century: University of Edinburgh, 1951, pp. 53,54.

holiness before God. John Howe lived these words. There are no skeletons in dark closets, no hidden staircases, no locked cellars in the crystal clear piety reflected in his life. He did not look upon religion so much as a system of doctrine, or a set of forms, but rather as "a divine Discipline to reform the heart and life."[1] This is reflected externally in his constant and outgoing hospitality to both great and small throughout his life, not even excepting the days of bitter exile in Utrecht.

It is not too much to say that John Howe strove for and attained an immortality of the kind described by the Puritan Thomas Adams:

> It is a foolish dreame, to hope for immortalitie and a long-lasting name, by a monument of brasse or stone. It is not dead stones, but living men, that can redeeme thy good remembrance from oblivion ... only the noble and Christian life makes every man's heart thy Tombe, and turnes every tongue into a pen, to write thy deathlesse Epitaphe.[2]

Dunn quotes a contemporary saying that "as Shakespeare among the poets, so is Howe among the divines." In tribute to his theological originality, Dr Samuel Clarke was deeply indebted to Howe's Living Temple when he wrote his Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God; and in it may be found the chief arguments in Paley's Natural Theology, although neither of these men made any acknowledgment of their obligation to Howe.[3]

Baxter found Howe endued with a "more than ordinary measure of

1. Calamy, op.cit. p. 238.
2. Bush, op.cit., p. 299.
3. Dunn, op.cit., pp. 45, 46.

judiciousness, even soundness, and accurateness of understanding."[1] His esteem for Howe was so great that he chose him to deliver the funeral sermon at the burial of his beloved wife.[2] The quality of "judiciousness" Baxter found in Howe is nowhere better attested than in one of Howe's own sermons for a deceased friend Mr Richard Fair-:clough. He could well have been writing his own autobiography when he said his friend had an ability to "strike through knotty difficulties into the inward centre of truth," and that his know-:ledge was not only book learned,[3] but "inwrought into the temper and habit of his mind which afterwards he liked not to muddy and discompose, by busy agitation with others." He might better have written of himself, "He declined controversy, not from inability, but dislike."[4] In Watt's elegy on Gouge, who died in January, 1700, he speaks of Howe as having survived his equals, "a great but single name, and ready to be gone."[5]

But it was Dr Alexander Whyte, naming him the "Plato of the Puritans", who did much to rescue Howe from oblivion.[6] He

1. Richard Baxter in an introductory essay to The Blessedness of the Righteous Opened and further recommended from the Consideration of the Vanity of this Mortal Life; in two treatises on Psalm xvii and Psalm lxxxix: 47, p.12.
2. Horton, op.cit., p.189.
3. Works, v. 68. Here Howe states ironically, how foreign it is to him to "consider how many thoughts were one way, and how many the other, before I would venture to think any of my own," thus demon-:strating his unwillingness to accept learning from books alone.
4. Works, vi. 233.
5. D.N.B., x. 87.
6. In his voluminous works, Whyte mentions Howe at least sixteen times, calling him a "Platonist", naming him in the list of doctrinal and experimental theologians, and quoting copiously from him in his own works.

nominated Howe as the outstanding example of a man who could "Platonize divine truth incomparably."[1] Thomas Chalmers called him "the first of the Puritan divines."[2]

Perhaps it is only fair to give his most ardent admirer, Rogers, the opportunity for an encomium. He says,

> To enlist him - whose temper and spirit were so transcendently catholic; whose whole life was devoted to the cause of our common Christianity; and who abhorred all excess of party feel-:ing, whether displayed by those with whom he agreed, or by those from whom he differed; - to enlist him, I say, in the mere strife of party, would, in my estimation, be a flagrant insult to his memory.[3]

Spademan, his friend and coadjutor, spoke truthfully when he said in a letter to the bereaved family, "it seemed as though he was intended to be an inviting example of universal goodness ... so that he had that principal recompense of piety in this life - a good name."[4] This he left in full measure, and if the dust of obscurity has almost covered his memory, his life has been immortalized in the transformed lives of those to whom his invitation to "universal goodness" proved successful. No man can ask for more.

1. Alexander Whyte, Bunyan Characters, London, 1895, p. 224.
2. Thomas Chalmers, Memoirs, ii. 775.
3. Rogers, op.cit., viii, ix.
4. Works, vi. 385.

Chapter Two

THE LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT

John 14:26 "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

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In a day when men are again asking questions which have been posed before, but perhaps not with the same sense of urgency or persistence, it is fitting that we should turn to the seventeenth century which pondered the same problems, and solved them to its own satisfaction, if not to ours. In our twentieth century which Karl Barth[1] freely admits may be a hundred years away from a fully developed doctrine of the Holy Spirit, it is pertinent to our present theological discussion to listen to the voices of the past. As Nuttall has said,

> Over against a degree of moral despair, on the one hand, and, on the other, over against the unbalanced psychology of the 'Group Movement,' which seems to have hardly less distrust of the normal activities of reason and conscience, a fresh presentation of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and of the doctrine's implications would be of great value ... the doctrine ... received a more thorough and detailed consideration from the Puritans of seventeenth-century England, than it has received at any other time in Christian History.[2]

One of the voices which spoke most clearly and effectively was that of John Howe. He stood in the full stream of Reformation theology, which, for the first time since the early centuries, turned men's attention to the nature of religion in the Bible as something to be individually practised and enjoyed. The agent of this biblical new life is the Holy Spirit[3] and He it is who makes Christian

1. Prof. T.F. Torrance, Lecture Notes on Dogmatics, Summer term, 1955.
2. Nuttall, op.cit., pp. vii, viii.
3. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 241.

renewal possible.[1] Therefore it is not to deny or controvert the classic expositions of the doctrine, that Howe writes, but to draw out its implications for faith and practice. Experimental religion was enjoyed within the context of Scripture, with Scripture confirming the experience. Howe agreed with Collier.

"This", says Thomas Collier, preaching to the army at Putney, "I shall for your satisfaction confirm unto you from scripture, although I trust I shall deliver nothing unto you but experimental truth."[2]

Calvin's most important effect on the Puritan preachers was to send them posting back to the Bible, particularly to Paul's epistles, his life in Acts, and thence to the gospels and the rest of holy writ.[3] This effect was so profound upon Howe that Spademan speaks of him as the Puritan most similar to the great Apostle.[4]

What distinguishes the seventeenth century, and justifies the place of Owen, Howe and Baxter as pioneers in the field, is the place given in Puritan exposition to personal experience.[5]

Howe laid his major stress on personal appropriation in his doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The vast majority of his writings devoted to that subject reveal great concern for the individual's inward life,[6] his need of the Holy Spirit in regeneration,[7] the

1. Ibid., pp.249, 250.
2. Woodhouse, op.cit., p. 39.
3. William Haller, The Rise of Puritanism, New York, 1938, p. 86.
4. Works, vi. 388-407.
5. Nuttall, op.cit., p. 7. See also Lloyd's thesis, John Owen with Particular Reference to the Socinian Controversy.
6. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 241.
7. John Howe, The Redeemer's Tears Wept over Lost Souls and Two Discourses on Self-dedication and on Yielding Ourselves to God, ed. by Robert Gordon, Glasgow, 1830, p. 83.

the necessity of his walking in the Spirit,[1] and his awareness of the Spirit's work in giving repentance.[2] His interest in the practical application of the Spirit's work is not to be wondered at. As Nuttall says,

> This stress on experience is, indeed, a characteristic of the seventeenth century in England, the century which has Hamlet as its prototype and exemplar, and one could only be surprised if there were no corresponding emphasis in theology.[3]

Howe was more interested in the believer's growth than in his dogmatics, more concerned with his life than his theology, and thus in all of his writings demonstrated a thoroughly practical interest in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. On the one hand, then, he did not share Owen's interest in the Socinian heresy which was reappearing in scattered sections, and therefore only reluctantly contributed a tract on the subject under pressure in the year 1694.[4] On the other hand, as a moderate Presbyterian, he kept free from the excesses of Fox, while retaining a strong interest in the devotional practice of the Quakers.

Howe's greatest concern was that believers should "come in the unity of the faith ... unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."[5] This could only occur as the Christian read the Bible with his heart as well as his head. And who was to impress the Gospel deep into his heart, but the Holy Spirit? Thus he wrote, "if the Spirit of the living God do no way animate the gospel revelation, and breathe in it, we have no day of grace."[6]

1. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 254. 2. Ibid., 88.
3. Nuttall, op.cit., p. 7. 4. Works, v, 78-120. 5. Eph. 4:13.
6. Works, ed. Gordon, p. 95.

The Holy Spirit and the Scriptures

The work of the Holy Spirit in connection with the Scriptures is twofold. He inspired the origin of the writings and He enlightens the hearers. He inspirited the writers to record the will of God infallibly in regard to matters of faith and practice. The Scriptures were "divinely revealed," and of "necessity had to be written."[1] They contain the stamp of Divinity, and were written to save "lost, miserable souls from perishing for ever."[2] Since the Scriptures bear the "divine stamp," there is no need of following the line of natural light further than to realize it can impart to us some knowledge of God, because the fulness of revelation in the Bible is more clearly and definitively stated.[3] In fact,

> all Scripture is Θεοπνευστος (sic.). It is only that one word that is said of it, God-breathed. All Scripture is (as it were) the breath of God. That indeed is the very literal sense of the word here used, breathed from God.[4]

Yet God, though the Divine Author, did make use of human writers, and it is never to be supposed that

> He should direct every word, and every phrase, by an extraordinary immediate inspiration; for then it were impossible there should have been a diversity of style, but all the parts must have been in one and the same style.[5]

If God did not use men merely as machines, how did He direct them? The Holy Spirit brought Himself into accommodation to the genius of each man as to all the substance of what was to be

1. Works, ed. Dunn, pp. 49,50.
2. Ibid., 53.
3. Works, ed. Hunt, vi, 445, 446.
4. Ibid.
5. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 53.

written, and yet the Holy Spirit "did attemper itself to the natural genius of the writer, so that the Scriptures came to be diversified."[1]

> (It) is as if one comes to pour a quantity of water into such and such a particular vessel; the water in its forms will resemble ... the figure of the vessel. If the vessel be round, the water falls into a round figure; if the vessel be square, the water is formed into that figure unavoidably. And so the same communication of the Holy Ghost, being poured into such a vessel as this or that man was, comes to be accordingly diversified.[2]

Only the mind of God comprehends the vastness of the Scripture. Its power is shown in the souls of the men whose lives it changes. But the real seal of the Scriptures upon the souls of men is set by the Holy Spirit.[3] The one great design of the book is to make men good and holy, and thus to make them "blessed and happy."[4]

The lesser questions concerning Hebrew vowel points, various translations, "etymological and other differences," are of little concern in comparison to the main design of Scripture, which is to show us "what we are to believe and do in order to our glorifying God as our supreme Lord, and our enjoying him, and being happy in him as our best and only satisfying good."[5] Throughout his writings, Howe maintains high fidelity to this central purpose of Scripture, thus freeing himself from the theological entanglements that dogged the steps of some of his great contemporaries,

1. Ibid., 53.
2. Ibid., 53.
3. Ibid., 55.
4. Works, ed. Dunn, p57.
5. Ibid.

including John Owen.

Owen's doctrine of the Scriptures seems to be definitely more rigid and scholastic. Even though prophets wrote in a historical manner, yet, he assures us,

> ... they did not write them either from their own memory, nor from tradition, nor from the Rolls or records of the times ... but by the Inspiration, Guidance and Direction of the Holy Ghost. Hence they are called prophets ... to signify any that are divinely inspired, or receive immediate revelations from God. As their minds were under that full assurance of Divine inspiration which we before described, so their words which they wrote were under the special care of the same Spirit, and were of his suggestion or inditing.[1]

Although Baxter is in agreement with Owen that the Scriptures are given under inspiration of God, he seems to feel that the "over-orthodox doctor," as he calls Owen, believes too much concerning the Scriptures.[2] Owen had stated that the inspiration was so exact, that the Spirit even guided the writers' hands in setting down the words, and thus the Scriptures were kept infallible.[3] Baxter writes that they believe too much, who think of the Bible, as a textbook on grammar, logic, and sciences, who believe that it is fully sufficient to prove its own authority, totally apart from church history and tradition, and the preached word. Those believe too naively who say that the Scriptures are so divine not only in matter, but in method and style, that there is nothing of "human (inculpable) imperfection or weakness in them."[4]

1. John Owen, Πνευματολογια or a Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit wherein an Account is Given of His Name, Nature, Personality, Dispensation, Operations and Effects, London, 1674, p. 113.
2. William Orme, The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter, London, 1830, v, 562 ff.
3. Owen, op.cit., p. 113.
4. Baxter, Works, v, 562, 563.

Thus Baxter safely removes himself from the stigma of bibliolatry, to which at times Owen is in danger of succumbing.

Howe seems to be more in agreement with Baxter than Owen. He considers it absurd that man should suppose the "Bible reached him down by an immediate hand from heaven."[1] Rather the Bible was given to teach our duty towards God. It never purports to prove Him, but to demonstrate what manner of God He is.[2] Man became so great a stranger to God's nature and power, "as to require a written revelation of his nature and will: and we have it in those Scriptures which bear with us the name of the Word of God."[3]

How do we know the Bible is divine? Howe says,

> Whereas, it doth pretend and avow itself to be Divine, and of Divine original; it hath those inimitable characters of Divinity upon it, which most plainly justify that pretence; I shall, before I instance, only forelay this, that we must consider when we would make judgment upon this thing, whether this thing be a God-like thing, yea or no, and carries visible characters of Divinity stamped upon it; we are, in making our judgment about this matter, to consider, not barely what is spoken or contained in this book, but also to whom such things are spoken, whose use this book was designed to serve, and what use it was intended for.[4]

John Calvin used much the same argument regarding the proof of Scriptural inspiration.

> Read Demosthenes or Cicero; read Plato, Aristotle or any others of that class; I grant that you will be attracted, delighted, moved, and enraptured by them in a surprising manner: but if, after reading them, you turn to the perusal of the sacred volume, whether you are willing, or unwilling, it will affect you so powerfully, it will so penetrate your

1. Works, iii, 284.
2. Ibid., pp. 281, 283.
3. Works, ed. Chalmers, p. 88.
4. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 53.

> heart, and impress itself so strongly on your mind, that, compared with its energetic influence, the beauties of rhetoricians and philosophers will almost entirely disappear; so that it is easy to perceive something divine in the sacred Scriptures, which far surpass the highest attainments and ornaments of human industry.[1]

Can the Scriptures be proved by reason to be the word of God? Howe believes they can. He states "that there wants no rational evidence to demonstrate the Divine authority or Divinity of this book," that is; to any persons who have the leisure or shall "impartially consider the thing."[2] One of the distinctive proofs of the inspiration of Scripture is its "correspondency to the spirit of man."[3] If we look upon man under a threefold capacity - as merely rational, as corrupt and depraved, or as regenerate and renewed, we find that the contents of the Bible admirably describe his nature in every way. There is "nothing so adequate to the mind and reason of a man,"[4] nor is there anything therein contained that does not commend itself to reason. When it comes to a realistic portrayal of universal corruption, no other book even approaches the exact descriptions of holy writ. Therein we also find the regenerate man so precisely represented that only God could have inspired such truth.[5] It is a matter of "plain necessity" and Howe means necessity to Reason that there be "some superadded revelation to the mere light of nature."[6] Here Calvin parts company with Howe. The Holy Spirit must do all the persuading. He says,

1. John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. by John Allen, London, 1813, I, 88.
2. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 56.
3. Works, ed. Hunt, vi, 479.
4. Ibid., 480.
5. Ibid.
6. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 50.

> Wherefore, the Scripture will then only be effectual to produce the saving knowledge of God, when the certainty of it shall be founded on the internal persuasion of the Holy Spirit ... But those persons betray great folly, who wish it to be demonstrated that the Scripture is the word of God; which cannot be known without faith.[1]

The difference between the two men seems to lie in a matter of emphasis rather than in an either-or proposition which denies, on the one hand, the inner persuasion of the Holy Spirit, or, on the other, the place of reason as buttressing the claim of the Scriptures to be divine. For, although Howe felt that a rational demonstration of the inspiration of Scriptures is possible,[2] yet he frankly admits that a "far more lively proof" of authenticity is the believers' own experience of the living Word.[3] It is true that Calvin says,

> Let it never be considered, then, as an undeniable truth, that they who have been inwardly taught by the Spirit, feel an entire acquiescence in the Scripture, and that it is self-authenticated, carrying with it its own evidence, and ought not to be made the subject of demonstration and arguments from reason, but it obtains the credit which it deserves with us by the testimony of the Spirit. For though it conciliate our reverence by its internal majesty, it never seriously affects us till it is confirmed by the Spirit in our hearts. Therefore, being illuminated by him, we now believe the divine original of the Scripture, not from our own judgment or that of others, but we esteem the certainty, that we have received it from God's own mouth by the ministry of men, to be superior to that of human judgment, and equal to that of an intuitive perception of God himself in it. We seek not arguments or probabilities to support our judgment, but submit our judgments and understanding as to a thing, concerning which it is impossible for us to judge.[4]

But it is also true that Calvin added a chapter on rational proofs

1. Calvin, op.cit., i, 98.
2. From January 9, 1691 onward he delivered a series of five lectures proving the divine authority of the Scriptures. Works, ed. Hunt, vi, 443 ff.
3. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 56.
4. Calvin, op.cit., i, 85.

of Scriptural authority, thus allowing some place for the play of reason.[1]

As always, Howe's primary concern is for the practical side of the believer's character. He fears that with wasting time in the tavern, and spending too much time at the shop, too little time is left for the perusal of Scripture. The main reason for reading the Bible is,

> ... to have this word of Christ dwelling richly in us; that we may be the epistles of Christ, written not with ink on paper, but with the Spirit of the living God on the fleshly tables of our hearts; otherwise this word cannot but be a witness against us.[2]

In agreement with Howe, Baxter says that this Spirit helps the believer to understand what is written, but this does not come apart from diligent study. He opens the heart of a sinner so that he may know practically what he had formerly known only "rationally."[3] Howe informs us that this leads a man to learn the "things of the Kingdom of God with very deep humility," as "learners," and with a humble sense of "yet knowing so very little."[4] It is not with the mind, but the heart that one truly learns the things of God, for he who dares to meddle with the Scriptures "only to satisfy his own curiosity, and the idle fancy of a vain mind, will have a sad ending."[5]

One of the great problems facing theologians of the seventeenth century was the question of extra-biblical revelations. The Quakers were particularly zealous believers in "more light."

1. See concluding chapter on the Scriptures, vol. I.
2. Works, ed. Dunn, pp. 58, 59.
3. Baxter, op.cit., ii, 104.
4. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 64.
5. Ibid., 65.

They insisted that the same Spirit which was in the prophets and in the Scriptures was also in them. They "brushed away all qualification, and turned theory into burning assurance and consequent action."[1] Baxter wrestled with this problem, and came out with the assurance that although the Holy Spirit "caused them (apostles) infallibly to indite the Scriptures," this is not the way of illumination today.[2] In the Apostles, the Spirit's work was more excellent than in us.[3] He gave them an infallibly inspired authority, first to preach the doctrine of Christ, and then in their writing, "perfectly imprinting therein the holy image of God."[4] In opposition to the Quakers who introduced the Holy Spirit as the touchstone against which the Bible itself was tried,[5] Baxter asseverated that the Scriptures as the "infallible dictates of the Spirit" are more to be trusted than "our apprehensions of the Spirit."[6] Thus we must not try the Scriptures by our "spiritual apprehensions," but our apprehensions by the Scriptures. We should trust the perfect inspiring of the Bible more than our imperfect apprehensions of that same Spirit. John Owen came to the same conclusion. He says,

> Upon the ceasing of extraordinary gifts really given from God, the Gift also of discerning spirits ceased, and we are left unto the Word alone for the tryal of any that shall pretend unto them.[7]

Earlier, John Calvin, who was ever loath to separate the

1. Nuttall, op.cit., p. 26.
2. Baxter, op.cit., ii, 104.
3. Baxter, op.cit., v, 558.
4. Ibid., ii, 190.
5. Nuttall, op.cit., p. 28.
6. Baxter, op.cit., v, 559.
7. Owen, op.cit., I, i, 22.

Spirit from the Word, or the Word from the Spirit, had set forth clearly the basic principle which distinguished Reformed theologians from the Quakers, and which led ultimately to the separation of the Quakers from the Puritans. He said,

> The office of the Spirit, then, which is promised to us, is not to feign new and unheard of revelations, or to coin a new system of doctrine, which would seduce us from the received doctrine of the Gospel, but to seal to our minds the same doctrine which the Gospel delivers.[1]

Similarly, John Howe put little trust in revelations which were extra-biblical. All Christian revelation is God's inward, "enlightening revelation of himself" in the mediator Jesus Christ, and it is confirmed in human experience through the Holy Scripture.[2] Further,

> ... inasmuch as the gospel-revelation is the instrument of this impression, by it the impression must be measured; with it must it agree. Which revelation being expressive of the nature of God and of his mind and will in reference to us, the impression cannot but be agreeable to that revelation ... But because of our best and surest way of forming true and right apprehensions of God, is to attend and guide ourselves by the representation that is there made of him ... therefore are we to aim at conformity to God as he is there represented.[3]

He asks in another place,

> And where is now your new light? Where are your latter discoveries, upon which, so many ages after, you are able to evict these writings of falsehood, or dare venture to disbelieve them.[4]

No, God will not cause a "new revelation to be written," for in the Scriptures are many "undiscovered wonders," which the

1. Calvin, op.cit., i, 100.
2. Works, ii, 13, 17, 15.
3. Ibid., 33.
4. Works, ed. Dunn, p.66.

Spirit illuminates to the discerning heart.[1] In what way then are the Spirit and the Word connected? Does the Spirit ever illumine in a way that contradicts the Word? Howe answers with an unequivocal 'no.'

> Who can doubt that, as God can, if he please, imprint on the mind the whole system of necessary truth, and on the heart the entire frame of holiness, without the help of an external revelation, as he can imprint this particular persuasion also without any outward means ... We may be sure the inward testimony of the Spirit never is opposite to the outward testimony of his gospel which is the Spirit's testimony also; and, therefore, it never says to an unholy man, an enemy of God, 'Thou art in a reconciled and pardoned state.'[2]

Sometimes God does speak without any external means, as in the case of the prophets, and certainly He testifies "his own special love to holy souls" without the external word, but this does not mean He always, or even usually employs these means. The important thing to remember is that

> He never says anything in this matter by his Spirit to the hearts of men repugnant to what the same Spirit hath said in his word; or that he doth not say a new or a diverse thing from what he hath said there for their assurance.[3]

In summary, we may say that the Spirit sometimes speaks apart from the Word, but never in opposition to it; His immediate inspiring of the Apostles is more to be trusted than our apprehensions of that inspiring. It is the main work of the Holy Spirit to illuminate, guide and teach the believer concerning the treasures of the Scripture, and to enable the believer to obey its

1. Works, ii, 22, 21, 23.
2. Works, ii, 74, 75.
3. Works, ii, 76, 77, 78.

commands in a spirit of gratitude. As Nuttall concludes, "The Apostles and not ourselves are the foundation stones."[1]

The Holy Spirit and Regeneration

The work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration is of primary importance in the thought of John Howe. As with other Puritans, the ideal of the "holy community" remains constant in his thinking,[2] and this company of the redeemed are only brought to their place among the elect through a personal experience of the Spirit's regenerative power.[3] He bestows a new unity upon the thoughts of men, enabling them to think new thoughts, live new lives, and walk in a new way.

The question arises; just what is regeneration? It is "a real change" in the temper and disposition of the soul; "it is a change of our relation and state Godward;" and it involves being "renewed in the spirit of the mind, putting off the old man, and putting on the new man."[4] Further,

> It is the ministration of the Spirit; that Spirit by which you are to be born again. The work of regeneration consists in the impregnating, and making lively and efficacious in you the holy truths contained in the gospel.[5]

Regeneration is a new birth, a "real new product in the soul,"[6] and it is a perfect birth, for "wheresoever the Spirit of God begets, it (sic.) begets perfect births ... speaking of a perfection of parts, not of degrees."[7] He it is who produces a new walk; yet

1. Nuttall, op.cit., p.33.
2. Woodhouse, op.cit., p.36.
3. Works, ed. Dunn, pp.212-214.
4. Ibid., 209.
5. Works, ed. Gordon, p. 83.
6. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 210.
7. Ibid., 211.

He may be present undiscernibly.

> For though there cannot be any gracious effects without the present person of the Spirit, yet we all know he may be personally present where he produces no such effects; it is therefore his being so present as to be the productive cause of such blessed effects that is any one's peculiar advantage.[1]

Regeneration "imports a total change, or a change throughout; and it imports by consequence a resulting relation."[2] This implies the doctrine of depravation, because being born "denotes a total production, and the thing produced" must be "proportionable" to the nature which has become corrupted.[3] Men overlook the "great disaffection of the heart towards God," and thus believe some partial reformation is possible.[4] Now a birth cannot be resisted in the natural process of nature by the subject being delivered, and the same truth holds good for the spiritual realm. "The Spirit of God in this work, can never be resisted; but so as that it will certainly overcome and effect its work."[5] However, the previous workings of common grace can be resisted; "My Spirit shall not always strive with man."[6] Thus the Spirit sometimes leaves a hardened sinner to his doom, because he resists too long.[7]

What of the permanence of regeneration? Is one born of God only by the Spirit? Howe says,

> This birth, as it is a birth, signifies a permanent production; an effect that is permanent, lasting and continued. He that is by this birth to be denominated to be a believer, as to the great faith of the Gospel, that Jesus is the Christ- is such a one born of God? Yes, as long as he is a believer, he is born of God. Does he believe to the saving of his soul? This impression, by which it is said he is born of God, it is co-extensive; it is commensurate.[8]

1. Works, iii, 409. 2. Works, ed. Hunt, v, 68.
3. Ibid., p. 80. 4. Ibid., pp. 82, 83.
5. Ibid., p. 23. 6. Gen. 6:3.
7. Works, ed. Hunt, v, 24. 8. Works, ed. Dunn, pp. 211, 212.

This was the prevailing view among the Puritans of the day. John Owen says of the Spirit's work,

> It is He who convicts men of sin, works Godly sorrow in them, **and regenerates their souls. No one enters the Kingdom of** God without the Holy Spirit... by Him we are regenerated, by **Him we are sanctified, by Him we are cleansed, by Him are we** assisted in and unto every good work.[1]

Baxter, apostle of the median way, says,

> the Spirit by which we are regenerated, is like the wind that **bloweth, whose sound we hear, but knoweth (sic) not whence it** cometh, nor whither it goeth.[2]

More precisely, Calvin says,

> ... the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ efficaciously **unites us to himself ... It is the Spirit that becomes the** seed of a heavenly life within us; for without Him there is **no enjoyment of paternal favour with God ... He is the inter**nal teacher by whose agency the promise of salvation pene**trates into our minds ... He enlightens us to faith, regen**erating us so that we become new creatures, and purging us **from profane impurities, consecrates us as holy temples to** God.[3]

It is regeneration, in short, which transfers a man from a "scheme of nature" into a "scheme of Grace." The Holy Spirit is the principal efficient cause of regeneration, in the communication of a new spiritual life, a vivification, a quickening and a renovation of our natures. Even in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit, though He was obscurely given, wrought the act of regeneration.

In the process of regeneration, according to John Owen, the will does not act. It is acted upon; it is passive, for grace works antecedently to the activity of the will, otherwise the turning

1. Owen, op.cit., pp. 26, 12. 2. Baxter, op.cit., xii,205.
3. Calvin, op.cit., iii, 6,7,9,10.

to God is a "meer natural act."[1] John Howe however, was not willing to admit the passivity of the will in the process of regeneration and conversion, although agreeing with Owen that the subject of regeneration is the heart, meaning the whole natural soul in all its moral operations. Regeneration is intellectual as well as spiritual, and carries with it mental light.[2] The regenerate man enjoys a clearer light, because his whole mind has been renewed. God alone is the one who takes away "the original disease of stoniness,"[3] giving a new heart and a new spirit. Howe's stress on the positive act of the will by which the sinner must turn from unrighteousness is particularly evident in his tract, The Reconcilableness of God's Prescience of the Sins of Men with the Wisdom and Sincerity of his Counsels, Exhortations, and Whatsoever Other Means He Uses to Prevent Them.[4] There he states that though God urges and incites men to come to salvation, "he foresees many will not be moved thereby, but persist in wilful neglect and rebellions till they perish."[5] If men would only will to turn to God, He who will have all men to be saved, would gladly welcome them. The fact is, however,

> that men ... so indulge their sensual, terrene inclinations as not at all to use their understandings and considering power about other matters than only what are within the sight of their eye, when by so easy and quick a turn of thoughts they might feel and find out who made them, and was the Original of their life and being ... to add that obstinate malignity, by which they are apt to reject and oppose the

1. Owen, op.cit., pp. 270, 271.
2. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 216.
3. Owen, op.cit., p. 278.
4. Works, v, 3-76.
5. Works, V, 46, 47.

> merciful discoveries and overtures of their offended reconcil-:able Creator and Lord: how manifestly doth this devolve the whole business of the little slow progress of the gospel in the world, upon themselves only![1]

Some of the characteristics of the regenerated person as viewed by Howe, are truth, love to God, and a more clear perception of the light of God's law.[2] Regeneration is not induced by baptism, nor does it consist of signs and tokens, neither can it be designat-:ed "a mere moral reformation of life and conversation."[3] It is even sometimes true that an unregenerate person, through study, has a better acquired knowledge of God than the regenerate. But what the regenerate do know, "they know better, and with a more excellent sort of knowledge proportionately."[4] There is also a progress in this knowledge of God through an increase in the gift of the Spirit.

Howe is in perfect agreement with John Owen that no one enters the Kingdom of God apart from the regenerating Spirit.[5] It is "simply impossible" because there is: (1) an inconsistency in the temper and spirit of the unregenerate person with the "purity and felicity of God's Kingdom," and there is, (2) an antagonism to the "irreversible determination of the righteous and supreme Lord of it."[6]

On the other hand, while life lasts, the sinner <u>can</u> be regener-:ated. Supposing he is willing, what directions must he follow? The sinner is to accept Christ with "all humble reverence, ... unfeignedly and with great solemnity"; he is to direct a steady eye

1. <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 29, 30. 2. <u>Works</u>, ed. Dunn, pp. 216-218.
3. Owen, <u>op.cit.</u>, pp. 179, 180, 181. 4. <u>Works</u>, ed. Dunn, p. 219.
5. Owen, <u>op.cit.</u>, p. 26. 6. <u>Works</u>, ed. Dunn, p. 222.

towards Christ; he is to take "part of the communicated Divine nature"; and he is to turn with tears for forgiveness.[1] In one of the most moving passages Howe penned, he said,

> Most earnestly cry to God, and plead with him for his Spirit, by whom the vital unitive bond must be contracted between God in Christ and your souls. So this will be the covenant of life and peace. Lord, how generally do the Christians of our age deceive themselves with a self-sprung religion! Divine indeed in the institution, but merely human, in respect of the radication and exercise. In which respects also it must be divine or nothing ... Your heavenly Father will give his Spirit to them that ask, more readily than parents do bread to their children, and not a stone.[2]

The Indwelling of the Spirit

The manner and mode of the Spirit's indwelling raises another problem; is it personal or is it impersonal?

Howe, according to Nuttall,[3] does not believe the Spirit personally indwells the believer, because he states,

> When we are cautioned not to 'quench the Spirit,' how can that be understood of the eternal uncreated Spirit himself? And the very thing produced - not merely the productive influence - in the work of regeneration is expressly called by that name (as it is no strange thing for the effect to carry the name of its cause): 'That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.'[4]

Yet elsewhere Howe speaks of "the Holy Ghost given them" (the disciples),[5] the overpowering communication of the Holy Ghost for the manifesting of the love of God, "inhabiting by the Spirit," the Spirit as the "immediate agent" between God and the soul, having our souls "inhabited and animated by that blessed Spirit," and finally as the author of "all our truly spiritual operations."[6] In The Living Temple, he further says,

1. Works, ii, 204, 243-244, iv, 176; also The Redeemer's Tears, p. 144.
2. Works, ed. Chalmers, pp. 144, 145. 3. Nuttall, op.cit., p.49.
4. Works, ii, 70. 5. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 238.

> That of a <u>personal indwelling presence</u> can by no means be denied. The plain import of many texts of Scripture is so full to this purpose, that to take them otherwise, exclusively of this, is not to interpret Scripture, but deny it.[1]

In the same discourse, he develops the theme of the actual indwelling presence by stating: (1) it is real, when "he (The Spirit) vouchsafes to be in us as the spring and fountain of gracious communications," and (2) it is also relative. The meanest persons may, by vouchsafement, have relation to and interest in the greatest. In this manner "God gives himself, his Son, his Spirit to them that covenant with him."[2]

There is no question, judging by these and many other passages, that John Howe believes in the personal indwelling of the Spirit, and the passage cited by Nuttall can be readily resolved by returning to the context. The argument Howe is developing is that there are holy dispositions in us that, strictly speaking, are not God, and are not ourselves. The Spirit has begotten a new spirit, and the spirit begotten must be distinguished from the Eternal Spirit. "There is Spirit begetting and spirit begotten."[3] All that Howe is trying to state in an admittedly ambiguous fashion, is that in sinning, the Christian can quench the new spirit which is begotten of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

John Owen thinks the indwelling Spirit is not only personally present, but effects a physical change. For him, the work of regeneration is not only a moral, but a "<u>physical</u> immediate operation of the Spirit by His Power and Grace."[4] This he demon-

1. <u>Works</u>, iii, 409.
2. <u>Ibid.</u>, 410.
3. <u>Works</u>, ii, 70.
4. Owen, <u>op.cit.</u>, p. 269.

:strates by showing that since the Spirit that raised Christ from the dead is the same Spirit now operative in regeneration, there must be a "physical efficiency" in that Spirit's activity. This inward efficiency of the Holy Spirit is "infallible, victorious, irresistible, or always efficacious."[1] Against the view of Quakers he hastens to assert that this does not mean an "Enthusias-:tical Impression," nor is there any violence done the will. For the Spirit comes with a two-fold mission: (1) He acts upon the passive will of the sinner to convert, (2) He comes as a Spirit of consolation to give him the privileges of the death of Christ.[2]

For Howe, the witness of the Spirit is something quite different from the understanding of more radical Puritans. In the preface to The Blessedness of the Righteous Baxter says of Howe's position,

> Here you have described to you the true 'witness of the Spirit'; not that of supposed internal voices, which they are usually most taken up with, who have the smallest knowledge and faith and love, and the greatest self-esteem or spiritual pride, with the strongest phantasies and passions: but the objective and the sealing testimony, the divine nature, the renewed image of God, whose children are known by being like to their Heavenly Father, even by being "holy as he is holy."[3]

James Berry is a representative of the radical tendency, which held to a belief in "phantasies and passions." He had

1. Owen, op.cit., p. 270.
2. John Owen, Communion with God the Father, the Sonne, and the Holy Ghost, Oxford, 1657, p. 262.
Baxter further states that the Spirit Himself, and not "only grace from the Spirit" is given to the true believer. This comes about in two ways: (1) He is given to us relatively, as our "covenanting Sanctifier" in the baptism covenant, (2) He is present as immediate agent, within those who are temples of the Holy Spirit. Baxter, op.cit., xii, 209.
3. Works, i, 11.

become filled with spiritual pride according to his "old bosom friend," Baxter, and was led away by "the new light" to look down on Puritans of the old type. After he had taken an active part in the councils to overthrow Richard, however, he repented. He confessed his regret to Howe, and ended his days as a gardener, 'being in a safer state than in all his greatness.'[1] Howe would have agreed with Baxter's comment on him that he was

> never well studied in the Body of Divinity or Controversie, but taking (sic.) his Light among the Sectaries, before the Light which longer and patient Studies of Divinity should have prepossest him with.[2]

To the radical Puritans, "new light" took the place of Howe's "objective ... and sealing testimony."

One sign of the Spirit's indwelling is love. Howe states,

> The soul that loves God opens itself to him, admits his influences and impressions ... yields to the transforming power of his appearing glory. There is no resistant principle remaining, when the love of God is perfected in it.[3]

Another is an increasingly better view of the things prepared by God, and of a man's "own propriety and interest in them."[4] Yet again, there comes a "clear, certain efficacious faith of the Gospel." There are no mystical apprehensions of "new light," but a "clear, perspicacious knowledge ... a fulness of assurance, in ... knowledge of the Gospel."[5] At all times Howe keeps the witness of the Spirit in its correct relation to the Word.

1. D.N.B., ii, 397, 398.
2. Nuttall, op.cit., p. 51.
3. Works, i, 78.
4. Works, ii, 80, 81.
5. Ibid., p. 260.

There are no confusing signs, no morbid introspections, no "Enthusiastical Impressions" in Howe's development of the indwelling Spirit. The Spirit comes to "animate the Gospel revelation," to bear witness to Christ; and only to Christ as He is revealed in the Gospel.[1] Howe concludes,

> We may be sure the inward testimony of the Spirit never is opposite to the outward testimony of the Gospel; which is the Spirit's testimony also; and therefore it never says to an unholy man, an enemy of God, 'Thou art in a reconciled and pardoned state.'[2]

On the other hand, it does not necessarily follow that all who are pardoned and reconciled will be fully assured of that pardon. There are many to whom the witness of the Spirit is not strong enough "to overcome and silence tormenting doubts, fears, and anguish of spirit."[3] There are those whose hearts fail them for fear, who nonetheless are true lovers of God. In an ambiguous sentence, he says,

> How many, who have learned not to make light of the love of God, as the most do, who reckon in his favour is life, to whom it is not an indifferent thing whether they be accepted or no, who cannot be overly in their inquiry, nor trifle with matters of everlasting consequence; who are not enough atheists and sceptics to permit all to a mad hazard, nor easy to be satisfied; walk mournfully from day to day with sunk dejected spirits, full of anxiety, even unto agonies, under the clear, external discovery of God's love to persons of that character whereof they really are.[4]

Although it is true that the Spirit aids natural learning,

1. Works, ed. Gordon, p. 95. Baxter says, "The great infallible witness of Christ is the Spirit of God, or the Holy Ghost; or the divine operation of the Holy Spirit, which infallibly proveth the attestation of God himself, as interesting him in it as the principle cause." Baxter, op.cit., xii, 101.
2. Works, ed. Dunn, pp. 235, 236.
3. Ibid., p. 239.
4. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 239.

yet unbelievers can speak learnedly of faith and love; and, conversely, many thousands who cannot speak of love, entertain true faith. Thousands have the Spirit, who do not know what He is. Howe states that some of these true believers refuse to be comforted; they are not filled with joy and peace; they entertain no hope. "It is plain there needs a more learned one than any human one, to speak a word in season to such weary ones."[1]

There are others who have settled into a state of spiritual sloth and deadness, who have reasoned themselves into a good opinion of their eternal state. They are more apt to be "rational," and yet their lives are not marked by vigour, love or spirituality. There is no discernible growth or spiritual improvement in them; they are remote from the temper of early Christians. What they need is an "effectual overpowering communication of the Holy Ghost for the manifesting of the love of God, of great necessity and importance to Christians."[2]

Of these "rational" persons Baxter writes,

> And it is an unsafe course which many such weak persons use, to think in their troubles that every text of Scripture which cometh into their mind, or every conceit of their own is a special suggestion of the Spirit of God. You shall ordinarily hear them say, 'Such a text was brought to me, or was set upon my heart, and such a thing was set upon my mind, when two to one, it was no otherwise brought unto them, nor set upon them, than any other ordinary thoughts are; and had no special or extraordinary operation of God in it at all.[3]

1. Ibid., p. 240. "Thus a minister should be cautious in casting any from the church who cannot give true definitions of faith, conversion or holiness. Their lives will tell you better than their tongues, whether they be sincere." Baxter, op.cit., xii, 189
2. Loc.cit.
3. Baxter, op.cit., xii, 495, 496.

The Holy Spirit and Sanctification

One of the greatest concerns in Howe's thought is the Christian's growth in grace. The Spirit begets a new spirit in man; but this is not enough, for each man lacks the perfection in Christ which is his duty and his privilege within the family of God. This "sanctifying work"[1] of the Holy Spirit in consecrating each believer to love of God, while working out the worldly image, is continually operative until death. This is not an automatic process. Nor is it passive, as Owen sometimes leads us to believe.[2] It is an active, terribly telling life-death struggle for more holiness. Howe says in Of Delighting in God,

> Therefore, if ever you would know what a life of spiritual delight means, you must continually strive against all your spiritual distempers that obstruct it, in the power of the Holy Ghost. And do not think that is enjoining you a course wholly out of your power; for though it be true that the power of the Holy Ghost is not naturally yours or at your dispose, yet by gracious vouchsafement and ordination, it is ... In short, "walking in the Spirit" must signify something; and what can it signify less than dependence on his power and subjection thereto, with the continuance of both these.[3]

Perhaps no other Puritan has developed more explicitly than John Owen, a study of the growth of sanctification in the believer. He defines it in the following way.

> Sanctification is an immediate work of the Spirit of God on the souls of believers, purifying and cleansing of their natures from the pollution and uncleanness of sin, renewing in them the Image of God, and thereby enabling them from a spiritual and habitual Principle of Grace to yield obedience unto God according unto the Tenor and Terms of the New Covenant, by virtue of the Life and Death of Jesus Christ.[4]

1. Works, ii, 80.
2. See Owen's Πνευματολογια, pp. 277, 278, 282, 283.
3. Works, ii, 155.
4. Owen, op.cit., p. 338.

As does Howe, he also makes a distinction between the instantaneous act of regeneration and the gradual growth in grace called sanctification. Perhaps more perceptive than Howe of the psychological pattern in attaining holiness, he sees that when men are incited to holy actions, this increases their holiness.[1] Internally He works, preserving the root and principle of the graces through His power. He increases the grace within us by improving the degree of the graces already in our possession. Whereas Howe finds the quickest way to pursue holiness is through direct prayer for immediate effusions of the Holy Spirit,[2] Owen states that growth in the Spirit comes as obedience to the expressed laws of God. Yet this obedience is not an act unaided. It is only possible as the Holy Spirit enables the believer to obey, acting in one of two ways, (1) either internally in faith and love, or, (2) externally through the "holy actings of our Understandings, Wills and Affections, and unto all Duties of Obedience in our walking before God."[3]

Both agree that regeneration differs from the work of sanctification. Regeneration is instantaneous, consisting in a creating act. Sanctification is progressive and admits of degrees. Regeneration is the birth, while sanctification is the growth of the new born infant into the "measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."[4]

1. Ibid., pp. 339, 340.
2. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 351.
3. Owen, op.cit., p. 414.
4. Eph., 4:13.

How is sanctification accomplished? The Holy Spirit works in several ways. He incites men to holy actions and thus increases holiness. Internally He works, preserving in believers the root and principle of all their grace through His Power. He increases the grace within them by improving the degree of the graces they already possess.[1] "'He that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him,' they do, as it were, inhabit one another," states Howe in explanation of true indwelling graces.[2] There is a life which is lived in God, distinguishing a holy man from a natural man. There is no greater concern of our souls than this question of personal holiness. Each Christian has within him a "Divine thing," which is an earnest and pledge of an immortal state of life.[3] Do we dare to be prodigal of it since "integrity is the glory of a Christian"?[4]

Just as extraordinary works of the Spirit were only accomplished through extraordinary faith, so now are the common works of the Spirit accomplished through the exercise of common faith. It is only by an exercise of this faith that we draw the power of that Almighty Spirit "into a consent and co-operation with our spirit: so the great God suffers himself, his own arm, and power, to be taken hold of by us."[5] The free Spirit is brought under bond to the covenant of faith, and if we would enjoy the full power of religion the only direct way is to believe in the

1. Owen, op.cit., p. 342.
2. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 315.
3. Ibid., p. 318.
4. Ibid., p. 321.
5. Ibid., p. 156.

Spirit. Nor are we to suppose that this belief is merely intellectual, or an assent to His place in the Trinity. As Baxter says,

> ... to believe in the Holy Ghost, is to take him for Christ's agent or advocate with our souls, and for our guide, and sanctifier, and not only to believe he is the third person in the Trinity.[1]

Of those who complain that though they often pray for the Spirit, they receive little, Howe says that they must reflect whether "their distrust or disobedience, or both, have not made them desolate."[2]

The Spirit comes through Christ. The curse originally intercepted all the influences of that "blessed Spirit," but since Christ has become a curse for us,[3] the way is again opened.[4] There is still a part "incumbent upon us to do, and that it is not the business of the Spirit of God to do all, in the matter of the Christian life," is plain enough to all who inquire into the Scriptures.[5] Some think that because the Spirit has come through Christ, they are absolved from all responsibility. They shrug off the sincere business of the Kingdom, pleading, "The Spirit did not act," as though everything were in His hands and nothing in ours.

To answer such, Howe says that the Spirit only enters the believer in terms of a covenant sealed in blood. This covenant is "everlasting," referring to a maxim among the Hebrews: "pacts

1. Baxter, op.cit., v, 189.
2. Works, ii, 159.
3. Gal. 3:13.
4. Works, iii, 320, 321.
5. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 248.

confirmed by blood (sanguine sanctita) can never be abolished."[1] Those partaking of this covenant are duty bound to pursue holiness and God-likeness in every area of life, because it has cost Christ His blood, and it has cost God His oath, "My covenant will I not break ... once have I sworn."[2] "Wherein God so confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation."[3] This new covenant between God and his people is distinguished from the old covenant by the more certain, general, and efficacious communica-:tion of the Spirit.[4] He who had before been with the disciples, was now to be in them[5] as Comforter[6] and Spirit of Truth.

The sanctifying Presence of the Spirit heightens the natural powers of a man. He helps to the "spiritual discussing of the Scriptures," and enables the believer to know and understand what is quite impossible to the natural man though his mind be ever so erudite.[7]

Baxter is sure of the same truth. If we give to the Spirit His due place in "reason, memory, study, books, methods and forms, He will quicken the study and give His help." And in another place he says, "The Spirit assists the minister to teach and apply the Holy Scriptures, according to the necessity of the people, the weight of the matter, and the majesty of the word of God."[9]

1. Works, iii, 445.
2. Ps. 89: 34, 35.
3. Heb. 6: 17, 18.
4. Works, iii, 454.
5. Jn. 14:17.
6. Jn. 14:16.
7. Works, ii, 81.
8. Baxter, op.cit., v, 566, 567.
9. Ibid., p. 191.

The work of God's grace upon the human spirit in sanctifying it to His use is for the specific purpose of exercise in His Kingdom. As this is the highest and noblest function of the soul, the Christian ought to bend every inclination to "choose, love, fear and serve Him ... in an entire self-resignation to him."[1] This process of yielding raises the Christian to a realm of holiness where no external violence can penetrate. Howe sees sanctification as a "calm, serene thing, perfectly homogeneous, void of contrariety, or any self-repugnant quality."[2] This inward peace and composure of heart is the hall-mark of a man who walks in the Spirit, and is of far greater importance than any outward sign of success. In conclusion he says,

> Holiness, which, (sic.) impressed upon the soul, suits it unto the heavenly state, and so makes it covet it more earnestly. All things naturally tend to the perfection of that state, unto which they are predisposed, which is more congenerous to them, or whereto they have an agreement in their natures ... All things naturally tend to their like ... It is the Divine holiness impressed upon the soul, that suits it unto the participation of the heavenly inheritance ... The regenerate frame and nature are so much akin to heaven, that in nature and kind they are not different things; and so, there can no man ever come into heaven that hath not somewhat of heaven aforehand come unto him. He must have the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, within him, which consists of "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; ... All these together are inchoate heaven, and so must, in the work of regeneration and conversion, be inwrought into the soul, to prepare and qualify it internally and subjectively for salvation, or the heavenly state, which is all one.[3]

Probably the best summary of Howe's doctrine of sanctification is found in the concluding portion of the ninth chapter of

1. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 329.
2. Ibid., p. 331.
3. Ibid., pp. 332, 333.

The Living Temple. There he states that the Spirit of God is actually given for six purposes: (1) He is to restore the temple of God with men as Builder and Inhabitant, (2) He is given only for Christ's sake, (3) The dispensing of the Holy Spirit is given to Christ as He is the Redeemer of sinners and the Mediator, (4) Actual communion is immediately from Christ, (5) It is given by Christ for the purpose of rebuilding the temple of God as absolute plenipotentiary in the affairs of lost souls, and, (6) Christ gives it upon prescribed terms in the Word, so that all Christians may claim the Spirit through the merits of His blood.[1]

The Holy Spirit in Prayer

Geoffrey Nuttall begins his book, The Holy Spirit and Ourselves, with the following observation.

> The gift of the Spirit is God's supreme gift to man. For it is the gift of Himself. And, just as man can give no greater gift, whether to God, or to his fellow-man, than himself, so neither can God.[2]

Echoing the same thought with even greater precision, Richard Baxter says,

> The greatest mercy in this world, is the gift of the Spirit; and the greatest misery is to be deprived of the Spirit; and both these are done to man by God, as a Governor by way of reward and punishment oftimes; therefore the greatest reward to be observed in this world, is the increase of the Spirit upon us, and the greatest punishment in this world is the denying or with-holding of the Spirit.[3]

Nowhere is the influence of the Spirit felt upon the new man more than in the realm of prayer. It is in prayer, pre-eminently, that the Spirit "witnesses with our spirit that we

1. Works, ed. Chalmers, pp. 262, 263.
2. Geoffrey Nuttall, The Holy Spirit and Ourselves, Oxford, 1947, p. 1.
3. Baxter, op.cit., xii, 207.

are the children of God."[1] It is on bended knee that the Christian cries 'Abba, Father.'[2] It is there he learns that it is not his unaided requests that go directly to the throne of God, but that the "Spirit also helpeth our infirmities," making "intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."[3] Again, prayer is the gateway to the Father's throne where we learn to come "boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."[4]

All this, however, presupposes prayer τῷ πνεύματι, based upon a regenerative experience in the life of the believer, awakening his spiritual sensibilities to the direct communion with Christ and "God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is one of the most penetrating rediscoveries of the Reformation that the child of God was in direct communion with the Father. The Johannine doctrine of a triune fellowship was reaffirmed,[5] and one of the great voices reflecting the changed attitude to prayer was that of John Howe. For him prayer is "the only proper, genuine, connatural breath of the new creature, the most inward, habitual sense of a devoted soul."[6]

All religion makes place for prayer. It is a "dictate of nature," a thing natural in itself in the very constitution of men. Yet when the matter is brought to the bar of reason, it becomes perfectly evident that prayer cannot move God to do anything

1. Rom. 8:16.
2. Rom. 8:15.
3. Rom. 8:26.
4. Heb. 4:16.
5. I Jn. 1:3, 1:1, 1:6, 2:6, 2:20 etc.
6. Works, iv, 225.

foreign to Himself, or inform Him of something He did not know. It is reasonable that He should desire His intelligent creatures to supplicate Him for their needs, but when He answers, "it must not be for their sakes, but his own."[1] Thus the strictest reason demands that our prayers should be conceived for those things that please Him. Since the Holy Spirit through the Scripture repairs the ruin wrought by the Fall, it is our high privilege to help in this restoration of God's temple, by resorting in most of our prayers, to a concern for the souls of others.[2]

The area of prayer encompasses only matters that are not known to be determined. Thus Howe writes,

> Prayer is conversant about matters of divine liberty; that is that are not known to us to be already determined this way or that; but that may be or may not be, as He pleases and sees fit, consistently with the settled course and order of things; not about things that he had before made ordinarily necessary, nor about things that are simply or in ordinary course, impossible.[3]

In his commentary on I John, Howe elucidates what he means by praying according to the will of God. First, it is praying positively, not negatively, guided by His express commands and promises. We are always sure to be heard in these matters. But there arises a great volume of prayer for things of a conditional nature which may or may not be beneficial for us. If the thing is best for us, we shall have it, but if we do not receive it, it may be safely concluded it was not for our ultimate good, or for His final glory.[4]

1. Ibid., p. 206.
2. Ibid., pp. 206, 207.
3. Works, iv, 209.
4. Works, v, 339, 340.

In regard to the former case, however, there are Christians who pray for the Spirit according to God's command, and are not answered. Well, Howe says, the problem lies within themselves. Their distrust or disobedience or both have caused their condition, for "his Spirit is not straitened."[1] He answers His word.

Since we come to God through His name, exactly what do we mean by using His name in prayer? By His name is signified both the "peculiar excellencies of his nature and being, which are himself ... and again by His name is meant his glory, and most especially the honour and reputation of His government."[2] The name of God is both the principle <u>from which</u> and the end <u>for which</u> it is hoped He will do what we desire. When we pray that He would do this or that, we are praying that from his goodness, and for his glory, He will do such a thing so that He may represent Himself as He truly is.[3] Nor does the Spirit ever act contrary to this principle. He works upon the heart so as to put its demands in subordination to the supreme will of God. The godly man's prayers arise from the dictates of the Spirit and they "import nothing but duty and devotedness to him."[4] In testing to see if a man has the Holy Spirit in prayer, he must observe that "the Spirit of Christ contradicteth not the doctrine of Christ in the holy Scripture," as Baxter wisely indicates.[5]

In praying in the name of God, two qualities must be borne in mind - sincerity and submission. Many use the name of God as

1. <u>Works</u>, ii, 158, 159.
2. <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 212, 213.
3. <u>Works</u>, iv, 213.
4. <u>Works</u>, ed. Dunn, p. 336.
5. Baxter, <u>op.cit.</u>, ii, 196.

a catch phrase, a form of speech, while really only concerned for their own wealth and ambition. They mention the 'name of the Lord, but not in truth.'[1] Indeed, it is possible to break the fourth commandment[2] by praying in the name of God insincerely. Submission is the second great requirement, a submission so full and complete that it ends in the benediction, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."[3]

Praying τῷ πνεύματι, is far more comprehensively obeyed, when complied with the light of our Lord's command, "Enter into thy closet, and shut thy door, and pray to Him in secret that seeth in secret, and he will reward thee openly."[4] There are four reasons for this; (1) it is a more constant opportunity for the exercise of personal religion, (2) there is more freedom and liber:ty in secret prayer, for there the whole man can give himself in friendship with God, (3) there is more delight in it because of the heightened opportunity for communion, (4) there is the fullest sincerity in secret closet prayer, for there is no pomp, no show, no ostentation.[5]

Does God work miracles in recognition of our prayers? Is this what we mean when we ask Him to heal our friends? No, for we might just as well pray for recovery after death. What we are really asking is that God would be pleased so to co-operate in the still and silent way of nature, with second causes, and so

1. Works, iv, 229.
2. Exodus 20:7.
3. Rev. 15:3.
4. Matt. 6:6.
5. Works, ed. Dunn, pp. 342, 343.

bless means that they may be recovered; otherwise that He will prepare us and them for the alternative.[1] In his famous sermon preached against the prevailing notion at Cromwell's court, shared by Cromwell, that God would most certainly answer prayers prayed with a certain, special faith by persons thought to be unusually devout, Howe further delineates his convictions on this facet of prayer. He confided to Calamy that he felt it his duty to oppose strenuously fanciful notions that gave rise to the spiritual pride and confidence which these impressions were apt to produce.[2] In this address, Howe states the idea that "the prayer of faith shall save the sick," cannot be understood as a universal maxim; otherwise man need never die. There was both an extraordinary faith especially applicable to that time as confirmatory of Christianity in miracles, and there was an ordinary faith to be exercised that holds true for every day and age. It is this ordinary faith that belongs to us, and we are never to suppose it moves God; it is "only a condition upon which it seems good to God to put forth his power."[3] Howe here withdraws himself completely from the radical Puritans, and becomes almost too philosophical in his insistence upon the unchangeableness of God. Probably his Platonic interest kept him from dealing with two elements of prayer in Scripture which run contrary to his overinsistence on the impassivity of God. One is the frankly acknowledged fact that God sometimes did give His consent to that

1. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 343.
2. Calamy, op.cit., p. 23.
3. Rogers, op.cit., p. 571.

which was not best for His people when they insisted upon having their own way. "And He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul,"[1] is one example. Another more famous instance of the same principle is seen in the selection of Saul as Israel's first King. God regarded this act as rejection of His personal rule over them; yet He granted their desire.[2]

The second biblical element regarding prayer about which Howe is silent is the mysterious, yet undeniable efficacy of importunate prayer. Our Lord taught this truth in the parables of the Friend Who Came by Night and the Unjust Judge.[3] It appears as part of Pauline theology.[4] The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews is persuaded of the importance of travailing, urgent prayer that will not permit itself to be denied.[5] James speaks of it in such clear, concise terms[6] that Howe is obligated to resort to an old stratagem, a differentiation between "extraordinary" faith, exercised primarily in biblical times, and "ordinary" faith, to be experienced universally,[7] in order to maintain his principle

However, Howe is quite correct in placing the major stress in our requests in yet another area of prayer, that of prayer for holiness. He takes quite literally the teaching of Jesus concerning the gift of the Spirit to those that ask the Father. He says,

> And let us supplicate more earnestly for the effusions of that Holy Spirit which alone can give remedy to our

1. Ps. 106:15 the reference is to the children of Israel in the wilderness who insisted on meat, when God had provided manna.
2. I Sam. 8:7, 10:19 see also the thesis, C. Farah, Jr., The Foreign Policy of the Jewish United Kingdom, 1948. John Dickey School of Theology.
3. Luke 11:5-13, Luke 18:1-8. 4. Phil. 1:6-9, I Cor. 4:15, 16
5. Heb. 4:16, 12:1-7, 11:6. 6. James 5:14-16.
7. Rogers, op.cit., pp. 570, 571.

> distempers, and overcome the lusts of the flesh, of whatsoever kind, and restore Christian religion to itself, and make the Christian name great in the world. For, can it content us, that Christianity should appear and be counted a mean, a weak, and even a ludicrous thing? that the Son of God should have descended ... have died upon a cross ... and, at length, leave men, even where the Christian name and profession doth obtain, no better men generally than he found them?[1]

Prayer is an opportunity for us to conform our minds to God, not only praying for the things He will most likely grant, but with the same motives and upon the same grounds. To pray according to His will is to pray for the best end for ourselves as well, for what is most excellent for Him is ultimately best for us. Prayer cannot move God to do that which is not already His will to do. To pray otherwise, or in anything else than his own name, is to "supplicate him that he would resign the Godhead, and quit his throne to this or that creature."[2]

The proper subjects of prayer are first, God the Father, secondly the Mediator, in whose name we pray, and thirdly, the Spirit of prayer, who makes intercession for the saints κατὰ θεόν.[3] We should adjust our prayers to the tenor of the Lord's prayer and guide ourselves by the prayers of holy men in Scripture; and finally, we must learn the Gethsemane agony which moves us to say, as Jesus did, "Father, glorify thy name," cost us what it may.

The great intent of prayer is to do homage to God, giving

1. Works, ed. Dunn, pp. 333, 334. Also see p. 251.
2. Works, iv, 223.
3. Ibid., pp. 224, 225.

Him his due glory. If we desire anything for ourselves, it can only be requested in terms of the fuller glory of God, as is often stated in Scripture. Ezekiel says of God,

> But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had prepared among the heathen, whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, O House of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake ... and I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen.[1]

The wrong motives in prayer arising from indifference or coldness, make for a worse state than not praying at all. If you pray thus, Howe says,

> ... (it) shows it is not love or any lively affection that puts you upon praying, but a frightened conscience only; and a miserably deluded one that makes you think the God you pray to will be mocked or trifled with, or that cannot perceive whether your heart be with him or against him... 'I would,' saith the blessed God, 'have a course of prayer run through the whole course of your lives; and all this that your hearts may be in heaven every day.[2]

The Holy Spirit and Assurance

Once the radical principle that the Holy Spirit Himself indwells the believer is accepted, a whole new set of problems emerges. How is a man to discern the Spirit from his own fancy? Does the Spirit ever direct a man into new truth apart from the Holy Scriptures? Is Reason synonymous with the Spirit's operation or does the Spirit perfect Reason? Does conscience answer to the Spirit, or is it but "a bruised and broken reed"?

Howe is adamant on the subject of the believer's assurance. The Holy Spirit not only transmits light, but He strikes the heart,

1. Ez. 36:21-23.
2. Works, iv, 371.

to pierce its stoniness for God, rendering it capable of a new mould and frame. He then confers the privilege of being the sons of God. The Spirit gives to men a 'peculiar cognizance' of the state, fitting them to be true children. An unmistakable influence of the Spirit is to set a knowledge of this state so deeply within the heart of the believer that he is able to cry, 'Abba, Father.' To this end, He also implants filial dispositions and affections.[1]

Admittedly, something of the ineffable usually obtrudes itself in any attempt to define exactly what the witness of the Spirit is. Even Baxter was hard put to it to describe the phenomenon. He says, somewhat unclearly,

> The Spirit also assures and 'comforteth believers.' He seals the believers and this is his evidence, which, if he discern, he may know that he is thus sealed.[2]

So again, Baxter, in his introduction to Howe's The Blessedness of the Righteous touches on the problem.

> And therefore, it is, that the holiest souls stick closest unto God, because, though their reasoning faculty may be defective, they know him by the highest and most tenacious kind of knowledge which this world affordeth ... Here you have described to you the true 'witness of the Spirit'; not that of supposed internal voices, which they are usually most taken up with, who have the smallest knowledge ... and the greatest self-esteem or spiritual pride, with the strongest phantasies and passions; but the object and the sealing testimony, the divine nature, the renwed image of God ... This is the Spirit of adoption, by which we are inclined, by holy love to God and confidence in Him 'to cry, Abba, Father,' and to fly unto Him: The Spirit of sanctification is thereby in us the Spirit of adoption; for both signify but the giving us that love to God, which is the filial nature and our Father's image. 3

1. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 235.
2. Baxter, op.cit., xii, 193, 194.
3. Works, i, 11.

Strictly speaking, these holy dispositions are not God, nor are they ourselves. They are the property of the new man, inbuilt of the Spirit.[1] Yet the discerning of the Spirit from a man's own fancy, our first question at the outset of this heading, can be tried by the negative test "that he never says anything in this matter by His Spirit to the hearts of men repugnant to what the same Spirit hath said in his word," nor does he say anything new or diverse as to their assurance, that is,"he never testifies to any person by His Spirit that he is accepted and beloved of him, who may at the same time be concluded, by his publicly extant constitutions in his word,"[2] to be in a state of God's disfavour, in a state of sin and death. From Howe's point of view, this is an extremely important consideration, for if this principle is clear, then it will keep the vain boasts of the more radical sects to a special love of God from any claim to validity. For Howe, this is the main problem; for it is not really necessary to determine whether the "Spirit do always not only testify according to the external revelation, but by it also."[3]

The positive side of this problem, namely, in what does the Spirit's witness consist, is as difficult for Howe to define as for Baxter. He says,

> I say, it is likely that few can distinctly tell how it hath been with them in this matter - that is, what way or method hath been taken with them in begetting a present persuasion at this or that time of God's peculiar love to

1. Works, ii, 70.
2. Ibid., p. 76.
3. Ibid.

> them. His dealings with persons - even the same persons at divers times - may be so various; his illapses and coming in upon them at some times may have been so sudden and surprising ... that we may suppose little is to be gathered thence towards the settling of a stated rule in the case.[1]

The doctrines of new truth immediately delivered by the Spirit is one, however, which Howe cannot accept. Even though it be admitted that many enjoy transporting experiences of God's love, as Howe himself experienced later in life,[2] it cannot be proved from this that new truth is imparted, but only that the Spirit has excited the "before-planted principles of faith, love, etc. so as to give them the lively sense of them now stirring and acting in their hearts ..."[3]

Nor can the immediacy of the Spirit's testimony be proved from Scripture. The famous text, "The Spirit of God beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God,"[4] is proof not so much of new communication as it is that since our hearts answer to the requirements of God for "heirs and joint-heirs," we may safely conclude from spirit and conscience that we are His.

Baxter is equally distrustful of the immediate communications of which George Fox and his followers were so much enamoured[5] He says,

> Many suppose a voice speaks saying 'Thou art a child of God,' And many others are in terror because no voice speaks to them. And hypocrites are fooled by their own imaginations. But in Scripture, the word 'witness' is often taken for 'evidence,' or an objective testimony. And the Spirit's being a witness ... a seal, an earnest, a pledge, a white

1. Ibid., pp. 75, 76. 2. Calamy, op.cit., p. 225.
3. Works, ii, 77. 4. Rom. 8:16.
5. See George Fox's Journal, ed. N. Penney, I, 44. Rogers quotes a letter from John Howe lamenting the decline of the effusion of the Holly Spirit from the first age. p. 229 (1863 ed.)

> stone, are all of same signification. If you show His love, you prove you are heirs of life. Holiness ... and love, is (sic.) the witness, seal and earnest; and not chiefly an inward persuasion that we are God's children.[1]

In Howe's writings, the place of reason stands high in apprehension of the Spirit's activity within the believer. In fact, reason actually finds out God, while religion adores Him.[2] Religion perfects natural knowledge of God, but does not operate apart from reason. In the epistle dedicatory to The Vanity of Man as Mortal, Howe significantly states that the settled purpose of writing is that when men "shall have reasoned themselves into a settled apprehension of the worthy and important ends they are capable of attaining," they might then be seized with a "noble disdain of living beneath themselves and the bounty of their Creator."[3]

The Holy Spirit teaches "by that common light which shines in every man's bosom," and it is to be inferred that the "common light" is nothing less than reason. In the same discourse, speaking of the doctrine of God, he again refers to reason as the point of departure from the Spirit's witness. He writes,

> Do but make this supposition in your own minds, and the matter will be as plain to you as any thing can be, that if nothing at all were now in being, nothing could ever come into being: wherefore you may be sure, that because there is somewhat now in being, there must have been somewhat or other always in being, that was eternally of itself.[4]

The argument here is Anselmian in origin, but its importance for us rests in the fact that Howe, whether speaking of the Spirit in believers, or writing to the unconverted about the Spirit,

1. Baxter, op.cit., xii, 499.
2. Works, i, 406. 3. Ibid., p. 384. 4. Works, ed. Gordon, p.237

starts with a sort of 'hidden rationalism.' Yet even this must be said with qualification, for he is fully conscious of the inability of reason to make sense of the world and its policies. He says,

> If the world be not looked upon as an attiring room to dress one's self in for an appearance on the eternal stage, but only as a great charnel-house, where they undress and put off themselves to sleep in everlasting darkness - how can we think it worth a thought, or to be the subject of any rational design or care? Who would not rather bless himself in a more rational neglect and regardlessness of all human affairs, and account an unconcerned indifferency the highest wisdom![1]

That Howe does not identify reason and the Spirit is perhaps most effectively demonstrated in his magnum opus, The Living Temple There is a personal indwelling presence of the Spirit.[2] The divine operation works in man both in power and in person. This Person is really present as the spring and fountain of gracious communica-:tions.[3] The union is a vital one, producing a holy life, and can never be simulated by a life of reason alone, for "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."[4]

There remains to us now only the task of dealing with Howe's directions and expostulations to those, who for some reason or other, have not yet enjoyed the "very delectable" manifestation of divine love towards them. First of all, it is not necessary to have this assurance in order to be a Christian. God exercises great variety in his dealings with men in the matter of personal assurance. It is to be less esteemed than the "heart-rectifying communication ... whereby we are made partakers of his holiness."[5] It certainly should not be made the sum of religion, as though God

1. Loc.cit.
2. Works, ed. Chalmers, p. 248. 3. Ibid., p. 249.
4. Ibid., p. 250. 5. Works, ii, 90.

did nothing worthy of acknowledgment if He did not do this. Most of all, people who have their religious inclinations awakened for the first time, must never look for this kind of manifestation until they have a complete change of heart, for Satan himself will gladly lead them to a lively faith in God's election of them, if he can do so while keeping them from true regeneration.

Baxter was equally cautious about putting too much emphasis upon personal assurance. He was often forced to walk a tight rope between the aberrations of the radical Puritans and the biblical truths found in their development of the doctrine of the Spirit. In a typical passage he writes,

> In this case also take heed of those ignorant guides, who know not the error of fancy, melancholy or disturbed passions, from the proper works of the Spirit of God: for they wrong the Spirit, when they ascribe men's sinful weaknesses to him. This is grievous to the troubled soul, for he tends to run to revelations and religious 'distempers' believing these to be activated by the Holy Spirit.[1]

But he is not willing to drop the matter there. The Spirit's activity in a legitimate sphere within the regenerated soul is too real to be passed off as religious distemper. So he states, further,

> On the other hand, it is also certain that every 'good' thought which cometh into our minds, is some effect of the working of God's Spirit, as every good word, and every good work is; and it is certain that sometimes God's Spirit doth guide and comfort Christians as a remembrancer, by bringing informing texts and doctrines to their remembrance; yet it is a dangerous thing to think that all such suggestions or thoughts are from some special or extraordinary work of the Spirit, or that every text that cometh into our minds, is brought thither by the Spirit of God at all.[2]

However, with these preliminary considerations understood, the true Christians who have no certainty of their salvation must

1. Baxter, op.cit., xii, 495.
2. Ibid., p. 496.

reckon it their own fault. Either they place too much upon it, or too little upon it. Or their carnality and licentious walking may keep them from it.[1] It may well be that God withholds it from such to check their vanity. When none of the above possibi-:ties holds true, the matter "may possibly be resolvable into the divine pleasure" but it is far more likely that one or more of the former delinquencies is the cause.[2]

The Sin Against the Holy Spirit

One of the neglected aspects of modern theology is the doctrir of the unforgivable sin. In the seventeenth century, however, it formed a very real and pressing problem. With that century's pion-:eering in the whole doctrine of the Spirit, it was almost inevit-:able that a theological literature should arise which endeavoured to expound biblical teaching on the subject in such a way that those who had committed the sin, or were in danger of doing so, might be warned, and that those who were thrown into extremes of terror that they had sinned irrevocably, might be assured that they had not. It is to the credit of Howe, Owen, Baxter and others that they spent the greatest proportion of their time and effort on the latter aspect of the subject, i.e., in comforting and persuading the weaker brethren that they were not culpable of the great sin.

Howe adopts a biblical position that is at once realistic and conciliatory.

> For admit that it (the unpardonable sin) generally lies in imputing to the devil those works of the Holy Ghost, by which the truth of Christianity was to be demonstrated, I

1. Works, ii, 91.
2. Ibid., pp. 92.93.

> yet see not how any man can apply this to his own particular case, so as justly and certainly to conclude himself guilty of it. I take it for granted, none will ever take the notion of blasphemy in that strictness, but that a man may possibly be guilty of this sin as well in thought as by speech.[1]

There are some who fear that they have committed blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. This, Howe views as a certain sign that they have not. He writes,

> For their very fear itself, with its usual concomitants in such afflicted minds, is an argument to them that they have not. While they find in themselves any value of divine favours, any dread of his wrath, any disposition to consider the state of their souls, with any thought or design of turning to God, and making their peace: they have reason to conclude God hath hitherto kept them out of that fearful guilt; and is yet in the way, and in treaty with them.[2]

It is a sign that a man has not committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, when he is troubled with fears lest he have committed it, and complains of his danger and sad condition.[3]

Howe considers the case of a philosopher, who, because of his prejudice against Christianity, thinks it quite possible that some mischievous demon worked the miracles of Jesus. Upon more sober inquiry, he discovers his error, and perceives the excellency of Christ. Now suppose this man comes across the section of Scripture that deals with the unforgivable sin. Is he to judge his case incurable? Or is it not better that he should humble himself before God, ask pardon for his rashness, and throw himself upon the mercy of Christ? Howe has no doubt as to the outcome of the issue if the philosopher follows the latter course.[4] Howe

1. Works, ed. Gordon, p. 154.
2. Works, ed. Gordon, p. 158.
3. Baxter, op.cit., xx, 234.
4. Works, ii, 347, 348.

rightly concludes that in His goodness, God has not disclosed to us the "very pitch and degree of malignity,"[1] which is necessary to damn a man, but has reserved such matters within His own judgment and mercy. In succinct and precise terms, Baxter advises,

> A man who fears lest he had committed this sin is the one who has not done so. If he still believes in Christ as Saviour, it is a sign He has not yet blasphemed him as a confederate of Satan. Those with the most fears actually have least to fear in believing that they have sinned against the Holy Ghost.[2]

Augustine viewed the unforgivable sin as an obstinate perverseness, attended with a despair of pardon, continued until death. With this Calvin disagrees.[3] The sin against the Holy Ghost, he says, is committed by those, who though "so overpowered with the splendour of Divine truth that they cannot pretend ignorance, nevertheless resist it with determined malice, merely for the sake of resisting it."[4]

Blasphemy against the Spirit takes place when a man deliberately strives to "annihilate the glory of God." This Calvin regards as the apostasy mentioned in the sixth and tenth chapters of Hebrews representing a "universal apostasy of the whole man." It is a"deliberate impiety" where the truth of the Gospel is "avowedly renounced."[5]

John Owen says that the sin against the Holy Ghost is unpardonable, not because it is against Him as much as because He

1. Ibid.
2. Baxter, op.cit., xx, 235.
3. Calvin, op.cit., ii, 87.
4. Ibid., pp. 87, 88.
5. Calvin, op.cit., ii, 88, 89.

comes in the name and authority of the Father and Son, and therefore to sin against Him is,

> to sinne against all the authority of God, all the love of the Trinity, and the utmost condescension of each person to the works of our salvation. It is, I say, from the authoritative mission of the Spirit that the sinne against him is peculiarly unpardonable; it is a sin against the recapitulation of the love of the Father, Son and Spirit.[1]

Richard Baxter observes that,

> ... this sin lieth in the rejecting of the objective testimony of the Spirit extraordinarily then attesting Christ's doctrine; as being the highest and last objective remedy of unbelief.[2]

As will be observed, Baxter and Howe are more biblical in their definitions of blasphemy against the Spirit than Augustine, Calvin or Owen. In the actual context of the original teaching on this subject by Jesus, he clearly has reference to those who imputed the power of the Anointed one to work miracles to the prince of devils, and not to God.[3] Herein lies its unforgivableness, for in refusing to acknowledge the one Person to whom God has entrusted the work of reconciliation, it strikes at the very heart of the Gospel.[4] The reason Howe could be sure that no man could <u>certainly</u> say that he was guilty of such a sin is that any man who even raises the question, has already demonstrated that he has not in truth, been guilty of attributing the power released in Christ's miracles to the agency of Satan.

In addition to the tract, <u>Concerning the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; and How God is said to Will the Salvation of them that Perish</u>, Howe was concerned with the subject throughout his

1. John Owen, <u>Communion with God</u>, p. 205.
2. Baxter, <u>op.cit.</u>, xx, 251.
3. Mark 3:22-30, Matt. 12:22-32.
4. Titus 3:5.

other discourses. In The Redeemer's Tears Wept over Lost Souls, he states that it definitely is not impenitence and infidelity. It is a more grievous and serious sin than that of simply dying in an unconverted state. But, if one asks, what is the difference if the Spirit no longer strives with a man? He answers that the difference lies in "the specific nature and greater heinousness of that sin, and consequently in the deeper degrees of its punishment. This certainly implies that there are degrees of punishment in hell, and as Howe is not blind to this deduction, he spends several pages in proving that sin must receive its just punishment to vindicate the righteousness of God.[2]

In his Annotations on the Three Epistles General of John, he adds this further word.

> But "there is a sin unto death" - that is, which doth not barely deserve death, as all sin doth, nor which argues a person to be probably in a present state of death or unregeneracy, which the sinful ways may do of many that never made profession; but of such as have apostatized from a specious profession into heresy and debauchery, and continue obstinate therein against all methods of recovery; that are even twice dead.[3]

Baxter, with his usual logic, proceeds to reason from the seriousness of this sin to include all sin against the Spirit as being a "special aggravation," arguing that since the sin against the Holy Ghost is the greatest sin, then our duty towards the Spirit is "certainly none of our smallest duties."[4] From this he

1. Works, ii, 305. 2. Ibid., pp. 306-308.
3. Works, v, 340, 341. 4. Baxter, op.cit., ii, 189.

that the doctrine of the Spirit and our duty towards him, deserve the most serious consideration.

The matter of God's own inscrutable will is bound up in any consideration of an unforgivable sin. Does God will certain men to commit blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? If He predestinates His children to be saved, does it not follow He predestinates others to be lost? Howe writes,

> Yet, in the meantime, while God doth not efficaciously will all men's obedience introductive of their happiness, does it follow he wills it not really at all? To say he wills it efficaciously, were to contradict experience, and his word: to say he wills it not really, were to contradict his word. He doth will it, but not primarily, and as the more principal object of his will, so as to effect it notwithstanding whatsoever unfitness he apprehends in it, namely, that he so overpower all, as to make them obedient and happy. He really wills it, but hath greater reasons than this or that man's salvation, why he effects it not. And this argues no imperfection in the divine will, but the perfection of it, that he wills things agreeable to the reasonableness and fitness of them.[1]

However, there is no need for the Christian to delve too deeply into a question which can drive good men to despair. It is enough to trust in the sure mercies of an Everlasting God.[2] He who watches the sparrow fall, numbers the hairs of the head, and cares for the lilies of the field, will not and cannot cease to love and provide for the children of his fold.

1. Works, ed. Gordon, p168.
2. Baxter, op.cit., xx, 235.

Chapter Three

THE CANDLE OF THE LORD

Proverbs 20:27 "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly."

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If it can be safely assumed that Puritanism is one of the major expressions of the Western intellect, then its organized synthesis of concepts is fundamental to our culture. In the history of occidental thought, there are few more powerful and more profound influences than that which has been our inheritance from Puritan thinkers. For example, the Puritans contribute directly to the modern distrust of reason as an infallible guide to the complete comprehension of all matters, terrestrial and celestial. In them we hear again the voice of Augustine, who proclaims that man must believe in order to know. Right reasoning could only arrive at conclusions already given, and it was well for man to be cautious in placing too much trust in an ability which could easily be betrayed by the fallibility of natural powers or the mendacity of the intellect. No Puritan imagined he could find out all truth, either revealed or unrevealed, for this he recognized as impossible to fallen man.

Yet this is only part of the truth. In one sense, this point cannot be emphasized sufficiently; in another sense it can be dwelt upon too exclusively. The Puritan mind was never so loaded down with the weight of dogma that it failed to give a reason for the hope that was within, and in most cases, it was done with due "meekness and fear."[1] From the same passages in Baxter, Howe

1. I Pet. 3:15.

and Owen that condemn reason, there are also copious quotations bearing in the opposite direction. In general, reason is to be distrusted when its natural arrogance sets it against faith. On the other hand, reason is to be championed and encouraged for "more full clearing of received truths; and finding out others, that may bee, yett lie hid; without such a libertie of opposing, or doubtfullie disputing ..."[1]

As Miller writes,

> Had Puritans merely recited in order the points of dogma and not also endeavoured to grasp their inner coherence, had they not set forth a philosophy as well as the assertions of the creed, there would be no accounting for the intellectual history of the last three centuries; in their zeal they were prepared to make short work of some ancient rituals and honoured conventions, but they did not therefore cast aside the traditions of their age, nor did they renounce all learning save theology or lose interest in other inquiries besides the religious. They did subordinate all concerns to salvation ... but they were incapable of confining themselves solely to dogma ... They were first and foremost heirs of Augustine, but also they were among the heirs of Thomas Aquinas and the pupils of Erasmus.[2]

Hence when Howe argues for the existence of God in The Living Temple, he appeals to the reasonable "general consent" of mankind. Since there is everywhere an acknowledgment of a deity of some sort, and the barbarous as well as the civilized express belief in some god, there is good 'reason' to believe in the existence of a Supernatural Being. He does not scruple to use Cicero, Epicurus Velleius and Maximus Tyrius to marshal arguments for the reasonableness of such belief. From the latter he quotes,

> In so great a contention and variety of opinions concerning what God is, you shall see the law and reason of every

1. W.C. de Pauley, The Candle of the Lord, London, 1937, p. 4.
2. Perry Miller, The New England Mind, New York, 1939, p. 66.

> country to be harmonious and one; that there is one God, the King and Father of all; that the many are but the servants and co-rulers unto God; that herein the Greek and the Barbarian say the same thing, the islander and the inhabitant of the continent, the wise and the foolish; go to the utmost bounds of the ocean, and you find God there. But if in all times there have been two or three, an atheistical, vile, senseless sort of persons, whose own eyes and ears deceive them, and who are maimed in their very soul, an irrational and sterile sort; yet, out of those you shall understand somewhat of God; for they know and confess him, whether they will or not.[1]

There is then, a two-fold thrust in the Puritan conception of reason. On the one hand, it is to be pitied as being insignificant in comparison with the vast sea of things yet to be know; on the other hand, it is an able and necessary supplement to the tenets of revealed religion. For from the standpoint of the philosophers, man is indeed,

> A noble creature, indued with understanding, with a reasonable appetite, with affections capable of divine objects, with apprehensions and operations suitable to his nature, being able to compare, connect, discourse, deduct, to remember, and perform other noble parts and actions.[2]

And in the same vein, Richard Baxter writes of reason in belief,

> You must believe nothing, but what you have sufficient reason to believe. But then you must know what is sufficient reason for Belief. Prove but the thing to be the Testimony of God, and then you have sufficient reason to believe it, whatsoever it be.[3]

Therefore, far from denouncing the powers of Reason, we have in Puritan thought a consistent and comprehensive synthesis of faith and understanding, of reason and revelation. A saint must believe in order to know, but once he believes, it is his duty to

1. Works, ed. Chalmers, p. 65.
2. Miller, op.cit., p. 66.
3. The Unreasonableness of Infidelity, p. 59, quoted by Margaret Wiley, The Subtle Knot, London, 1952.

be diligent in the search to know all realms of 'natural truth.' There must be a continuous attempt to translate the experience of the heart into language the mind can understand. Faith is an act of the whole man; it includes understanding as well as assent of the will. Faith is not a 'leap into the dark;' a journey into the unknown, but a whole-souled response to the question God asks. Faith does not answer all the problems, but it does quell the fears of the Augustinian heart; 'this sea of restless waves.' Thus Donne wrote,

> Batter my heart, three person'd God ...
> But sweare by thy selfe, that at my death thy sonne
> Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;
> And, having done that, Thou haste done,
> I fear no more.[1]

The faith that persuaded Anglican Donne to forsake his fears is thoroughly grounded in knowledge, a knowledge that is no 'mere contemplative knowledge,' but for both Puritan and Anglican, a lively knowledge of the heart. Howe informs us that knowledge means practice, assuring us from his study of the Hebrew, that the word "knowledge" actually implies "practice."[2] If we really know what is right, we will do it. A true and vivid knowledge of God immediately informs the life with all the Christian graces. A continued course of sin is inconsistent with the knowledge of our peace in Christ. And then ensues a most startling statement.

> All sin is in a true sense reducible to ignorance; and customary sinning into total destitution of divine knowledge. According to the usual style of the sacred writings, 'Awake to righteousness, and sin not'; for some have not the knowledge of God.[3]

1. Bush, op.cit., p. 134.
2. Works, ed. Gordon, p. 66.
3. Ibid., p. 67.

Of course, as Howe has already taken pains to explain, this 'ignorance' is not simply lack of knowledge of the facts of grace, but a wilful ignorance which issues not so much from the inability of the mind to understand as from the corrupt perversity of the human heart to accept the grace of God. It is not 'ignorance' in the Socratic sense of lack of acquaintance with the true facts, but it is a depraved blindness of the heart which refuses to obey the knowledge of God already therein inscribed. Howe would point to the Scriptures,

> And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; ... who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.[1]

Thus it can be seen that Puritanism is not only a piety, but an articulate intellectual system, wrought in the heat of religious experience, purified in the fires of daily life, and finally codified into a coherent system of thought by the efforts of Reason. Puritan definitions of what is meant, precisely, by 'Reason' are rare in their theology. They spoke of it as the 'image of God,' and often differentiated between its acts of invention and method. Yet they were sometimes guilty of using the word with a double connotation, thinking of it at one moment as functional, and at the next as substantival, and the apparent contradiction between the two meanings is often thinly veiled. The difficulty was that Puritanism needed both significances; each

1. Rom. 1:28, 32.

was necessary to its theology, and each had come to it from an inheritance of two hostile traditions. From medieval scholasticism, from Aquinas, and eventually from Aristotle came the conception of reason as a principle of action, a power or faculty by which truth was discovered, and from Augustinian theology, and ultimately from Plato came the conception of reason as itself the source of truth, the container and giver of ideas through inward intuition or recollection.[1] The latent conflict between these two mutually exclusive concepts was perhaps the gravest problem which Puritan thinking faced, for the attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable; to bring these two uses of reason together eventually proved abortive.

There is a possibility of making too much of the two-fold inheritance of Puritanism from Platonic and Aristotelian thought. It is true that Puritanism borrowed copiously from both sources, but even greater than its debt to the philosophers, was its inheritance from the Reformers. And from Calvin particularly, the Puritans learned a distrust of philosophical conclusions. Calvin writes for most Puritans when he says,

> I deny not that there be here and there read in Philosophers, concerning God, many things well and aptly spoken, but such as always savour of a certain giddy imagination. The Lord gave them indeed, ... a little taste of his Godhead, that they should not pretend ignorance to colour their ungodliness: and many times he moved them to speak many things, by confession whereof themselves might be convinced. But they so saw the things that they saw, that by such seeing they were not directed to the truth ... Besides that, those small drops of truth, wherewith as it were by chance, they sprinkle

1. Miller, op.cit., pp. 190, 191.

> their books, with how many and how monstrous lies are they defiled?[1]

In some moods, John Howe thinks no more highly of the possibilities of 'refined reason' than Calvin. After he has suggested that the most reason can do is to persuade man to fill his mind with knowledge, he writes,

> Death robs away all his gain. And what is the world the better? How little shall he enrich the clods, his abode! O how little is his gain, when the labour and travail of so many years are all vanished and blown away with the last puff of his dying breath, and the fruit that remains is to have it said by those that survive, 'There lies learned dust!'[2]

A predominant strain in the Puritan intellectual heritage was Platonic thought, which was most ably presented in England by the Cambridge Platonists, who made it their life-work to demonstrate the possibility of a fusion between Christianity and philosophy. And if a Christian philosophy like Cudworth's should bear a striking resemblance to parts of the Republic, it was only to be expected, for even Calvin admitted that Plato was the most enlightened of the philosophers.

'Reason,' Whichcote is never tired of quoting, 'is the candle of the Lord,' and 'to follow Reason' is to follow God. But the word reason must not be misconstrued in its meaning, for the Cambridge Platonists understood the injunction 'Follow Reason' to have a two-fold significance. In the first place, to 'follow Reason' means to 'think philosophically' - to regard as real what Plato considered real. On the other hand, they could not have

1. Calvin, Institutes, II, ii, 118 ff.
2. Works, I, 405.

been true to Plato had they not realised that the pursuit of truth also involved purification of the heart and will; only the 'pure in heart shall see God.'[1]

As Whichcote observed,

> Nothing is the true improvement of our rational faculties, but the exercise of the several virtues of sobriety, modesty, gentleness, obedience to God and charity to men.[2]

Puritanism then, was faced with a dilemma that seriously threatened its inner harmony. If intelligibility only came from the senses, there loomed ahead all the worst consequences of Aristotelianism, an arbitrary power, an unpredictable deity, and an unknowable universe. If, on the other hand, knowledge came from innate ideas, by the intuition of the light of nature, then it did not take an Amos to prophesy that the day would come when divine grace was unnecessary, biblical revelation superfluous, and a "universal antinomian transcendentalism would result."[3] So Puritanism tried to use parts of both conceptions, and avoid the extremes which each of the two, alone, might have demanded. This checked the concept of reason from waxing too insistent, and yet allotted to reason a very real place in the world of thought. Ideas could be inducted from things but supernatural revelation took precedence over the powers of reason. Or, as Howe said, "reason having first found out God, religion adores him."[4] Ideas could also be innate in the mind, but the conscience and reason of man were corrupted, necessitating the clear voice of

1. Willey, op.cit., p. 190.
2. Ibid.
3. Miller, op.cit., p. 194.
4. Works, I, 406.

the Scriptures to find the 'path of life,' for Puritanism was committed to the belief that only in His Presence, was there "fulness of joy."[1] The revelation of the Bible points to the most significant Revelation of all; that Jesus Christ is God Incarnate.[2] Every Puritan would assent to the testimony of John that "these things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing, ye might have life through his name."[3] What he means by this is that God breaks into the pattern of human history to save men, not through the oracles of reason, not through the powers of sense perception, nor through His glories revealed in nature, although all of these, when redeemed, can contribute to knowledge of Him, but through the Revelation of Divine Truth as mediated in His Son.

It is the part of Reason therefore, to confess humbly that its powers are incapable of finding out redeeming truth, and to turn to its counterpart, faith, for help in receiving the good gift of God; reconciliation through His Son.[4] There is an area in which reason is to have full reign; in the pursuit of the arts, the sciences, cosmology and logic, and there is an area in which 'arrogant reason' has no place but to acquiesce in the truth. Calvin spoke for most of Puritan thought when he wrote,

> Finally, they (the Philosophers) never so much as smelled that assuredness of God's good will towards us, without which, man's wits must needs be filled with infinite confusion. Therefore man's reason neither approacheth, nor goeth toward, nor once directeth sight unto this truth, to understand who is the true God, or what he will be toward us.[5]

1. Ps. 16:10. 2. Jn. 1:14. 3. Jn. 20:31. 4. II Cor. 5:11.
5. Calvin, op.cit., II, ii, 120.

Howe was equally adamant in his rejection of man's earthly knowledge as being of soteriological value.

> So that except a man's knowing more than others were to be referred to another state (immortality), the labour of attaining thereto, and other accessory disadvantages, would hardly ever be compensated by the fruit or pleasure of it; and unless a man would suppose himself made for torment, he would be shrewdly tempted to think a quiet and drowsy ignorance a happier state.[1]

Theologians of the seventeenth century were convinced that the truths of Christianity 'are not contrary unto, yet they are above Reason.' There is a peculiarly modern ring to this insistence, particularly when we discover the same emphasis in the writings of Karl Barth, who also protests vigorously against the assertion that Christianity is irrational.

> The Word of God is primarily spiritual, and after that and in that form, in this its spirituality, for the sake of it and without prejudice to it, also a corporeal or natural event. That above all is what is meant when, in accordance with the forms in which we hear it, we call it God's language. The form in which reason communicates with reason, person with person, is language, so too when it is God's language. Of course it is divine reason that communicates with human reason, the divine person with the human person. The complete inconceivability of this event confronts us. But reason with reason, person with person, primarily in analogy with what happens in the spiritual sphere of creation, not primarily in analogy with what happens in the corporeal or natural sphere. The Word of God - we should not evade the concept so much tabued today - <u>is a rational and not an irrational event</u>.[2]

In the true Augustinian tradition, which was undoubtedly the strongest and most vital part of Puritan intellectual thought, Puritans confessed reason as the handmaid, the support, the instrument of faith, the interpreter of biblical revelation.

1. <u>Works</u>, I, 405.
2. Karl Barth, <u>The Doctrine of the Word of God</u>, New York, 1949, vol. I, part I, p. 153.

"Ratio sana non pugnat cum Theologia," was their thesis.[1] "I should be very ill satisfied," says the Puritan minister, "in an irrationall Gospel."[2] Baxter was speaking for all Puritanism when he delcared again and again that there was no contradiction between natural and supernatural Revelation since God cannot contradict Himself.[3]

Howe saw in man's inner capacity for immortality proof that the nature of man is only fulfilled in the attainment of future blessedness. There could not be a conflict between this inner capacity and man's nature, else God made man in vain.[4] When considering the tremendous powers of man's inner life, he becomes more than usually articulate.

> What! that he should come into this world furnished with such powers and endowments for this! It were a like case, as if one should be clad in scarlet to go to plough, or curiously instructed in arts and sciences to tend hogs.[5]

In a discussion of our knowledge of God, which Dr Baillie calls the "most difficult of all subjects,"[6] Howe seems to be unaware of the tremendous problems involved, for the seventeenth century still belonged to the age of faith. If the assumption that reason always leads to God seems to come too easily, it must be remembered that he wrote in an age in which belief in the absolute authority of Scriptures was axiomatic, and belief in God's revelation in nature scarcely less so. Thus in Howe's greatest philosophical work, The Living Temple, he moves from the realm of nature to the realm of sacred writ with bewildering ease, and assumes,

1. Miller, op.cit., p. 195. 2. Ibid., p. 68.
3. Baxter, op.cit., I, V, XII. 4. Works, I, 409.
5. Ibid., p. 404.
6. Dr John Baillie, Our Knowledge of God, 1949, p. v.

perhaps rightly for that age, that proofs from either source are equally valid to the reasonable man. Otherwise, he differs little from a more modern theologian who teaches that "Reason allows man to know the idea of God immanent in him and teaches him to conclude from the visible world as God's work to its invisible originator and ruler."[1]

Exposition of Howe's View

As originally created, man was holy, with no depraved inclination in his nature, though the possibility of sinning was always present. God endued first man with a "perfect and universal" rectitude.[2] He is a twofold creature; that is, he has a double nature, so that there is an "inner and an outward man."[3] Although the outward man calls forth the highest praise for the manner in which it was conceived,[4] it is really the inner man that is most essential. Man is distinguished by that fundamental vitality called spirit;[5] which cannot die. Next in importance is intellect, the power of understanding that belongs peculiarly to the spirit of man, which is not only perpetually conceiving, but has the power of "ranging thoughts, of methodizing thoughts, of putting thoughts into a frame and order, according to that relation which they mutually bear to one another."[6] A fourth quality, which many profess is man's unique prerogative, is the capacity for religion. Brutes may or may not have reason, but they certainly exercise no

1. Heinrich Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, trans. G.T. Thomson, 1950 p.2.
2. Works, I, 463.
3. Works, ed. Hunt, vii, 289.
4. Ibid., p. 291.
5. Ibid., p. 295.
6. Ibid., p. 295.

propensity to worship of the Creator.

The rectitude of first man consisted in conformity to a rule. Since rectitude is a "mere relative thing," it must be a relation to a law.[1] And we may define law as the rule of duty given by a superior to an inferior; in this sense, nothing can be a rule to God. The law given to Adam was partly natural, and partly positive. Since man was holy, it was congruous enough that the main body of laws should be given by an inward impression, approved by his reason.[2] In addition, God added some positive laws which were to be obeyed because it was the Creator's will, and not because they appeared naturally "reasonable and fit to be done."[3] Adam was endued in his creation with a sufficient ability to conform to the whole law, both natural and positive, and in this ability his original righteousness consisted.[4] This holiness included innocency but it did not preclude the possibility of sinning.[5] It meant first; a perfect illumination of mind to understand and know the will of God; second, a compliance of the heart to this will; and third, an obedient subordination of the sensitive appetite so that it did not resist man's desire to do the Divine Will.[6] Further, man's will was the seat of holiness wherein the image of God stood, and in his will and his reason were impressed the will of the Creator.[7] The endowment of righteousness also brought with it man's actual blessedness, while he acted in accordance with the laws. But it was a mutable state; man's defection from his primitive state was voluntary, and resulted

1. Works, I, 463.
2. Ibid., p. 464.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 128.
6. Works, I, 465.
7. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 129.

from "the unconstrained choice of his own mutable and self-determining will."[1]

The image of God in man lies in "some mental thing," and has its seat in the soul and spirit of man itself; and thus we must understand the image of God in man to be twofold; natural and moral.[2] The natural image consists in spirituality, in "essential life,"[3] in the power of understanding, and in liberty, or the power of willing.[4] The natural image is permanent and fundamental to the moral image, for without the natural image which is retained in fallen man, the moral image is impossible.[5] In first man, the image was a glorious thing for,

> when man was himself in his innocent and instituted state, and where the inferior nature was held in direct subordination to the superior, as there was then no undue thoughts, so neither were there any undue notions, of an inferior nature itself, but what were certainly commandable and kept within due limits.[6]

The moral image of God was superadded to his natural image, and consisted of the rectitude of his natural powers and the holiness of heart "of this creature in his original state."[7] We must take heed, however, of asserting either too much or too little concerning man's first estate. Caution demands that we state nothing that is inconsistent with the possibility of his falling. On the other hand, we must beware lest we allow no chance of his standing.[8] In general, this sanctity or holiness consisted of innocency and the possibility of continuing in fellowship with God.[9]

1. Works, I, 467.
2. Works, ed. Hunt, vii, 319.
3. Ibid., p. 319.
4. Ibid., p. 320.
5. Ibid., p. 321.
6. Works, ed. Dunn, pp. 127,128.
7. Works, ed. Hunt, vii, 321.
8. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 128.
9. Works, ed. Hunt, vii, 322.

> It is true, he was not made impeccable, or with an impossibil-
> ;ity of sinning, yet he was made with a possibility of not sinning; that is, with an intrinsical possibility thereof: for we must distinguish here, between possibility and futurity.[1]

In this perfect state, man was a "knowing thing" with a grow-
;ing knowledge of God's nature and the universe.[2] His reason dir-
;ected him to know more of God, and it concurred in causing his will to resemble God's will. The inward law was a universal and ever-
;lasting obligation, engraven on the hearts of all men, as well as Adam, for even pagans themselves have the "work of the law written in their hearts."[3] And this law, even in the old dispensation, was the law of love.

It was "rational" then, that God, having furnished this "glor-
;ious prince" with every dominion and power, should put him on pro-
;bation, even as the angels before him were on probation.[4] The doc-
;trine of man in his original state is a valuable one because it teaches us "gratitude for redeeming mercy."[5]

In exactly what does the image of God in man consist? It con-
;sists of a trinity - a frail and partial image of the Trinity in the Godhead, but nonetheless a real representation of God in rela-
;tion to active power, intellect and love.[6]

> Any one that will make himself his own study, must discern and acknowledge such things in himself as do make a real trinity; one and the same soul having active power belonging to it, understanding belonging to it, and love belonging to it, which, though all meet and unite in one and the same soul, are yet diverse and distinct from one another; for my power is not my understanding, and my understanding is not love; but all these do meet together in one and the same soul.[7]

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid., p. 323.
3. Rom. 2:15.
4. Works, ed. Hunt, vii, 326, 327.
5. Ibid., p. 328.
6. Ibid., p. 330.
7. Ibid.

When we perceive the image in fallen man, it is like looking at the rude draft of a picture, pencilled in without the beauty and depth of oils.[1] Or perhaps it can better be likened to a palace, formerly owned by a noble family, now inhabited "by nothing but owls and vultures; a habitation of dragons and serpents."[2] There was at first a posse non peccare; a possibility of not sinning; but in the heavenly state a non posse peccare, an impossibility of sinning.[3] Man was not made in a state comprehensor, but in a state of probation, and from this he defected to choose himself against God.

The Fall of man stood in the breach of a positive precept which commanded him to abstain from the fruit of the tree.[4] But it was also a violation of the whole law of nature, for it had been written upon his heart as well as expressly signified.[5] This act involved a radical rebellion which was not only "disbelief of the first eternal truth," but contempt of the "highest and most indisputable authority."[6] Curiosity, impatience,[7] discontent, pride and ambition[8] all mark the terrible fall of man. If we ask how is it possible that a creature who was perfectly intelligent and holy should come to such a horrid violation of divine law we must answer, "It came so as the divine history doth inform us."[9] That

1. Ibid., p. 333.
2. Ibid., p. 334.
3. Ibid., p. 351.
4. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 131. Howe's distinction between the positive and the natural laws of God places the depth of the defection at a deeper level than was present in Milton.
5. Ibid.
6. Works, ed. Hunt, vii, 344.
7. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 132.
8. Works, ed. Hunt, vii, 344.
9. Ibid., p. 345.

is, man voluntarily renounced the heritage that was his in exchange for "greater measures of knowledge than God had yet thought fit for him."[1] His happiness disappeared with his delinquency; for legally the penalty was death, and by nature it was not possible for his vitiated soul to continue in its aptitude to converse with God.[2] In short, this reasonable creature, capable of God, exchanged his good Reason, for the bad Unreason of sin.[3] And yet the appeal was made to reason. It offered the alluring temptation of more knowledge, and in this appeal to the lust for knowledge, it enticed Adam to pride of intellect.[4] "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Only secondarily did his "sensitive appetite" affect his choice, for up to this time it had been fully subjected to the "rational nature."[5] The consequences of the fall were most painful. Since it represented not simply an accident, or a moment of weakness, but the planned choice of the only fully rational man, it involved the whole nature of man in a radical change jeopardizing every area of life.[6] Death to the body and trials to the soul were minor catastrophies in comparison with the greater tragedy of spiritual death.[7] This self-destruction effectively cut off any and all attempts of man to be "his own saviour."[8] It involved the retraction of God's Spirit, and the holy image of God was erased and completely vanished.[9] This caused in man not a neutrality, but

1. Works, ed. Dunn, pp. 133, 134. 2. Works, I, 470.
3. Ibid., p. 471. 4. Works, ed. Hunt, vii, 350. 5. Ibid., p.351.
6. Works, ed. Dunn, p.134. 7. Ibid., p. 135. 8. Works, I, 471.
9. Works, ed. Hunt, vii, 362. Of course, as Howe informs us elsewhere, he means that man lost his image of God in respect to innocence and sanctity, not in regards to reason and mental attributes.
Vide Supra, p. 110.

a positive aversion to God, a "turning off" of his apostate soul from God.[1] And like the collapse of a deck of cards, there ensued also cessation of intercourse between God and man, consequent regrets of conscience, black and gloomy thoughts,[2] despair, fears, and all the external miseries of life "that a delinquent creature could be liable to."[3] The Divine image is "defaced and torn down," and its former excellencies are lost. Now man exists not only "in darkness", but <u>as</u> "darkness" itself.[4]

> He and darkness may define one another: That is he and he is that. A dismal horrid cloud hath enwrapt his soul, that resists and yields not easily to the most piercing beams, excludes light wheresoever it would insinuate itself. This hath made the soul of man a most unmeet receptacle for the Divine presence, and more like a dungeon than a temple.[5]

And further,

> And whereas he was of a middle nature, partaking somewhat of the angelic, somewhat of the animal life, how is he swallowed up of the latter, and become like the 'beast that perish,' as the 'horse and the mule without understanding,' as the dog and the swine both for fierceness and impurity; as the one is both apt 'to bite and devour,' and 'return to his own vomit,' and the other both to rend such as stand in his way, and 'wallow in the mire.'[6]

Wrong action results not so much from a wrong use of reason as it does from a perverse heart.[7] Man has cut himself off from God in order to become in himself what God once was to him. Now he moves wholly within his own sphere, and is <u>his own centre</u>. All he does is from himself and for himself. Thus the true image of God is torn down from his temple, and man's image is now

1. <u>Ibid</u>. 2. <u>Loc.cit</u>. 3. <u>Works</u>, ed. Hunt, vii, 363.
4. <u>Works</u>, III, 301. 5. <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 301, 302.
6. <u>Ibid</u>. 7. <u>Ibid</u>.

"dedicated to that abominable idol, Self."[1] The enmity of man toward God extends "unto madness itself."[2] Men resist the authority of God, disobey his commands, shun peace, "take hold of hell," and vanish in the "chambers of death" because they choose rather to perish than to obey.[3] Even philosophy, the loyal servant of theology, whose "feeble and mistaken reasonings" are to be distrusted, is in a state of revolt and rebellion.[4] This is true because man has dethroned his "own reason and judgment," and "unnatural wickedness" has caused him to hate God.[5] His sin is such that though he has a thinking power, he will not think of God.[6] Even the mention of God's name is distasteful, and this hatred is engendered by the "enmity of mind" that is in man against God.[7] In unregenerate man there exists "carnality that is death," and as it makes men miserable, it "makes them stupid" as well.[8] It is true that Reason is the highest and noblest of our faculties, but it is not a self-sufficient endowment equipped either by God or by nature to fulfil its true function since the Fall. Reason now directs the thought of man away from God, "continually downward in opposition to him."[9] Thus it is the mind, not as "speculative merely, but as practical and active, that must be renewed."[10] Without special revelation man is left to wander in perpetual confusion, not because he cannot see the truth,[11] but because he will not see the "Father of us all." It is a corollary of this

1. Ibid., p. 303.
2. Ibid., p. 305. Calvin speaks of fallen man as mente alienatus. cf. Torrance, E.Q., 1942, p. 27.
3. Ibid. 4. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 136. 5. Ibid., p. 145.
6. Ibid. 7. Ibid., p. 150. 8. Ibid., p. 151. 9. Ibid., p.150
10. Works, IV, 384. 11. cf. Calvin, Inst. II, ii, 297 ff.

that man sets the fabric of his mind in mendacious thoughts against God.[1] It is not lack of natural ability that keepsman from making the acquaintance of God; "they know not God and converse not with him, only because they have no mind to it."[2]

> The ill inclination of men towards God affects the whole soul. The mind knows him not, is habitually forgetful of him; and more formally, this aversion is in the will; that doth not choose the Lord for his God. And conscience is stupefied, doth not its office, or, sometimes is outrageous and overdoes it, the affections and passions are all so many furies; original rectitude being gone, and the soul destitute of that holy image which originally it bore.[3]

In this fallen estate, "sense is actually the great dictator to the most of men, and, de facto, determines them to the mark and scope which they pursue, and animates the whole pursuit."[4] The law that remains is "much obscured, shattered and broken," for "there is a continual mutiny and insurrection against these relics of the law."[5] The result is complete confusion as to the purpose and function of man. Indeed,

> If the question were put, 'Wherefore did God make man?' who would not be ashamed to answer it; 'He hath made him to eat, and drink, and take up his pleasure, to gather wealth for he knows not whom; to use his inventions, that each may become a talk and a wonder to the rest; and then when he had fetched a few turns upon the theatre, and entertained the eyes of the beholders with a short scene of impertinence, descend, and never be heard of more.'[6]

Is the doctrine of original sin reasonable? Is it just that every man should suffer ill affects because of the bad disposition of first man? This question is best answered by introspection.[7]

1. Works, IV, 363. 2. Ibid. 3. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 136.
4. Works, I, 403. 5. Loc.cit.
6. Works, I, 404. Pascal writes, "What a chimera then is man! ... What a novelty! What a monster, what a chaos, what a contradiction, what a prodigy!" Pascal, Thoughts, p. 165.
7. Works, I, 474.

When man looks inward, he sees clearly that he would have personally consented to the same temptation which ruined Adam, and if we grant God "prescience of the event," without making it predestination, we perceive in the fall of original man a microcosm of the action of every man.[1] The act of eating was preceded by a great many "mental evils" which included ingratitude, disbelief, and exaltation of the sensitive nature against the rational.[2] Thus in the Fall, we have not only an act, but a whole mental disposition which sets itself against God.

It is this whole inward impression of God that the heathen sin against without a written law.[3] This "natural law" must be dis-:tinguished from Revelation in the word of God, for it is the only law by which the heathen are held accountable.[4] The nature of man is now a "seminary, a seed-pot of all kinds of wickedness," and can be defined in general as that "sinful inclination which lies oppos-:ite to the law of God, natural or revealed."[5] Man's mutiny or insurrection against the relics of the inward law is complicated by war not only against God, but his "state of war with himself."[6] A further aggravation is that man's understanding remains with him; "he can discourse, reason, project, lay designs, form methods in reference to all things that are of inferior concernment." But his reason is a "monstrous" thing, for it was created to converse with God, but has instead joined itself to "devils, apostate, impure spirits" and has fallen into confederacy with them against

1. Works, I, 474. 2. Works, ed. Hunt, VII, 365.
3. Ibid., p. 371, cp. Rom.2:12.
4. Ibid., p. 372. 5. Ibid. 6. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 136.

God."[1]

Natural religion is the resort of the untaught and uninstructed. As Minatius Foelix pointed out, even pagans raised their voices to a Supreme Being in time of trouble.[2] But the problem is that "such sentiments of God as they have about them, they cannot erase, and yet cannot obey."[3] The "self-reflecting power" which turns its ruthless rays into the "inward penetralis" might well be of use to unregenerate man, if he were to use this "gift" wisely, but he complicates his sin by a stedfast refusal to take cognizance of his actions.[4]

Nature herself adds to his dilemma, because she showers man with the good gifts of God's beneficence.[5] The sun shines, the rain falls, the seasons come and go, the whole earth is full of God's goodness and attempts by its bounty to lead men to repentance.[6] Thus natural law, conscience, intelligence, and nature contribute to the magnitude of man's rebellion.

In addition to the consequences mentioned previously,[7] apostacy results in the loss of God,[8] wilful ignorance,[9] an interdict upon the world,[10] continual craving desires,[11] slavery,[12] and the reduction of reason to subserviency.[13] It is no wonder that this noble piece of workmanship, the inward nature of man, is so scarred and dislocated that the metamorphosis of the inner disposition is a far greater monstrosity than the outward changes

1. Works, ed. Hunt, VII, 388. 2. Ibid., pp. 389, 390.
3. Ibid. 4. Ibid., p. 393. 5. Ibid., pp. 394, 395.
6. Rom. 2:4. 7. Vide supra, pp. 111-117.
8. Works, ed. Hunt, VII, 418. 9. Ibid., p. 419.
10. Ibid., p. 423. 11. Ibid., p. 424. 12. Ibid., pp. 426, 427.
13. Ibid., p. 437.

which have occurred to the body.[1]

The reason and will of man are equally debilitated. Although in pursuit of "inferior" goods the will is rational, yet in the goal of all life, the will is perpetually at fault, so that "the whole life of man can be nothing but a continual error."[2] It commands without reason, and thus no rational principle is left as to the end of life. In this respect, "the apostate, unregenerate man, is natus ad miseriam, he is wholly framed unto misery; and to nothing else but to misery."[3]

> And if you would reduce the determination of men's wills to any principles at all, they can agree to no other principles than such as these; ... man is made for himself; that is his own end; that he that hath made him, hath no right to rule him; that from him from whom he hath received his being, he is not to expect blessedness; but that he is to seek it in inferior things ... that time is far more considerable and valuable than eternity, that mortal flesh is far more invaluable than the immortal spirit.[4]

Because the end of man is lost in wilful ignorance, no system of "coherent truths" remain, but some "shivered parcels."[5]

Yet man remains man. He has so much reason left that he recognizes his origin comes from an "infinitely perfect Being."[6] More than that, he understands his obligation to love God, and if he but fulfilled the destiny reason directs, he would spend his days in felicity. At first this may sound like a contradiction of previous statements, but this does not necessarily follow, for the fact is, man will not follow, and cannot follow the reasonable course.

1. Ibid., p. 437.
2. Ibid., p. 438.
3. Ibid., p. 439.
4. Ibid., p. 439.
5. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 139.
6. Works, ed. Hunt, VII, 487.

When we turn to the regenerate man, the picture is a different one. The knowledge of God which lies lifeless and useless within unregenerate man,[1] now springs into vitality; light takes the place of darkness, and the "new man" not only has light, but is light, just as the non-elect are not only in darkness, but are darkness. The Christian's temper is altered, he has a new "frame and habit in his soul," and the knowledge of God which formerly condemned him, has begotten "an impression of godliness."[2] This kind of knowledge unites him in a vital union with God. The power of self-determination which had as its object in Adam "things of the highest nature, purely spiritual and divine," has been repaired by sanctifying grace.[3] It is the business, then, of regeneration to restore the broken image of God in man that was "defective and lost."[4] His regenerate state must be renovated "after the same image that man was impressed with at first, consisting of knowledge, (not only in a capacity to know, but in knowledge,) and in righteousness, and true holiness."[5] Man was first created after the image of God, and now is created again after that image. This renewal gives higher knowledge.[6]

Regenerate man has been removed from the law of nature unto the sphere of grace. The intellect is thus enlightened by the light of God,[7] and now gives man a cognitive power, which makes him capable of knowing God in an active and vital way.[8] This knowledge is not the superficial knowledge that lies upon the

1. Works, ed. Hunt, VI, 416 ff.
2. Ibid., p. 421. 3. Works, I, 395. 4. Works, ed. Hunt, VII, 334
5. Ibid., pp. 334, 335. 6. cf. Eph. 4:24 and Col. 3:10.
7. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 214. 8. Ibid., p. 215.

surface of the mind, but it centres in the soul.[1]

The love of God which formerly resided in the soul of Adam has been restored in the "new creature." The inward impression of law, weakened and broken by the fall, is restored to its former strength,[2] and communion with God again becomes the great privilege of the regenerate.[3] It is a constantly growing concern which reaches its maturity only in the consummation of union with God. The regenerate man also receives a permanent work of the Spirit, while in Adam the Spirit was enjoyed only so long as he remained innocent.[4] The covenant of grace has thus brought untold blessings impossible to the old covenant.[5] Reason in the new man enjoys the wisdom that is from above, and purpose, which has been lacking in the unregenerate, is restored to seek its glory, in the glory of God. Thus regeneration can be viewed as consisting chiefly in the restoration of the image of God in fallen man, giving in addition all the fruits of the evangelical covenant Christ has fulfilled.

Reason has a two-fold use; a positive and a negative signifi-:cance. As the tool of the philosopher, it is indeed the "noblest faculty of them all" and has a power of its own to find out some things about God. For we may take it as truth,

> that the mind of man is capable of arriving by way of argument unto the knowledge of God; it is capable of attain-:ing in a way of argumentation to the knowledge of God's existence and in great measure of his nature too. For we are told, the eternal power and Godhead are to be clearly seen by the things that are made. Things in themselves invisible, and while they are in themselves invisible,

1. Ibid., p. 216.
2. Ibid., p. 218.
3. Ibid., p. 229.
4. Works, ed. Hunt, VII, 361.
5. Ibid., p. 366.

> if we are to come to the knowledge of them by the things that are made, how can that be but by way of argument?[1]

On the other hand, as the broken instrument of the sinner, it simply motivates an intelligent spirit, hating God, "to become the most frightful prodigy in universal nature."[2] Reason, when rightly employed, leads man to the moment of Revelation, but man refuses to follow reason, and runs from heaven to hell.[3] Thus it is the mind, the whole mind, with its active functions as well as its contemplative aspects, that must be renewed.[4] Without special revelation man wanders in perpetual confusion because he will not use his reason rightly.

Now we see that there is not only no "inclination towards God," but a positive "disinclination" which is "voluntary, affected and chosen."[5] It isn't that men are only "strangers" to God, but that they are "enemies" that causes astonishment, - it is "that the very mind of man, the offspring of God, 'the Paternal mind,' as the heathen called him," has become so poisoned against God that man lies about his Creator.[6] It is not lack of natural ability that keeps men from making the acquaintance of God so much as it is lack of will "because they have no mind to it."[7]

No, reason is necessary, for things which are invisible in themselves can only be understood by intervening arguments, not immediately, "for the things that are made are the medium."[8] The eternal power and Godhead are discovered by reason. This

1. Ibid., p. 416.
2. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 150.
3. Ibid., p. 148.
4. Works, IV, 384.
5. Ibid., p. 362.
6. Ibid., p. 363.
7. Ibid.
8. Works, ed. Hunt, VII, 416.

ought to tell us things about our own nature; its ability to improv itself in knowledge of the highest and greatest, even God himself.[1] This is the only way in which the Creator's commands become obligatory, for without the power of reason, there is nothing in man to respond to the eternal majesty revealed in nature.

> 'There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty hath given him understanding.' Thus we can arrive at a true knowledge of God if we will but employ our reason. We should not balk at this teaching, for lower things than our mental capacity are subservient to Divine knowledge. Does the Word not say, "Faith cometh by hearing." [2]

And if external sense is to be subservient to our reception of the knowledge of divine things, then certainly much more our understanding, "which is a thing far nobler than our external sense," [3] is a talent for which we are held accountable.

In fact, no one who uses his understanding can even be "innocently ignorant" of God.[4] There is such a clear representation of the eternal power and Godhead in the things that are made, that if men fail to know God, they are left without excuse.[5] The real problem is not that God is hidden from searching man, but that man has hidden from a searching God. Bluntly, man is blind.

> There can be no blindness but voluntary blindness, affected blindness, chosen blindness; that men are blind because they will be blind, because they will not see. A blindness of the mere speculative understanding is quite another thing, but such a blindness as is referred to the heart, as having its seat and subject there, must mean a blindness that men voluntarily do continue themselves in, as he that stifly (sic) and resolvedly winks that he may not see the light. [6]

Yet even the clearest rational knowledge is not enough

1. Ibid. 2. Rom. 10:17. 3. Loc.cit. 4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 418. 6. Ibid.

to save our souls.[1] The objective representation of God in nature must be apprehended by our reason, but it is insufficient to redeem. There must also be a subjective reception of the knowledge of God, for as men view truth, they tend to hold it down in unrighteousness. "Truth" here refers chiefly to the truth concerning the existence and nature of God. This is the general revelation made to all men, but men, even when holding this truth, do so in unrighteousness and thus distort and veil the inner meaning.[2] Defeated of its proper design, the truth becomes a liability leaving mean accused, and without excuse. What is really necessary is another kind of knowledge.

> That which is rational, may be had and ought to be had, and we shall most dearly answer for it, if we have it not; but then when we have it, that is not enough, it is necessary but not sufficient.[3]

If reason apprehends the eternal power of God in nature, and the mind receives this knowledge, what more does man lack? He lacks having that clear knowledge made vital. It is not the clarity with which such knowledge swims in our minds that is necessary for our salvation, but the life such knowledge engenders when it becomes vital in our souls that is needful.[4] "A light that is not vital will serve to condemn, but only a light that is vital will serve to save."[5] In every man, in every intelligence, in every conscience there is light, but it is of such little profit that it but serves as darkness.[6] The only light that is "truly salutary" is the light "which comes by Christ."[7]

1. Ibid., p. 419
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 420.
5. Ibid.
6. Matt. 6:23.
7. Loc. cit.

How is this possible? One man is well assured of God and is able to prove rationally that He exists, and is quite competent to bear witness to such proofs of his nature as remain in the world. What is the difference between him and the pious man who is not nearly so well versed in the rational proofs?[1]

It is essentially the difference between a man who knows the value of food and drink, discourses boldly about the properties of meat, speaks understandingly, and never eats, and the man who knows good food and eats. One man knows rationally many things about the nature of God, but he never "closeth with them, his soul never inwardly unites with him as his best good ... never subjects to him as his highest Lord."[2] In other words, his knowledge of God makes no difference to his life.

What then is the value of rational knowledge? It is of value because it distinguishes between proper and improper objects of devotion.[3] It is necessary but not sufficient. To sit in the chair that a man uses, he must come in the door of the room, but it is not enough simply to walk to the door. Rational knowledge is an "intermission" into the vital unitive knowledge which redeems.[4]

Thus sin is injustice and madness; injustice to God, and madness to ourselves.[5] For the rational creature to rebel is unjust to the Creator, but for him to rise up against the Authority which gives him breath is sheer madness against himself. The

1. Calvin, Institutes, II, ii. Calvin speaks of knowledge "swimming on the top of the mind" or being imbedded "in the heart."
2. Ibid., p. 420.
3. Ibid., p. 422.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., pp. 424, 425.

The only feasible explanation is that the horror of sin turns the rational creature into a state against reason.

> The whole nature of sin consisting only in a defect, no other cause need be designed of it than a defective; that is an understanding, will, and inferior powers, however originally good, yet mutably and defectively so.[1]

Sin is irrational by nature, and as a "defect," enjoys no positive being.[2] And the unreason of sin is nowhere more apparent than in man, who while remaining rational, has chosen to sin. We tend to think of Adam's sin as no concern of ours, but "do we not sin daily after the similitude of Adam's transgression? and is not sin as unreasonable and unjust a thing as ever?"[3]

Moreover, reason does not always infonm man with a clear knowledge of God.[4] They "are destitute of the knowledge of him out of choice"; they are ignorant and quite willing to remain so.[5] They are capable of knowing God, but prefer not to recognize His Lordship.[6] Thus reason operates in a two-fold way: it can either discover God in nature as a necessary preamble to the Revelation in Christ, or it can turn in upon itself, declining knowledge of God through "blindness of heart."[7]

Is reason then a substance, a "thinking thing" that disposes itself either towards or away from knowledge of God? It would appear that it is.

> The natural activity of the intelligent mind and spirit, when it comes into union and supervenes, especially with respect to its cogitativeness, its thinkingness, its power to think; which now soon it doth exert and put forth its

1. Works, I, 469.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 471.
4. Works, IV, 366.
5. Ibid.
6. Rom. 1:28.
7. Loc.cit.

> power into act, we do not know: but to be sure, as soon as its organs are capable, and as soon as it becomes, in its own nature a cognitative or a thinking thing, nothing is more essential to it than a power of thought.[1]

As the thought life progresses, it thinks amiss, and as the power of using thought grows riper, the thinking of a man becomes more and more irregular. From this comes the "first ebullition of corrupt nature";[2] impure thoughts, sinful thoughts, vain thoughts. "And so, here is the very root of evil."[3]

Reason is able to demonstrate two truths about life from its own impressions and external materials in the world; namely the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. The latter has been proved by the 'light of philosophy' in Dr More's works[4] and the former is demonstrated in The Living Temple. The practice of strange religions, the muted voice of conscience, and the general consent of reason presuppose the existence of God and "his converse:ableness with men."[5] Only "rash and immodest " persons refuse to accept the proofs nature affords that a good man is the temple of God.[6] From the pagans it can be amply shown that all men worship some Deity.[7] It is the more specific task of reason to discover who and what kind of God men ought to serve. With a little introspection, and a careful sifting of the facts that confront us in nature, we conclude that "this eternal, independent, uncaused necessary Being" is also "self-active."[8] That is, He not only has the power to act upon creature and creation, but He derives

1. Works, ed. Hunt, VII, 507. This is the clearest evidence of Cartesean influence in all of Howe's writings. cf. Paul Valery, The Living Thought of Descartes, London, 1948. Heppe calls it by nature a "substantia cogitans, or cogitatio substantialis." Ref. Dogmatics, p. 224.
2. Ibid. 3. Ibid., p. 508. 4. Works, III, 220, 235.
5. Ibid., p. 28. Howe's proofs of God in the following pages follow the outline of argument developed in The Living Temple.
6. Ibid., pp. 14-16. 7. Ibid., p. 32.
8. Ibid., p. 41. Proof here is notably weak.

this power from nothing outside Himself. Reason a little further, and the discovery is made that this Being is also wise and intelligent.[1] And as He is wise, He must work "after a most constant and unchangeable manner."[2] This "wise and good" Being is in every way sufficient "to satisfy all our real wants and just desires."[3] By the old Anselmic formula it can be demonstrated that "actual infinity cannot but be the peculiar knowledge of that which is necessarily."[4]

> For howsoever disputable it may be, whether whatsoever is infinite can have nothing added to it, yet it is without dispute, that whatsoever is so full as that nothing can be added to it, is infinite.[5]

Further, this Being must have "unity or onliness." There are some who think this doctrine comes only by Divine Revelation, but if men follow the foregoing methods, "having proved some necessary self-subsisting being, the root and original spring of all being and perfection, actual and possible, which is as plain as anything can be,"[6] it will be rationally demonstrated that there cannot be two such Beings or more, because one comprehends within itself all being and perfection, since there can be but one 'all.'[7] Nor does this controvert the doctrine of the Trinity, for even the heathen have some apprehension of God's three-in-oneness. It can be shown that a trinity in the Godhead may be consistent with its unity, but we cannot know that it is, except by supernatural revelation. There are things to be known only by the Spirit of

1. Ibid., p. 49.
2. Ibid., p. 53.
3. Ibid., p. 115.
4. Ibid., p. 135.
5. Ibid., p. 136.
6. Ibid., p. 143.
7. Ibid., p. 158.

God, revealing and testifying of them, and this doctrine belongs to that category.

Although the brunt of the task of proving God must be borne by reason, experience is not without its value. It shows to every man who will open his eyes that there is a Being for whom no term other than 'God' will do. Jehovah's address to the children of Israel,[1] strong impressions, glorious apparitions, terrible voices and strange transformations all bear witness to the existence of a Being greater 'than which nothing can be supposed.' These, however, are extraordinary manifestations and are not necessary to the proof of God.

When we inspect the works of nature, the vastness and beauty of the universe, "the variety, the multitude, the order, the exquisite shape and numerous parts, the admirable and useful composure of particular creations, and especially the constitution and powers of the reasonable soul of man itself" we have to be unusually "obstinate and blind" to deny the existence of God.[2]

Since such a God exists, it is reasonable to suppose that He is conversable with men. If this were not true, we would be justified in worshipping any object we chose, and this cannot be admitted.[3] God's converse with men must be distinguished into "that which he hath in common with all men," and "that which he more peculiarly hath with good men."[4] When men refuse to grant the former of these two truths they tend to veer into a type of

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid., p. 163.
3. Ibid., p. 177.
4. Ibid., p. 178.

Epicureanism, which thinks of Deity as being so dull and phlegmatic that He "cannot" be concerned in the actions and affairs of men, or so "soft and easy," that He "will not."[1] This removes all intercourse between God and man, and results in the debauchery of the race.[2] The problem with notions of Deity such as these, is that they are always products of man's "own making," and all the being Deity enjoys is dependent upon "their own accord ... their grace and favour."[3] All this is but a sham by which they mock the world, for in truth, they believe in no God at all.[4]

No, God can converse with men, for if it be admitted to have been proved that God is the Being who made this world,[5] it follows He can commune with those He has made. Christianity asserts exactly this, in stating that God made man in His own image, capable of rational and intelligent conversation, with a nature similar to the nature of God.[6] "And even this were sufficient to give foundation to a temple, and both afford encouragement and infer an obligation to religion."[7]

Part one of The Living Temple thus argued from the necessity of existence to absolute perfection, rather than beginning at the summit, and arguing "from absolute perfection," to "necessity of existence."[8] In other words, the Anselmic formula, which argues that the idea of Perfection involves existence, and

1. Ibid., p. 180. 2. Ibid., p. 183. 3. Ibid., p. 189.
4. Ibid., p. 191. 5. Ibid., pp. 20-150. 6. Ibid., p. 179.
7. Ibid. Most of the rest of the discourse is spent in answering the protests of "cavillers," so that readers can rest assured that the logical proofs for man as the temple of God are better than those ranged against the proposition. pp. 200-220.
8. Ibid., p. 227.

necessity of existence, has been inverted.

The second part of The Living Temple is involved first in the refutation of Spinoza, and a French writer in "avowed opposition," and then proceeds to demonstrate from Scripture some things concerning the temple of God which are not discoverable or clearly demonstrated "the rational way," and finally concludes with a demonstration of how the temple should be "uninhabited and desolate."[1]

For the reader who has become discouraged, or feels that the proofs have been unconvincing, the following suggestions are offered. First, he is not to think "meanly of the understanding" whereby God has distinguished him from the inferior creatures.[2]

> That apprehensive power that can take in the orderly frame of such notions as are requisite to the exact skill of numbering or of measuring things ... that can lay down to itself such prudent maxims and rules ... that understanding which can do all this, would far more easily comprehend as much as is needful to the certain knowledge of God's existence ... if it apply itself hereto.[3]

Secondly, the reader must work hard to set his thoughts with all diligence, using his "thinking power"[4] to reach up to the great Author of all things. Thirdly, he is to look upon things that are "rationally evident" to his understanding as equally certain as sense datum.

To recapitulate; that there is a God is the first great principle to be recognized. This is demonstrated in four progressive steps: (1) something or other must have been,[5] (2) that

1. Ibid., p. 229. Discussion of the first part is not pertinent to our aim; namely to demonstrate the use of reason in proofs of God, and is therefore dropped.
2. Ibid., p. 273. 3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 274. 5. Ibid., p. 275.

something or other is of itself, without depending upon anything else,[1] (3) that which was of itself, was necessarily, and (4) whatever was necessarily, "still is, and ever will be."[2]

> What could never but be, can never but be, for its nature is such, as whereto not to be is impossible. Otherwise, if its nature had not been such, there being nothing else by which it should be made, it could never have been.[3]

Secondly, we must recognize that whatsoever is not necessarily of itself must have been created by, or come from that which is necessarily of itself.[4] Thirdly, neither this visible world, or anything created is necessarily, or of itself, and was therefore created by a Being more excellent than itself. This is evident because: (1) change implies imperfection, and this world changes, (2) whatsoever Being is of itself is more excellent than what is not of itself. Fourthly, from the things that are visible and created, there is plain evidence that the Maker of them "excels in power, wisdom and goodness."[5] This is precisely what the Scripture means which states "the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made"[6]; so that they who refuse to see Him "are without excuse."

From this it follows that this God is on speaking terms with men.[7] However, we find a great cloud separating man from God, and though it is still possible to discern that God is, what He is, is only revealed to us through the Scriptures.[8] The light of reason

1. Ibid., p. 276.
2. Ibid., p. 277.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 278.
5. Ibid., p. 280.
6. Rom. 1:20.
7. Loc.cit.
8. Ibid., p. 281.

in other words, gives the foundation to religion, and proves that man should be the temple of God, but it is only the written Revelation that tells us how to regain our rightful place in God's plan.[1] If we compare what nature reveals of God with the Scriptures, our reason assures us of the latter's authenticity.[2]

When nature's disclosure of God and Scriptural revelation concur so universally with reason's proper estimate of God, it is passing strange that man is so much an enemy to God, and gives Him so little place. The answer lies in man's apostasy. If a man looks inward, he can see the vitiated powers of his soul, but introspection requires the sacred volume to fill out the extent of the defection.[3] Pagan authorities universally attest this inward corruption, and some even hint at the biblical Fall.[4] The image of God became "defaced and torn down"; not the natural image of God be sure, for it consists of the permanent faculties of man; his intelligence, vitality, reason and immortality, but the image which resembles the excellencies of God.[5] In short, God was forced to vacate the temple He had made, because man insisted upon becoming his own god.

The ruin of the temple had to be restored by God's Son, Immanuel.[6] He became "a most perfect temple," and as the exemplary temple, pointed the way to which all other temples of men "were to be conformed."[7] He became a "seminal temple" by the sacrifice

1. Ibid., p. 283.
2. Ibid., pp. 283, 284.
3. Ibid., p. 291.
4. Ibid., pp. 296-300.
5. Ibid., p. 301.
6. Ibid., p. 313.
7. Ibid., p. 315.

of dying. This "legal substitution," made possible by a special law in the case, was accomplished in order that all guilt might be transferred to Him.[1] The Spirit became the Agent for the actual transformation to be inwrought in the lives of those who accept the sacrifice,[2] and He indwells the private mansion of each Christian to build him up again as the temple of God.

This was a rational act, and one commended by reason, because "the bands of a love are the cords of a man."[3] This is the "rational magnetism," which draws man to the Universal Lover. The question arises, however, "why might not the matter have been otherwise brought about"?[4] Was it necessary for a Sovereign God to cause His only Son to die? Yes, it was necessary, for there was no other way in which the majesty of God could be propitiated.[5] "Surely the best reason we can exercise in this case, is to think that course reasonable which we find God hath chosen, although we had no insight into the matter."[6] Fortunately, however, God does furnish us with reasons which are sufficient for at least a partial understanding of Atonement. When we consider the requirements of Divine justice,[7] God's legal constitution, His holiness and wisdom, our reason confirms God's decision.[8]

Therefore, not only was a sufficient recompense necessary, but no less was sufficient than that made by Immanuel. Once made,

1. Ibid., p. 323.
2. Ibid., pp. 323-327.
3. Hos. XI:4. 4. Ibid., p. 347. 5. Ibid., p. 350.
6. Ibid., p. 353.
7. Ibid., pp. 374-382. Howe distinguishes between positive and negative justice, showing that both aspects of God's righteousness had to be satisfied. It is interesting to note that at the time Howe was writing The Living Temple he was concurrently studying English law.
8. Ibid., pp. 380, 383.

it is the Spirit's work to be both Builder and Inhabitant of the Temple.[1] He is the Trustee, the chief Steward of God's household,[2] and in this capacity, raises man again to the position of nobility he once enjoyed.

In summary, "reason having first found out God," it is the duty of religion to adore Him. This is not a blind acquiescence to an Inscrutable Creator, who bends men to His sovereign will, but the reasonable consent of faith to admit the "King of Glory."[3] God does nothing which is contrary to Reason, but Reason without Revelation is insufficient. It is therefore only against Reason that man denies Revelation, and the truth revealed in Jesus Christ.[4]

The Cambridge Platonists

The main sources of Howe's doctrine of man are twofold - Platonic as interpreted by the professors at Cambridge, and Calvinism inherited in a direct descent from the great Genevan. The first of these influences looms large in the philosophical framework from which his theological thought is launched.

When he wrote, "reason having first found out God, religion adores Him ..."[5] he was only echoing the philosophy of intellect his masters at Cambridge had been developing for half a century. The formative influence of the Platonists upon the youthful Howe is aptly described by his biographer, Calamy. He writes that after

1. Ibid., pp. 423-435.
2. Ibid., pp. 440-470.
3. Ibid., p. 472.
4. A century and a half later, Kierkegaard was energetically writing that we must believe "against the understanding." cf. Concluding Unscientific Postscript.
5. Works, I, 406.

making entry to Christ College in Cambridge, Howe became a great admirer of More and Cudworth, receiving from them that "Platonick Tincture, which so remarkably runs through the writings which he drew up and published in his advanced years."[1] Later Calamy speaks of the large "Fund of Rational and Theological Learning,"[2] which he used to develop for himself into a private "Body of Divinity," from which he "deviated but little the rest of his life."[3] From these facts we not only have demonstration of the intellectual vigour of young Howe, but also the lasting indebtedness of his thought to the Cambridge Platonists.

There is no great difficulty in tracing the sources of the Cam-:bridge philosophers. As a philosophical school, they were de-:cisively influenced by the study of Platonic writings, that is to say, not only of Plato himself, but of those Alexandrine teachers who followed out in a theological direction the Platonic course of thought. This was the positive influence, which more than any other, moulded their minds. It was their desire to bring the church back to "her old loving nurse the Platonistic philosophy"[4] and they made an earnest effort to raise her thought again to an area where the antitheses of differing denominational interests might disappear in a synthesis of Christian unity. If they under-:estimated the depth of the differences, and if they failed to see that in the furore and passion of party politics, it is very diffi-:cult for sane Christianity to prevail, they are not greatly to be

1. Calamy, op.cit., pp. 7, 8.
2. Ibid., p. 11.
3. Ibid., p. 12.
4. Tulloch, Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy, II, 24.

blamed. Their positive emphasis on stressing the unity of Christian thought perhaps made a deeper and more decisive impression on Howe's life and future actions in the interests of ecumenicity, than even their philosophical bias.[1]

As Tulloch has summarized,

> They (Cambridge Platonists) sought, in a word, to marry philosophy to religion, and to confirm the union in the indestructible basis of reason and the essential elements of our higher humanity ... It was the first elaborate attempt to wed Christianity and philosophy made by any Protestant school; and it may be even said to have been the first true attempt of the kind since the days of the great Alexandrine teachers.[2]

Nowhere was Howe influenced more by the Platonists than in his view of anthropology. The basic agreements have called forth such varying comments as Alexander Whyte's appraisal of him as the "Platonist among the Puritans" and Thomas Chalmers' judgment that he ranked first among Puritan theologians.[3] One such similarity appears in his view of the image of God. It will be remembered that Howe taught a distinction is to be made between the positive and natural image.[4] The former was lost, while the latter, comprising reason, intelligence, understanding and knowledge could not be lost, because it is a permanent possession of the nature of man.[5] Thus reason retains its powers, but now uses them against the knowledge of God. If Reason can be turned to its proper work, it again finds God. So also Dr Whichcote, who said, "It is the proper Work of Reason in Man, to find God out in his works and

1. See Chapter V.
2. Tulloch, op.cit., II, 14.
3. Vide supra, pp. 45, 46.
4. Works, ed. Hunt, VII, 355-370.
5. Ibid.

follow him in his Ways."[1] In a full section on reason, Henry More writes,

> For mine own part, reason seems to me ... to be in God Himself ... and what is this but Ratio stabilis, a kind of steady and immovable reason, discovering the connation of all things at once? But that in us is Ratio mobilis or reason in evolution, we being able to apprehend things only in successive manner, one after another. But so many as can comprehend at a time, ... which is really a participation of that divine reason in God ... is a true and faithful principle in man when it is perfected and polished by the Holy Spirit.[2]

Whichcote, the seminal spirit of Cambridge, if one can be named, was more of a scriptural latitudinarian than a pure Platonist.[3] He sent his admiring students, of which Howe was one, to 'Plato, Tully and Plotin,' and although acknowledging his debt to the philosophers, declared that he had spent much more time with Calvin, Perkins and Beza. Thus it is natural that he, with Howe, should interpret 'right reason' to mean, not the logical analysis of syllogisms, but the proper mental disposition toward God. He wrote, "What has not Reason in it, or for it, if held out for Religion, is man's Super-:stition; it is not religion of God's making."[4]

From this follows the great unreason of sin "It is an astonish-:ing thing," Howe writes, "to think ... that a creature perfectly intelligent and perfectly holy should come to be guilty of so horrid a violation of the divine law as this."[5] As Whichcote states,

> To go against reason is to go against God; it is the self-same to do that which the reason of the case doth require, and that which God Himself doth appoint. Reason is the Divine Governor of man's life; it is the very voice of God.[6]

1. Tulloch, op.cit., II, 355.
2. Ibid. cf. Dr B. Whichcote, Select Sermons, 1698, p. 69.
3. Bush, op.cit., p. 342.
4. Benjamin Whichcote, Moral and Religious Aphorisms, 1930, p.14.
5. Works, ed. Hunt, VII, 344, 345.
6. Tulloch, op.cit., II, 100.

Sin is contempt; in fact sin is contempt of "the highest and most indisputable authority."[1]

Whichcote gives precisely the same definition of sin as Howe: "Sin, as it reflects upon God, is an act either of neglect or contempt."[2] Thus sin results not so much from lack of knowledge as from wilful disobedience. Man knew God's will, and still knows it, but he refuses to obey that will because he does not "like to retain God" in his knowledge.[3] He became "darkness."[4]

> He and darkness may define one another: That is he, and he is that. A dismal, horrid cloud hath inwrapped his soul, that resists, and yields not easily to the most piercing beams; excludes light, wheresoever it would insinuate itself.[5]

The mind no longer knows him; in fact forgets him, but the aversion stems first from the <u>will.</u>[6] Man adds insult to injury by a "rebellion against what doth remain of the law in the mind, so that what remains is very imperfect, much obscured, shattered and broken."[7] Or as Smith puts it, "We want not so much means of knowing what we ought to do, as wills to do that which we may know."[8] Whichcote informs us there is no point in trying to square wickedness with Reason, "for Reason is against it."[9]

Howe is in accord with the Platonists in yet another area of anthropology; the difference in the knowledge possessed by the elect and the non-elect. It is chiefly a matter of vitality. The rational man who thinks about God at all, often enjoys a very

1. <u>Loc.cit.</u> 2. Whichcote, <u>op.cit.</u>, p. 301. 3. Rom. 1:28.
4. <u>Works,</u> ed. Dunn, p. 137. 5. <u>Ibid.</u> 6. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 136.
7. <u>Ibid.</u> 8. John Smith, <u>Select Discourses,</u> 1756, p. 14.
9. Whichcote, <u>op.cit.</u>, p. 18.

full knowledge about matters pertaining to Deity. Yet even the fullest rational knowledge is not enough because it lacks life.[1] Man has to have "that clear knowledge made vital."[2] It is axiomatic that the mind of man is capable of arriving by argument unto knowledge of God,[3] but this knowledge is of no soteriological value until it becomes "the light of life."[4] With many men, "the closest and truest notions of God are only dead notions ... operate nothing there,"[5] and hence profit nothing. The knowledge innate must be "wrought unto a vital union" before it prepares a man for God.[6] Whichcote writes, "I may with great Reason say, that the Matter of the Gospel is a vital Principle: as it satis-:fied the Reason of our Mind."[7] Further, it is the task of the clergy,

> to awaken Men to understand the Reason of the Gospel and to consider it; that it may become the Reason of our Mind: and if it be the Reason of our Mind; it will be a Vital Principle of Life.[8]

Smith finds all knowledge quite destitute of saving power until it is reflected in the lives of men. An understanding of logical analysis is not "right knowledge." He writes,

> We must not think we have then attained to the right knowledge of truth, when we have broken thro the outward shell of words and phrases that house it up; or when by a logical analysis we have found out the dependencies and coherencies of them with one another ... Divine truth is better understood, as it unfolds itself in the purity of men's hearts and lives, then in all those subtle niceties into which curious wits may lay it forth.[9]

1. Works, ed. Hunt, VI, 419.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 416.
4. Ibid., p. 420.
5. Ibid., p. 421.
6. Ibid.
7. Whichcote, op.cit., p. 53.
8. Ibid., p. 60.
9. Smith, op.cit., pp. 8, 9.

This leads to the conclusion that there is an inward or a natural impression of God wrought in the very nature of man whereby he recognizes God. As Howe has taken great pains to explain, men do all they can to make themselves "notional atheists," but it is to no avail.[1] The knowledge of God "will stick as close to them as their thinking power."[2] They run hither and yon, to and fro, in a vain attempt to rid themselves of the God who made them. Misery dogs their steps; they "decline all acquaintance with their own souls; ... they cannot endure to appear to themselves."[3] And yet the Hound of heaven relentlessly pursues them to save them from themselves. This is also a distinguished doctrine of the Platonists. Whichcote informs us that,

> This natural knowledge of God is wrapt up in the Inward of man's Mind and Soul; that Men, whether they will or no, whether they be pleased or disaffected whensoever they look into themselves, and consult with their own Principles, and answer their very make, so oft are they satisfied in this Knowledge that there is a God.[4]

When we inquire what this impress of souls actually is, Smith informs us that "it is nothing but God himself, who could not engrav his own name, so as that it might be read, but only in rational natures."[5] God has given each man a perpetual memorial of Himself, which is a true representation of eternal understanding. Whenever we look inward upon our own souls in the correct way, "we shall find an Urim and Thummin there," by which we may ask counsel of God, since He has chosen to impress Himself upon this "breastplate."[6]

1. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 149.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 144.
4. Whichcote, op.cit., pp. 102, 103.
5. Smith, op.cit., p. 102.
6. Ibid.

Finally, the greatest lesson Howe imbibed from his masters at Cambridge was a corollary of their doctrine of man - religious toleration. Perhaps Whichcote embodied this vital principle more fully than any of the other professors. Bishop Burnet expresses the graciousness of his temper,

> He was much for liberty of conscience, and being disgusted with the dry systematical way of these times, he studies to raise those who conversed with him to a nobler set of thoughts and to consider religion as a seed of deiform nature (to use one of his own phrases). In order to do this, he set young students much on reading the ancient philosophers: chiefly Plato, Tully and Plotin; and on considering the Christian religion as a doctrine sent from God both to elevate and sweeten human nature; in which he was a great example, as well as a wise and kind instructor.[1]

Inge reminds us that the Cambridge Platonists deliberately stood apart from the conflicts of their time.[2] It was not to be Howe's lot to enjoy this immunity from the internecine struggles of the church, but the principles of liberty absorbed at the feet of Whichcote and More stood him in good stead first; when he was protecting members of the Established Church from the extremists among the Puritans, and secondly; when he attempted to bring unity and the principle of mutual toleration to the nonconformists engaged in quarrels and schismatic movements. Basically, he argues the case for toleration on Scriptural grounds.[3] The Apostles constantly employed it, even towards their enemies,[4] and used love as the means by which best to promote it.[5] This leads to the inevitable conclusion that "the maintaining of sincere love among Christians, and the improving of their faith ... are ... the best means to unite, establish and preserve them."[6]

1. Burnet, History of His Own Times, I, 186-187.
2. Whichcote, op.cit., Introduction, p. iii.
3. See Chapt. V for fuller exposition. 4. Works, IV, 255-258.
5. Ibid., pp. 258, 259. 6. Ibid., p. 261.

In Howe, we have an "original, acute ... and laborious thinker,"[1] and thus it is only to be expected that there would be departures from Cambridge Platonism in his maturing thought. Although the professors were mainly Puritan in affinity, they were Puritans with a difference. They took a line of stubborn resistance to the customary depreciation of human nature, reason, and the natural faculties by the orthodox divines. For them, reason still retained its integrity; it could not be considered to be among the 'noble ruins' of which Calvin was so fond of speaking. Although Howe accepted with the Platonists the essential rectitude of human reason, he sided with the great Genevan in the treatment of human sin and the importance of Scripture.

As originally created, man was holy, but by "his own great default,"[2] the Divine image became "defaced and torn down."[3] Man has become in every respect repugnant to God. There exists now in man only an "utmost dissimilitude" to God, so that he is now "as unlike God as he could devise."[4] These statements contrast sharply with the words of Cudworth who says,

> Man is the creature of God, made in the divine image with divine reason. Intuitions of reason and the dictates of his conscience are alike indestructible. Ideas of good and evil are as axiomatic and absolute as the maxims of geometry. Both are true, not as instituted by a personal act, but as expressions of eternal mind.[5]

Whereas Whichcote sees the Fall as the sin of 'self dependence,'[6]

1. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 2.
2. Works, III, 301.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 303.
5. Tulloch, op.cit., ii, 300.
6. De Pauley, The Candle of the Lord, p. 26.

Howe sees it as the aversion of man's will in rebellion, "that doth not choose the Lord for his God."[1] When the Platonists speak of 'sin against the light,' it is the light of philosophy which is sinned against; but when Howe writes about the darkness of sin, it is philosophy itself, whose "feeble and mistaken reasonings about matters that concern him (man) most,"[2] that is in a state of revolt and rebellion against God. For More, "the Christian religion is the deepest and choicest bit of philosophy that is."[3] Almost untarnished it seems, the intellect rides through the Fall, for "the image of God is the royal and divine Logos, but the image of this image is the human intellect."[4] Quite to the contrary, Howe says, for the enmity of man's mind against God extends "unto madness itself."[5] He writes,

> Why do they resist his authority, against whom they cannot dispute? and disobey his commands, unto which they cannot devise to frame an exception? What but the spirit of enmity, can make them regret so 'easy a yoke' ... shun and fly off from so peaceful and pleasant paths? Yea, and take ways that so manifestly 'take hold of hell, and lead down to the chambers of death'; rather choosing to perish than to obey?[6]

In a word, the theological despair of man without Christ, which marks the impassioned pleas of John Howe, is seldom present in the writings of the Platonists. Howe writes like a priest beseeching his people to turn to God. Man has dethroned his 'own reason and judgment,'[7] and 'unnatural wickedness' has caused him to hate God. His sin is such that though he has a thinking power, he will not

1. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 136.
2. Ibid., p. 136.
3. Tulloch, op.cit., ii, 303
4. Ibid.
5. Works, III, 305.
6. Ibid.
7. Works, ed. Dunn, 145.

think of God.[1] From whence comes this hatred, but from the "enmity of mind that is in man against God."[2]

There is another divergence in the importance each assigns to holy writ. For the Platonists, revelation had not ceased with the Bible, and hence was not confined to the pages of Scripture. God continues to illumine those who live the life of Reason, and Scripture confirms the truth of nature. "The written word of God," says Whichcote, "is not the first or only discovery of the duty of man. It doth gather and repeat and reinforce and charge upon us the scattered and neglected principles of God's creation."[3] This is a far cry from the preaching heard at Great Torrington, for there Howe was delivering extempore sermons which contained passages like the following,

> How great, how august, and how God-like (The Bible) is! Take it entirely in the whole frame, and nothing could appear in respect to the style, more majestic, or more worthy of God. But there was that influx of the Divine Spirit that did most certainly guide the writers.[4]

Whichcote had taught that "the spirit in us, is the Reason of our Minds, Illuminated by the Written Word. The Spirit now teaches by these Writings."[5] Further he asseverated that God has set up two lights in man, the light of reason, which is the light of creation, and the light of Scripture, which is the after-revelation from Him.[6] In regard to the identification of reason and spirit

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid., p. 150.
3. Tulloch, op.cit., ii, 100.
4. Works, ed. Dunn, pp. 53, 54.
5. Whichcote, op.cit., p. 41.
6. Ibid., pp. 14, 15.

in us, Howe answers that the spirit in us is a new thing created by the Spirit of God.[1] "Divine life" comes down from heaven to work a new spirit in us.[2] Although Howe has no quarrel with Whichcote's teaching that reason finds out God, he would object to the secondary place given Scripture as the "after-revelation" from God. For him, the Scriptures are much more: they are in fact, "Divine ... the communication of the Holy Ghost ... , God-like ...[3] the very image and idea of heaven itself."[4]

Thus Howe represents a mediating position between Platonism and Reformed theology. On the one hand he assures us that "reason hath dignified our nature by adding to it a sagacity," that knows when "God speaketh."[5] On the other hand, he saw far more clearly than any of his professors at Cambridge that reason itself needs to be changed in regeneration. The "mind of man" is the "seat and subject" of regeneration. He writes, "you that have not con-sidered what regeneration is - I tell you, it is to have your minds altered and changed."[6] And not only the practical side of the mind, but the speculative must be renewed. "If ever the gospel doth us good, it must be by the change of our minds."[7] If it seems impossible to bring consistency out of these paradoxical statements concerning the mind of man; if reason appears in Howe in a two-fold sense; a philosophical and a theological, if there seems

1. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 249.
2. Ibid., p. 253.
3. Ibid., pp. 54, 55.
4. Ibid., p. 57.
5. Works, IV, 94.
6. Ibid., p. 383.
7. Ibid., p. 384.

to be no ultimate reconciliation of the two, let it be remembered that Howe achieved, perhaps at the price of consistency, a truer view of the biblical doctrine of man than any of his great masters at Cambridge.

Calvinism in Howe

Few theologians are more concerned than John Howe to develop a biblical doctrine of man, and at the same time to weave into that context our knowledge of God. Long before modern psychology stripped the mask from the pretensions of reason, Howe observed that man does not choose the things which are good for him, which build up his immortal nature, but rather, man follows the inclinations of nature like a beast. For when we observe man, we see that even though he desires 'good,' he will not pay the price to pursue it. In this emphasis upon the deep enmity of man, he is a disciple of Calvin. Calvin observed that real aspiration unto eternal life comes not through the gift of reason, but only through the moving of the Holy Spirit.[1]

When Calvin speaks of Reason, he, like Howe, is thinking of the mind of the whole man.[2] Natural reason is not totally destroyed, but is completely perverted. And by perversion of mind, Calvin simply means a total disinclination to honour God as He

1. Calvin, op.cit., II, ii, 124, 125.
2. Torrance says, "Christianity bring no indictment against reason as such (the neutral reason). That would be to repudiate the intelligibility of its own faith. But Christianity does insist that the reason be brought back to a place of dependence on God." Torrance, E.G., xiv, 29.

demands. Right reason, therefore, is regenerate reason, reason rectified by the "renewing of the Holy Ghost."[1] It is dynamic, dependent wholly upon "the divine liberality."[2] It must be understood as being maintained in being, not autonomously, but by God's Spirit. Reason, therefore, as the function of man's nature, is truly reasonable only when it reflects the image of God and His Glory.

A great question in any theologian's anthropology pivots on his doctrine of the Fall. Is the image of God intact in man, as Pelagius insists, or is it corrupted? The seventeenth century asserted the latter with unanimity. A more pointed question was, 'Is man's Fall to be taken so seriously that it is understood to vitiate the efficacy of his mind as well as the efficacy of his actions?' Howe is in accord with Calvin in admitting the impairment of reason as well as corruption of morals. Man retains the capacity of reason, but his uniqueness rests upon an ability to acknowledge a "divine Being." The image of God in man which Howe terms "moral" was "superadded to his natural image" in the original sanctity and holiness of man.[3] This is the image which was lost.[4] The natural image remained but its "resemblance of Him in the excellencies" which were ruined can only be repaired through regeneration.[5] The Fall occurred primarily in the mind of man so the Divine order became inverted, and now man became ruled by his 'inferior,' not his 'superior' attributes, ending in corporeal

1. Titus, 3:5.
2. Calvin, op.cit., II, 124, 125.
3. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 128.
4. Ibid., III, 301.
5. Ibid.

and spiritual death.[1] In Calvin the treatment is similar. The consequence of the Fall can be summed up in the two words, deprivation and depravation.[2] Man lost the fuller knowledge of God which would have prepared him for heaven, termed aeterna beatitudo.[3] He also became depraved in every faculty, his reason, his will and his appetites. His reason is blind in spiritual things for it "attaineth not at all to those that are the chief things in the first things"; that is, it has no "confidence in God."[4]

Although the fallen conscience has no more power for Calvin than it does for Howe in finding out God, yet it enjoys a certain nuisance value.

> Conscience does not allow us to enjoy a perpetual sleep without being a witness to those things we owe God. It serves to show us what is good and evil, and does not fail to accuse us when we stray from duty. Yet man is wrapped in such error, that he cannot truly learn much about God from conscience. His own pride blinds him, therefore it was necessary for God to give man a written law.[5]

It will be recalled that one of the most striking features of Howe's anthropology is his insistence that knowledge of God is a permanent possession of man.[6] "For he hath some light in his mind,"[7] "secretly conscious of the immortality of the soul,"[8] and yet tends "continually downward in opposition to him."[9] In this regard, the language of Calvin sounds almost identical. The philosopher may

1. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 134. 2. De Pauley, op.cit., p. 232.
3. Calvin, op.cit., II, ii, 16. 4. Ibid., p. 123.
5. Calvin, op.cit., II, ii, 26. Pascal says, "original sin is foolishness to men ... but this foolishness is wiser than all the wisdom of men ... how should it be perceived by ... reason, since it is a thing against reason?" Pascal, The Thoughts, p. 165.
6. Vide supra, p. 111. 7. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 136.
8. Ibid., p. 148. 9. Ibid., p. 150.

laugh at God, but it is only a front; for inwardly his conscience is seared. Even the basest suffer a dull feeling of God, which cannot be shaken off. This isn't something gathered at the schools, "but such a one whereof every man is a teacher to himself even from his mother's womb, and such a one as nature suffereth none to forget," although it cannot be denied that "many spend all their endeavour to shake it out of their minds (sic.)."[1]

What of the imago dei? Is it completely obliterated? Or is it only marred? Howe tells us that the righteous image has "completely vanished," but the natural image, composed of man's spiritual, intellective, "vital and immortal nature ... cannot be lost."[2] Here again Howe's usage of reason is ambivalent. There is a positive sense in which the image has been destroyed, and there is a negative sense in which it cannot be obliterated. Calvin treats the difficult problem in two senses as well; there is a narrow meaning and a wider meaning of the word. In the narrow sense, Calvin thinks of the imago as a mirror. Only while the mirror actually reflects an object does it have the image of that object. Where the thought is of the mirroring of God, the mirror is always the Word.[3] The imago cannot be dissociated from the act of reflecting. On the other hand, the imago dei used in the wider sense, means anything in the universe created by God. Both the world as a whole and the tiniest creature image the glory of God. Man, as the pre-eminent specimen of God's handwork, shows

1. Calvin, op.cit., I, XIV.
2. Works, III, 301 ff.
3. Torrance, Calvin's Doctrine of Man, pp. 36, 37.

most completely that image.

As Torrance says,

> All this means that behind Calvin's wider sense of the imago dei he thinks of the image as the reflection seen by the eye of man, who, coming down from his knowledge of God, reads it into nature, or who by means of the Word, makes the mute creation speak of the glory of God. Therefore Calvin's wider use of the imago dei, is grounded upon the special relation of man to the word of God; that is, upon the narrower sense of the imago dei.[1]

This means, of course, the doom of fallen reason, for natural man is not able to ground his being in the special relation to the Word necessary for salvation. Howe points out that "the clearest rational knowledge" is of no value to "the saving purposes and necessities of our souls."[2] "Besides the objective representation, there must be a subjective reception," and our rational knowledge only serves to condemn us if there be no inward application. The use of reason "is necessary but not sufficient."[3] Calvin reiterates even more forcefully,

> For whereas the wit of man by reason of the feebleness thereof can by no means attain unto God, but being helped and lifted up by his holy word, it followed of necessity that all men ... did wander in vanity and error, because they sought God without his word.[4]

It is only when we come to a consideration of the function, value, and ability of natural reason that the major differences appear. Although Howe is unclear as to how much actual impairment the natural image suffered, he seems to hold that the critical power of reason is left intact, but it rages in its ill

1. Ibid., pp. 41, 42.
2. Works, ed. Hunt, VII, 419.
3. Ibid.
4. Calvin, op.cit., I, iv.

inclination towards God "unto madness," because it is rooted in enmity of will.

> The ill inclination of man towards God affects the whole soul. The mind knows him not, thinks not of him, is habitually forgetful of him; and more formally, this aversion is in the will; that doth not choose the Lord for his God. And conscience is stupefied, doth not its office, or, sometimes is outrageous and over-does it, the affections and passions are all so many furies; original rectitude being gone, and the soul destitute of that holy image which originally it bore.[1]

So far so good. But then he asserts that when reason's natural disinclination towards God is overcome by rational proofs, the existence of a "First Being and Cause ... of the wisdom, power goodness and other perfections which must primarily agree to Him" can be proved.[2] Wrestling as he is between a functional and substantival view of reason, he would agree with Calvin that most men are only reasonable when regenerate, but there are those chosen few, who by sheer power of thinking come to the light of theological day.[3] Calvin never thinks of reason as substance, "but adopts a functional or dynamic view of man's mental nature."[4] Thus to the question, 'Can Reason find out God?', Howe answers a resounding 'yea'; while from those influenced by Calvin comes an even sharper 'nay.'

Perhaps part of the confusion regarding the ability of natural reason could be cleared up if a distinction were drawn,

1. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 136. 2. Ibid., I, 400.
3. Ibid., III, preface to part two; pp. 229-233. cp. G.W. Bromily, "Even the finest philosopher cannot by his philosophising find out God. He can and probably will create his own God, ... but he cannot alone rise beyond that to the true God who is the Lord and Master." Bromily, "The Biblical Conception of Revelation," E.Q., XII, 317.
4. Torrance, op.cit., p. 120.

as Calvin does, between the judgments of reason as directed towards "inferior" and "superior" objects.[1] By the former he means all things which pertain to the earthly kingdom, the sciences, the liberal arts and mathematics. By the latter he means matters relating to the "pure knowledge of God, the method of true righteousness, and the mysteries of the heavenly kingdom."[2] It is in regard to the latter that man's reason has no ability to find out God. Reason has been perverted, so that now it is at variance with itself, in its conflicting desires like "hostile armies."[3] In regards to 'Divine things' our reason is "totally blind and stupid," but this does not mean that man is ever wholly destitute of "some little flame," or at least a "spark of it"; but rather that this spark is so slight and the flame so feeble, that "it cannot comprehend God by that illumination."[4] However, when we consider the intellectual powers of man from Howe's standpoint, there is considerably more hope. By the greatness of his mind, man forms notions of God that "primarily agree to Him."[5] It is not lack of natural ability that keeps man from making the acquaintance of God; "they know not God and converse not with him, only because they have no mind to it."[6] In a sense, Howe's position is more devastating in its attack upon the reason of man than Calvin's because reason is

1. Calvin, op.cit., II, ii, 86.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., I, xv, 205.
4. Ibid., II, 292.
5. Works, I, 400.
6. Ibid.

more culpable in that it can, if it will, find out God. Calvin understands by natural theology only a hindrance or a "kind of veil, by which the mind is prevented from a discovery of God."[1] In a word, Howe says that reason does not find out God because it will not, while Calvin maintains that it cannot. According to Calvin, man is in total disjunction with God, even to the wrong interpretation of nature, while Howe finds man a rational creature who is irrational only because he will not listen to the voice of Reason in nature. He adopts the basic soundness, if not the method of the Ramist system. Miller says,

> The whole Ramist system, with its trust in direct perceptions, its immediate adjudication between doubtful alternatives through the divining rod of the disjunctive syllogism ... was fundamentally a glorification of nature; it was an assertion that the cultivated mind, unexalted by divine influence, is competent to gather knowledge of things, and to assign particular truths to the proper place in the universal system, because the mind is fundamentally commensurate with creation.[2]

Basically, we may conclude that Howe and Calvin are in essential agreement concerning the depth of the gulf that separates man from God, and the vitiation of all man's spiritual powers. But when we contemplate the abilities of natural reason, Howe wavers between a substantival and functional view which obscures the Calvinistic emphasis that reason itself has fallen from its former ability to come to true knowledge of God.

1. Calvin, op.cit., II, ii, 297.
2. Miller, The New England Mind, p. 157.

Chapter Four

PROVIDENCE, PRESCIENCE AND THE LORD PROTECTOR.

Rom. 8:28-29 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Acts 17:24-25 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.

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The century that observed an obscure country minister with Puritan leanings[1] hounded by the authorities, deprived of his living, and exiled from his country, also saw his son, with the same predilections, elevated to the highest politico-ecclesiastical position afforded to a minister of that time - chaplain to Cromwell The century that admitted the rule of her greatest biblicist, Oliver Cromwell, also endured the reign of one of her worst prof-:ligates in Charles II. In such a topsy-turvy century it is not surprising therefore, to find religion and politics more closely conjoined in England than at any other time. Probably the gap between the godly and the ungodly, the regenerate and the unregen-:erate, was never wider, or more clearly depicted in the mind of the average man than in this turbulent, exciting period. Richard Baxter, in describing his tour of duty as chaplain to the Army, complained about the honest men "of weak judgments and little acquaintance with such matters," who spent much of their time

1. Vide supra, p. 2.

disputing against "set times of prayer, and against the tying of ourselves to any duty before the Spirit move us ..."[1] so that he, never loath to enter controversy, spent much of his time trying to correct their errors. This and numerous other incidents clearly demonstrate the interest of the rank and file in subjects which were troubling the weightiest minds of the seventeenth century.

It is perhaps only in this period that such an enigmatic person as Cromwell could rise from his station as an obscure land-owner to a position of almost absolute control of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Cromwell's character fascinates because it is full of paradox, and yet the paradox is not merely political; it is not simply the paradox of a man who professes to be a democrat and ends by becoming absolute dictator. The issue is complicated by religion,[2] and at its deepest level the contradiction is between an Independent who held 'democratic' ideals and yet became Lord Protector. To solve the problem, historians have resorted to a wide variety of theories, the most simple being that of the royalists, who, by denying the sincerity of Cromwell's religion, are able to picture him as a black-hearted, ambitious tyrant. At the other end of political interpretation is the Liberalism of the nineteenth century which vaunts him as the Great Democrat. Between Clarendon's royalist contention of the "brave bold man" and the hero of Carlyle a great gulf is fixed, and if none can pass over by the bridge of historical research, one's estimate of Cromwell must be consigned to the arbitration of prejudice.

1. Baxter, Works, ed. Orme, i, 49.
2. Paul, The Lord Protector, pp, 11, 12.

As Paul points out, modern attempts to cut the Gordian knot[1] and to present a 'realistic' view of Cromwell fail because they make no real attempt to capture the essence of the seventeenth century mind. If we can accept Thomas Carlyle's premise that a "man's religion is the chief fact with regard to him," perhaps we can more easily understand Cromwell as a religious child of a truly religious century. Since John Howe was chaplain to Cromwell from 1656 until the death of the great Protector, and remained the life-long friend of his godly son, Richard, it is well worth while to compare and contrast preacher and Protector in the doctrine of Providence, which in Cromwell is the key not only to his success, but also to his own belief in a personal rule thrust upon him by Jehovah. If we can properly understand Cromwell's reaction to this doctrine we shall have progressed a considerable distance in solving one of the great riddles of English history. In Howe's dispute with Cromwell over one of the by-products of the doctrine of personal providence,- the certitude of answered requests in prayer,- the central issue is the Reformed doctrine of Providence over against the new interpretations afforded through Independency, Fifth Monarchism, and the subtle influences wafting from the fruit-:ful pen of George Fox. Although notions as far reaching as this "float about like thistledown and germinate none know how,"[2] it is fairly certain that Cromwell owes his peculiar view of special providence not to a misinterpretation of Calvin, but to his accept-:ance of God's seal upon him through historical events.

1. Ibid.
2. Knox, op.cit., p. 153.

In Cromwell's view, there are three modes by which God demonstrates his will to the spiritual man. First, he reveals Himself in the Scriptures, secondly, through experience, and finally, through the attestation of external events. The third is the testimony which Cromwell preferred because it was more objective.[1] When Cromwell took his place as first man in the state, he did so because Providence had willed it through unmistakable historical signs. This became so unshakeable a belief that twice a day he recited the 71st Psalm which he believed to be a

> Prophesie purposely dictated by the Holy Ghost for him, or else that this great Personage was the mortal Figure of that great Favourite of God, who had done so many marvellous things with such slender beginnings, passing through so many obstacles, difficulties and dangers.[2]

It was upon these external events that Cromwell came to rely increasingly, and as must always be the case, he looked more and more for signs to reassure him.

On the other hand, Howe's doctrine of Providence and Prescience developed most especially in his tract, The Reconcilable-:ness of God's Prescience of the Sins of Men with the Wisdom and Sincerity of his Counsels, which Hall calls his best work, is thoroughly grounded in the more certain statements of Scripture. We shall proceed first to study Howe's view of Providence, and then to place Cromwell's view in juxtaposition.

Even a superficial knowledge of Howe's works acquaints the reader with his remarkable interest in the dispositions of Providence, particularly in regard to the future. The sermon titles alone reveal

1. Woodhouse, op.cit., p. 42.
2. Samuel Carrington, The History of the Life and Death of His Most Serene Highness, Oliver, Late Lord Protector, 1659, p. 230. (as found in Paul, loc.cit.)

a great preoccupation with providential interests in the future welfare of the saints - sermons such as, The Blessedness of the Righteous, The Vanity of this Mortal Life, Thoughtfulness for the Future, The Redeemer's Tears Wept over Lost Souls, The Christian's Triumph over Death, and Of Delighting in God. In Of Thoughtfulness for the Future, he discusses the 'secret distrust of Providence,' which stems from a 'lurking atheism.' It proceeds because of unbelief, and progresses from

> our not having a fixed, steady, actual belief of the wise, holy, righteous and powerful Providence that governs all affairs in the world, and particularly all our own affairs, no doubt highly offends against this law.[1]

As was true of Calvin, Howe finds the doctrine of Providence particularly comforting. It is God, not Fate, that governs the world, and if God be "thought out of the world," only a "horrid darkness" results.[2] But the doctrine of Providence tells us that God is

> everywhere present and active ... that heavens, earth, and seas, are replenished with a divine powerful presence; were our minds possessed with the belief of his fulness filling all in all, and of governing power and wisdom extending to all times as well as places; there were neither time nor place left for undue thoughtfulness of what is or shall be.[3]

In a similar vein Calvin writes of providence - "it is certain that not a drop of rain falls, but at the express command of God."[4] Certainly if the flight of birds is directed by the unerring counsel of God, we must admit with David, that though "he dwelleth on high," yet he "humbleth himself to behold the things which are in heaven and in the earth."[5] Nothing happens through

1. Works, IV, 105.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Calvin, op.cit., I, i, 217.
5. Ps. 113: 5, 6.

fortune alone. Popular thinking ascribes ship-wreck, robbery, escape from death and all such occurrences to fortune. But the one who has been taught by Christ seeks further, and discovers that "all events are governed by the secret counsel of God."[1] Even nature, with its supposedly immutable 'laws' is governed by the 'present hand of God,' operating not autonomously, but according to His will. Contrary to philosophy, the doctrine of providence makes God not merely the 'prime Agent' but the One who also 'worketh now.'[2] He holds the helm of the universe, "regulating all events."[3]

This sets the stage for an exposition of Howe's view. From his writings we receive the impression of a God who is near at hand, controlling the growth of the flowers, the ferocity of the wind, the intensity of winter cold, and the heat of summer days. It is the 'present hand' of God that controls and upholds all of creation, and His providence is never farther away than the near-:est object of creation. Yet to balance this emphasis, there is an equally adamant insistence that God is wholly independent of His Universe.

Providence in Howe

Divine Providence is not extended to the righteous alone, but also to the wicked. "Oh, we do not enough consider the kind-:ness of heaven towards our world! that there should be any beams of divine light ... shining in it."[4] God continually surrounds us; He is before and behind in all the created things of the

1. Calvin, op.cit., p. 211.
2. Ibid., p. 213.
3. Ibid., p. 214.
4. Works, ed. Hunt, VI, 391.

universe.[1] There is nothing we can take up, nothing we can employ, nothing we can enjoy but what He has made. Yet we do Him no homage. He who is "clearly seen by the things that are made" deserves our absolute subjection to His government "both legal and providential."[2] To rebel against either involves man in a continual war against God.

The doctrine of providence cannot properly be understood without reference to the power of God. All things on earth and in heaven have come into being out of nothing through the power of God. "If all the world were assembled to contrive and unite their power to make a grain of dust out of nothing, they must all confess it infinitely above them."[3] Again, the continual sustaining of the world calls forth the same power, "as if a new world were created every moment."[4] The power of nature, the might of the storm, and the motion of the vast heavenly bodies are alike sustained by the providence of God.[5]

A second characteristic of providence is that it involves God's knowledge of "all contingent futurities."[6] By 'contingent futurities' we mean futurities which depend upon free causes, such as are dependent upon the will and pleasure of creatures which possess this freedom as inherent in their nature. Some suppose this means only that God makes a man do what He knows he will do, but this does not fit the biblical schema and subverts "the whole

1. Ibid., p. 432.
2. Ibid., p. 440.
3. Works, ed. Hunt, VII, 72, 73.
4. Ibid., p. 73.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p. 84.

entire notion of divine forbearance and permissive providence."[1] We are told that God has set forth His Son to be "a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."[2] If God does not truly forbear, but makes man do evil, then He is caught in the very act of hating Himself.

A third characteristic of providential guidance is divine wisdom. As Jeremiah states, "He hath established the earth by his wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by his understanding."[3] The wise providence by which God governs the world and all the variety of creatures within it, so that each fulfils his function and his station, is surpassing evidence of His wisdom.[4]

The Goodness of God is an intrinsic dimension of His providence. It was out of His immense and boundless goodness that the creation was brought into being.[5] That there should be a creation framed in orderly procession is a tribute to His wisdom. But that there should be any creatures at all is owing to nothing else but "his mere goodness."[6] The creature has no autonomy of his own, but is eternally dependent upon the pleasure of the Creator whether he should be "something or nothing."[7] The fact that His Providence continues to sustain the world is further proof, if proof were needed, of the goodness He displays, "for

1. Ibid., p. 85.
2. Rom. 3:25.
3. Jer. 10:12.
4. Works, VII, 87.
5. Ibid., p. 104.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.

as he had no need of a creation at first, he hath still no need of it," and he that

> raised it up into being out of nothing one moment might have suffered all to slip and lapse into nothing the next moment again, without injury to what he had made, or without loss to himself.[1]

God will have the whole world know that "there is the power of goodness that doth predominate and is governing."[2] His goodness protects even His offending creatures in two ways; through laws, which keep evil and rapacity down, and providence, which sustains the creatures in their rebellion.

Against the doctrine that God's providence is good, men interject two arguments. First, they argue, eternal miseries dog the steps of most men, and secondly, temporal calamities occur to the majority.[3] If God is good, why is it that most men perish miserably, and the best undergo great and tragic hardships? If God is good, why is there so much evil? Does a good God create wickedness?

In the first place, it must be understood that goodness in God is not a perfection that excludes or diminishes other attributes.[4] Punitive justice is also a perfection belonging to the nature of God, and as He is Ruler of the world, He is also Judge.[5] Each man's conscience assures him that God is righteous, and all men freely admit that punishment is nothing but "due animadversion upon

1. Ibid., p. 110.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 115.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

an offender against the law to which he is obliged."[1] Judgment upon creatures without will or understanding has no meaning, for they cannot comprehend its purpose. But man is a knowing creature, and should be a worshipping one as well. Was it not an ancient philosopher who said,

> If I were capable ... of making an intelligent creature stand up out of nothing, with a present power of using and understanding, the first thing I should expect from him should be, that he fall down and worship me, and make acknowledgment to me, for having been the author of being, and of such a being to him.[2]

That man does not worship the Being who made him, and that he offends daily is all too evident, and if no course were undertaken for the punishment of such transgressors, God's government would be jeopardized.[3] Even the punished creature must acknowledge the goodness against which he has sinned.[4]

Nor, secondly, does God's general goodness contradict His special goodness. General goodness, or the doctrine of Providence, is often set against the notion of God's special goodness to some. Here we must distinguish between matters of right, and matters of favour.[5] "For matters of right, we are to expect from it, that God do right to all men universally without exception; but for matters of mere favour, in reference whereunto he is not so much as a debtor by promise; ... he can owe nothing to his creature."[6]

When a man is fully convinced of the goodness of God in His providence, he is furnished with a very considerable weapon against the

1. Ibid., p. 116.
2. Ibid., pp. 116, 117.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 121.
5. Ibid., p. 122.
6. Ibid.

temptation to doubt a good God in an evil world. When we consider that it is God's law which prescribes to us the way, His providences which make the way in which we walk, then we see that "all his ways are mercy and truth."[1] His providences are to be judged by a series of His leadings; as a whole, and not separately. "And so, if you look upon providence, you are not to pronounce concerning this or that, separately and apart, considered by itself."[2] The providences of God are to be judged in reference to their end, and only then is it possible to see that His work is perfect and entire.[3] Then only do we understand that nothing could be left out of the whole chain of providences without damaging the final unity into which it falls.

In Howe's thinking, God's concern about human affairs extends to every aspect of humanity. There are no areas of life to which God is indifferent.[4] This means that his government of the universe is supreme and exact.[5] It is not possible that part of His creation should be governed, and another part ungoverned; part under a ruler and part under no ruler at all. His government is also precise, that is, with respect to the state of the governed creatures. Since this world is in a state of general apostacy, it is not to be expected that His methods of government are the same as though no depravity existed.[6] The wonder is not that the world seems so chaotic, but that God has preserved so "mild and propitious" a government under such difficult circumstances. Therefore, we may conclude that

1. Ibid., p. 133.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Works, VII, 190.
5. Ibid., p. 191.
6. Ibid.

providence works even when not readily discernible by us, in every agency and exigency of life.[1]

However, this does not rule out the common course, in the way of God's dealings with His creatures, which is to "let things go on according to the posture and aptitude of the second causes by which they are effected and brought about."[2] Although God occasionally overrules, it is His usual method to allow men of this world "leave" to execute their evil doings without intervention. This means that in God's providential dealings, God allows the wicked to rage and cause injury to the elect, according to the inclinations of second causes, without restraint.[3] When He does check them by an extra-ordinary power, He always does so by means which commend themselves to reason.[4] There is nothing incongruous in the law of second causes with divine intervention, for, as in the case of God's general and special love, the good pleasure of the Creator is sufficient rea-son to explain His extraordinary works.

Clearly, in the universe there is nothing outside the will of God. No sparrow falls without the Father's will, and in His provi-dential dealings with man, we must distinguish between the secret and revealed will of God.[5] There is a difference between the will of God as it lies revealed in Himself, and as it is known and rea-lized in the world.[6] "His will concerns what he will do himself,

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid., p. 193.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 194.
5. Ibid., p. 145. Here Howe finds the Calvinistic distinction of 'will' in God, of great merit in his explication of the distinctions and propositions which belong to it.
6. Ibid.

and it also concerns what he will have us to do."[1] A further distinction is to be made between the effective and permissive will of God; "his will to effect whatsoever he thinks fit for him to effect; and his will to permit whatsoever he thinks fit to permit."[2] Propositionally expressed, the will and purposes of God always connect together means and end.[3] For example, when God purposed to save the life of Paul and his comrades in the ship, he also determined that the mariners should not go away, for the apostle expressly stated, "If these go away we cannot be saved." Thus God not only determines the ends but the means. In the will of Providence, then, these men were the second causes or the means to accomplish God's active will; namely that Paul and his companions should be saved. We may say that the mariners represent His purpose as to permissa, things that are permitted by Him, and they also represent His purpose as to effecta, since they are the means by which His active will is brought to pass.[4] It is the former, the permissive will of God, which is our particular concern in the doctrine of Providence.

It is plain then, that nothing happens fortuitously. The counsel of the divine will is conversant with every concern of man. "He doth nothing unwillingly, he wills nothing unadvisedly; therefore, whereas all things lie under his agency, all things lie under the counsel of his will."[5] Under the doctrine of Providence is comprehended His rules, precepts, and mandates.[6] There is no state or condition of man, no private business of man, personal or domestic, no political problem of man in kingdoms or nations, no concern of the

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 146.
4. Ibid., p. 147.
5. Ibid., p. 185.
6. Ibid.

church of God in time that does not lie under the determination of the divine counsel.[1] "And so the conditions of men, while they are here in this world, whether they shall be high or low; whether they shall be rich or poor; every one hath his dimension, his allowance ordered for him; and no doubt therefore, pre-ordained."[2] What the ravens have, the fowls of the air enjoy, and the beasts of the field realize, is measured out by the divine allowance.[3]

As in nature, so in families. What allotments such and such a family receives, how many members, what times they will increase and decrease, where and how they will live, what their place shall be, is not only known, but planned by Providence.[4] These events are not ordered by the Lord "incogitantly," but according to His eternal counsel and purpose.[5] Now if these things are matters of Providence, they must have been part of God's eternal purpose, and if this is so, it follows that "nothing can be new with God; no new thought, no new counsel or purpose."[6]

Nations are also understood within the compass of this object. Alterations in kingdoms, seasons of rest and disturbances, peace and war, plenty and scarcity, prosperity and depression, and favourable providences or judgments all lie under the counsel of the divine will.[7] "Et eternum non patitur novum; no new thing can fall out in eternity."[8]

The nature and counsel of Providence is characterized by four

1. Ibid., p. 186.
2. Ibid., pp. 186,187.
3. Ibid., p. 187.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 188.
8. Ibid.

attributes: (1) it is always perfectly wise, with the eternal view ordering all connections, references and dependencies, (2) it is also immutable, without possibility or reason of change, (3) it is a measure to God of all His own agency, of what He will and will not do, (4) it is a measure of all events, because nothing can occur but what is according to his effective or permissive will.[1]

Does the doctrine of providence rule out human prudence? What possible point can there be to the exercise of caution, when God has foreseen all events? The answer lies in the fact that we must exercise care, because the counsel of His will counts on these means.[2] Again, in the course of God's ordinary government, things go according to the posture and aptitude of second causes.[3] To go against human prudence is to go against the nature of man, and therefore to rebel against reason.

A deeper difficulty confronts us when we come to the subject of prayer. Men often argue against prayer because of the divine counsel and will, or vice versa: they think that because prayer exists as a very real force, God's decrees cannot be final.[4] If Providence brings to pass all that which His eternal decrees have declared, what value has prayer? First of all, it must be asserted with great clarity that the main purpose of prayer is worship.[5] As such, prayer is a duty, binding us to pay homage to the Sovereign Lord of All. Secondly, when we foreknow the event is determined by the divine will, we are impelled to pray with even greater urgency, as is evidenced in the case of Daniel's prayer. When he learned of

1. Ibid., p. 189.
2. Ibid., pp. 192,193.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 197.
5. Ibid.

its near completion, he prayed more earnestly for the termination of the seventy years exile, than he ever had before.[1] Thirdly, when we do not know the outcome of the event, we ought to pray for "a disposition of spirit complying with his pleasure,"[2] so that we pray not to bend the divine will to ours, but ours to it. Finally, no prayer from a devoted soul can ever fail of its principal answer, that of love to God.[3] For if a man loves God more than himself, his love will "dictate such prayers as can never miss of their answer."[4]

Those who understand the doctrine of providence to mean the personal, upholding hand of God in regard to His creation, are often tempted into a kind of Immanentalism. Howe holds to the absolute independence of God. He writes,

> This lets us see the absolute independency of the Divine Being; for what is there without himself for him to depend upon? These worlds are all that can be thought of extra Deum, without God; and they were all made by him. Can he depend upon that which he himself made? The worlds were created by the word of God; therefore, his being must be absolutely independent ... We might even lose ourselves and be swallowed up in the contemplation, to think of a Being, that, by its own peculiar excellency, could never not be, to which it was impossible not to be; which was not beholden to any thing; for all things were beholden to it.[5]

The creature not only cannot add to the Being of God, but he is impotent to add even to His happiness.[6] The divine all-sufficiency is such that all the creations exhaust no particle of His Being. He is diminished in no way, and His power in the "sustentation" or upholding of the universe subtracts nothing from His totality.[7]

Since Howe's mind was eminently practical, he was always careful

1. Ibid., p. 198.
2. Ibid., p. 199.
3. Ibid., p. 207.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 272.
6. Ibid., p. 273.
7. Ibid.

to apply the deductions of theology to the everyday life of his hear-:ers. This meant that even the doctrine of providence, which at first glance appears to be remote from practical considerations, holds primary interest for Howe in its application to the Christian life. The first use of the doctrine is to show us how to form the correct notion of God.[1] All His attributes are perfectly conjoined, and are directed by wisdom and counsel.[2] Secondly, we see from His works, the stable ordinances of night and day, the certain return of summer and winter, the perfect synchronization of sun, moon and stars, that the works of His providence are ordered by counsel and wisdom.[3] Thirdly, we should rejoice in the extent and universality of His government. Not a hand is lifted, nor a foot set down, not a sparrow falls, nor does any creature exert power, but that God's working agency moves and directs.[4] Finally, a proper understanding of providence proves the reasonableness and congruity of all His pub-:lic constitutions and laws.[5]

In all of Howe's writings there is no better summary of his doc-:trine of providence in regard to man than in a letter added as a postscript to his tract on prescience. He had been sharply criti-:cized for begging the main issue, which at that time seemed to be an extreme Calvinism that went by the appellation of "predetermina-:tive concurrence." This doctrine teaches that God not only per-:missively allowed men to sin, but also worked upon them "by a mighty and irresistible influence."[6] With this, Howe disagreed violently,

1. Ibid., p. 205.
2. Ibid., p. 206.
3. Ibid., p. 207.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 208. He also employs the argument of congruity in the doctrine of prescience. Vide infra, p. 150.
6. Works, V, 60.

and it was in his answer to the critics that he formulated an articulate Calvinistic summary of Divine providence. Clearly, he identifies prescience and Divine action, refusing the arbitrary and flimsy exits some theologians employ to deliver themselves from the unhappy necessity of dealing with the problem of universal sinfulness. He states: (1) God exercises a universal providence about all His creatures, (2) He particularly exercises such providence about man, (3) this providence extends to all the actions of men, (4) God is not a mere idle spectator, but is 'positively' active about them, (5) this providence of God does not only consist in giving man natural powers, but is a real influence upon those powers, (6) this influence is, in reference to spiritual and holy actions since the Fall, efficaciously determinative, overcoming man's natural disinclination to holiness, (7) the ordinary means of receiving this determinative influence is by our consideration of the word, (8) in reference to all other actions which are not sinful, God's influence is determinative, (9) in reference to man's sinful actions, God not only sustains those who do them, but as 'first mover' excites and activates the powers "to which they have a natural designation, and to which they are not sinfully disinclined."[1] The term 'first mover' is an unfortunate one, but Howe means, not the 'prime mover' of Aristotelian metaphysics, but a God who has brought the world into being ex nihilo, who is Prime Agent in all the affairs of men. (10) Finally, when men employ the power God gives them to ends which are evil, God overrules and disposes it to good.[2]

1. Ibid., p. 74.
2. Ibid., pp. 72-74.

The ninth proposition is the crucial point at issue. His old college friend, Theophilus Gale, in the fourth part of his justly famous The Court of the Gentiles, subjected Howe's work on prescience to a merciless and unfair criticism.[1] Howe had been taking a "quiet walk in the country,"[2] trying to help a "sceptical and pendulous"[3] mind to be set at rest concerning a troublesome aspect of the provi-:dence of God, and had been rewarded with misrepresentation and un-:just criticism. Gale evidently wanted Howe to say in proposition nine, that God was not only 'first mover' but that He actually sent a 'secret and irresistible force' that caused man to sin. Failure to do this earned Howe the unhappy classification, 'heretic' and fellow-traveller with Durandus, a noted name among haters of Reform-:ed theology. After using his considerable gift for sarcasm to good effect,[4] Howe speaks of the betrayal of friendship and his per-:sonal disappointment. "He pretends to give my sense in other words, and then gravely falls to combatting his own man of straw, which he will have represent me, and so I am to be tortured in effigy."[5]

Unconsciously, he gives an insight into his own originality when he denies association with the writings of Durandus.

> Nor did I indeed consult any book for the writing of it - as I had not opportunity, if I had been so inclined - except, upon some occasions, the Bible: not apprehending it necessary to number votes, and consider how many men's thoughts were one way and how many the other, before I would venture to think any of my own.[6]

Clearly, Howe's short summary of the doctrine of Providence

1. Calamy, op.cit., p. 68.
2. Works, V, 62.
3. Ibid., p. 60.
4. Ibid., pp. 62-64.
5. Ibid., p. 64.
6. Ibid., p. 68.

delivers him from the opprobrium of Wood's characterization - "a great and strict Arminian," and the equally distasteful identity of his views with those of Durandus. On the other hand, Howe is adamant that God never "doth by an efficacious influence move and determine men to wicked actions."[1] To love a good name, health, ease, life is not necessarily efficaciously determined by God. To do wickedness is never efficaciously determined, but to do good, to love God and His Son is always efficaciously determined.[2]

Divine Prescience

In the last seven sections of his treatise on prescience, he argues for foreknowledge on the basis of congruity or fitness. The power of God is limitless, but it is voluntarily limited by His truth - "he cannot lie,"[3] - and His wisdom.[4] When we consider the wisdom of God, it staggers the imagination. There are an infinite number of congruities open to Him that are closed to our eyes, but without becoming presumptuous, there are two things which can be said: (1) The course of God's government must be, for the most part, steady and uniform, (2) sometimes God uses a "royal liberty of stepping out of his usual course ... as he sees fit."[5]

> The universal continued rectitude of all intelligent creatures had, we may be sure, been willed with a peremptory, efficacious will, if it had been best; that is, if it had not been less congruous than to keep them sometime - under the expectation of future confirmation and reward - upon trial of their fidelity, and in a state wherein it might not be impossible to them to make a defection: - and so it had easily been prevented, that ever there should have been an apostacy from God, or any sin in the world.[6]

1. Ibid., p. 74. 2. Ibid., p. 75. 3. Ibid., pp. 48, 49.
4. Ibid., p. 50. 5. Ibid., pp. 50, 51.
6. Ibid., p. 56.

The fallaciousness of this argument is all too evident, but it is equally inevitable when congruity becomes the measuring tape of Divine doings. The problem seems to lie in Howe's identification of what is 'best' and what is 'congruous.' There are secret things which may not appear congruous to us. "The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."[1] Howe later tempers the problem raised by his doctrine of congruity when he explains that not all the congruities have to appear to us - "it is enough that they are obvious to his own eye, who is the only competent judge."[2] And then in a noteworthy confession of a humble acceptance of human frailty, he points out that the conception we hold is "but an embryo, no less imperfect than our present state is."[3]

> It were very unreasonable to expect, since this world shall continue but a little while, that all God's managements and ways of procedure, in ordering the great affairs of it, should be attempered and fitted to the judgment that shall be made of them in this temporary state, that will soon be over, and to the present apprehension and capacity of our now so muddled and distempered minds. A vast and stable eternity remains, wherein the whole celestial chorus shall entertain themselves with the grateful contemplation and applause of his deep counsels. Such things as now seem perplex and intricate to us, will appear more irreprehensively fair and comely to angelical minds; and our own when we shall be vouchsafed a place amongst that happy community.[4]

A point that Howe makes with particular clarity is that God nowhere promises to overpower the laws of reason, nature and freedom

1. Deut. 29:29. A.R.
2. Works, V, 57.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 58.

to foist upon man his own salvation.

> Nor did that belong to him, or was his past as our most benign, wise and righteous governor, to provide that we should certainly not transgress, or not suffer prejudice thereby; but that we should not do through his omission of anything, which it became him to do to prevent it.[1]

Is God then frustrated and disappointed when men are lost? If so, does this not impugn the power of the Almighty? No, it is impossible that "frustration be so much as possible to him," for His prescience of the event informs Him of "his will being crossed in this."[2] But surely, to speak of the will of God as 'being crossed' is a contradiction in terms? Not so, Howe continues. It is the term 'will' which is the culprit in our proper understanding.

> In the present case, we are not to conceive that God only wills either man's duty or felicity, or that herein his will doth solely and ultimately terminate: but in the whole, the determination of God's will is, that man shall be duly governed, that is, congruously, both to Himself, that such and such things, most congruous to both, shall be man's duty; for by his doing whereof, the dignity and honour of God's own government might be preserved, which was the thing principally to be designed, and in the first place; and, as what was secondary thereto, that hereby man's felicity should be provided for.[3]

If this is so, is there not a weakness or imperfection in the Divine will which does not bring to pass the thing willed? This is the wrong way to view the problem. The Divine will would be "more liable to that imputation if it should effect anything, which it were less fit for him to effect than not to effect it."[4] In other words, there is a sort of value judgment God places on His

1. Works, V, 39.
2. Ibid., p. 44.
3. Ibid., p. 45.
4. Ibid.

order of creation. The perfection of any act of will is to be estimated by its proportion "to the goodness of the thing willed," by which yardstick a mere 'velleity' has greater perfection than the "most obstinate" volition.[1]

Does God ever save a man against his will? We are not to suppose that God will renew His holy image in man, impart to him a new nature, give him 'the blessed spirit' if he neglects and refuses the "ordinary aids and assistances of his good spirit." The Lord will not offer violence to a man's conscience or save him "against the continuing disinclination of his will."[2] God does not save any man who neglects the ordinary means of grace, for everywhere the Scriptures put the emphasis on personal decision. There is no question of God's wish in the matter; the Scriptures plainly declare that "He will have all men to be saved." But just as plainly they declare that if they hearken not, they shall die. God has respect for His own laws and principles, and the man who breaks them forfeits his life.[3] A man cannot trust even his reason and senses. Gloomy indeed are man's chances for finding the light. Pascal draws out the image in full.

> Man is only a subject full of error, natural and ineffaceable, without grace. Nothing shows him the truth. Everything deceives him. These two sources of truth, reason and the senses, besides being both wanting in sincerity, deceive each other in turn. The senses mislead the reason with false appearances, and receive from reason in their turn the same trickery which they apply to her; reason has its revenge. The passions of the soul trouble the senses, and make false impressions upon them. They rival each other in falsehood and deception.[4]

1. Ibid., p. 46. 2. Works, V, 36. 3. Ibid., pp. 37, 38.
4. Pascal, Thoughts, p. 38.

What hope then has man? None at all, unless he turns to the "Father of Lights with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."[1]

Howe attempts to sever the Gordian knot of God's foreknowledge and man's freedom in an interesting fashion. Foreknowledge has no influence to alter or change in any way the nature of the thing foreknown, or the temper of the person who acts. No one denies foreknowledge to God, and when it occasionally occurs to man, it involves him in no complicity with evil. Then why should God be blamed for the wicked actions of men?[2] He only beholds the action and detests it; in no way does He condone or approve it. The problem is to reconcile God's wisdom and sincerity with His certain knowledge of all "sure to come to pass."[3] If God foreknows, why does He not prevent evil? The expression of this paradox is at least as ancient as the days of Habbakuk.

> Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?[4]

Howe is under no delusion that he can resolve the paradox involved, but he believes that when we view man as one who possesses a contingent freedom, we can at least partially understand why no culpability attaches to God. The problem becomes more comprehensible when we review events in the life of Jesus. Although He performed miracles and preached the Word, urging men to repentance, yet His Crucifixion was a thing which God's hand "had determined

1. James 1:17.
2. Works, V, 24.
3. Works, V, 7.
4. Hab. 1:13.

before to be done."[1] His "sovereign power and wise counsel concurred with his foreknowledge" to bring it to pass.[2] If only this passage existed, it could be easily proved that God's foreknowledge is not identical with His actions in history. As Howe is careful to state, he does not intend to reconcile God's "irresistible predeterminative concurrence to all actions of the creature," even the worst kind of actions to "the wisdom and righteousness of his laws against them."[3] He has exactly the same problem facing him that confronts Calvin. How are we to distinguish between the "influence and concurrence" of God in evil actions and good actions? Is it possible to understand how the first creatures were "irreversibly condemned to the suffering of eternal punishment for the not doing of what it was, upon these terms, so absolutely impossible for them to avoid"?[4]

In the final analysis, it is not really given to us to comprehend why Adam and Eve were condemned any more than it is possible now to understand why God chooses certain ones to be saved, while allowing others to perish. It is enough to leave this in the hands of a 'good God.'

> We will acknowledge the reasons of divers things in God's determinations and appointments may be very well hidden, not only from our more easy view, but our most diligent search; where they are, his telling us the matter is so or so, it is reason enough to us to believe with reverence. But when they offer themselves, we need not be afraid to see them; and when the matter they concern is brought to question, should be afraid of being so treacherous as not to produce them.[5]

1. Acts, 4:28. 2. Works, V, 15. 3. Ibid., p. 16.
4. Ibid.,
5. Works, III, 349. Typically, Calvin takes refuge in the secret counsels of God, content to know that when men are tossed about like 'tennis balls' the reasons lie hidden with Him. However, the Christian does understand many mysteries so that "there we have now no abyss, but a way in which we may safely walk." Calvin, op.cit., I, XVI, 226, 227.

Clearly, for Howe, the crux of the matter lies elsewhere. Discussion of foreknowledge has no value simply as a matter of theological controversy. He has no intention of placing even the tiniest seed in the sterile womb of this theological problem. The freedom of man, and the foreknowledge of God are not problems to be resolved by fallen reason. His interest in defending God from implication in the guilt of man derives from a desire to persuade sceptical minds that God's foreknowledge does not mean concurrence in evil.

> That in this temporary state of trial, the efficacious grace of God is necessary to actions sincerely good and holy; which therefore all ought undespairingly to seek and pray for: but that in reference to other actions, he doth only supply men with such a power as whereby they are enabled, either to act, or in many instances - and especially when they attempt anything that is evil - to suspend their own action.[1]

Since Howe does not purport to understand or defend God's "predeterminative concourse unto sinful actions"[2] he will develop how to reconcile His prescience of them with His provisions against sin. What he really is concerned to show is that God's utterances, 'You will do such a thing,' and 'You ought not to do it,' are not mutually contradictory.[3]

In the Bible, God professes to "will the salvation of all men,"[4] not to "desire the death of him that dieth,"[5] and to be sorrowful over those that perish.[6] With all of God's tender exhortations to repent, the Scriptures give forth the over all impression that God desires to save all men. How then, can we

1. Works, V, 20. 2. Ibid., p. 22. 3. Ibid., p. 23.
4. I Tim. 2:4. 5. Ez. 18:32. 6. Ps. 81:12, 13.

reconcile this golden thread of Scripture with the darker hues of God's prescience of men's perdition?[1] The answer amounts to this. God is perfectly willing to pardon all men their sin and defection, if they will "seriously repent and turn to him, love him as the Lord their God with all their heart, and soul, and might and mind, and one another as themselves."[2] The Scripture which assuresus 'God will have all men to be saved,' means nothing more than that it is more pleasing to Him to save than to destroy men.[3]

Calvin goes one step further. He admits,

> The whole may be summed up thus; that as the will of God is said to be the cause of all things, his providence is established as the governor in all the counsels and works of men, so that it not only exerts its power in the elect, who are influenced by the Holy Spirit, but also <u>compels</u> the compliance of the reprobate.[4]

Therefore, whatever is attempted by men, or by Satan himself, God still holds the helm to direct all their attempts to the execution of His judgments.[5]

Howe points out that in the good providence of God, for reasons best known to Himself, God sometimes works in His creatures in such a way that they willingly obey and glorify His name. At other times, however, He does this, and "meeting with resistance, retires"[6] and exercises a less potent and determinative influence, so that the creature, albeit by his own responsible action falls into the labyrinth of sin. In other words, Howe is saying that God exercises more benevolence to some than to others, although He is

1. <u>Works</u>, V, 34. 2. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 36. 3. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 38.
4. Calvin, <u>op.cit.</u>, I, 18, 248. 5. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 245.
6. <u>Works</u>, V, 40.

unjust to none. Man by his own will, in the contingent freedom he enjoys, chooses for or against God. He works in us to will and to do his own good pleasure.[1] Admittedly, this is a hard doctrine, but "where he will, he shows mercy, and where he will, he hardeneth."[2] As Howe ruefully comments, "and indeed, we should be constrained to raze out a great part of the sacred volume, if we should not admit it to be so."[3]

With Calvin, Howe confesses an aversion to scholastic terminology, particularly the term voluntas beneplacitis et signi. His objection is against the implication that God only seems willing, not being really willing to save all.[4] No, the truth of the matter is, that God doth "really and complacentially" will "the salvation of all men," but He does not "irresistibly procure" the regeneration of all. This should be no more difficult to accept than the presence of evil in a creation by the good Lord. If God willed man's good, and man revolted against the Divine will, does this make God's willing insincere? Does he cease to will man's good? Shall God change His laws to fit the sinning desires of man? Never! This amounts to the ridiculous plea that God abdicate His throne in order that man "by becoming a sinner, might make himself a God."[5]

In summary, Howe represents the position of moderate Calvinism, with a conception of providence that ensures God's present interest in the world, without involving Him in dependence upon creation.

1. Phil. 2:12, 13.
2. Prov. 1:23-26.
3. Works, V, 41.
4. Works, V, 42.
5. Ibid., pp. 43, 44.

With regard to prescience, God foreknows future events without injuring the contingent freedom each man enjoys. Since He does not 'irresistibly procure' the salvation of all, most men fail to avail themselves of the means of grace. Hence they perish.

The Lord Protector's View

Cromwell's conception of Providence is drawn from the Scriptures, shaped by the Reformation, and added to by the sectar-:ies. With the exception of the third ingredient, the general outline of the doctrine appears to be similar in Howe. Both believed that God is forever at work in history, redeeming and delivering His chosen people, acting through them as His instru-:ments and that He orders all events to His ends, making even the 'wrath of man to praise Him.' Both were persuaded that the effic-:acious power works in us, "not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace."[1] But in application the two men were poles apart. Cromwell saw himself as a bruised reed, raised up of God to deliver his beloved England, but he was equal-:ly convinced that he was a chosen instrument entrusted with a responsibility which he could not shirk. As Haller succinctly states, Cromwell was certain that,

> His will was God's will, his plan God's plan, his enemies, God's enemies, and his eventual success was certain because his work was God's work and could not fail.[2]

Howe did not share his master's assurance, that he, Oliver, was the appointed man of destiny. According to Cromwell, those that

1. II Tim. 1:9.
2. Haller, The Rise of Puritanism, p. 192.

protest the Lord Protector had plotted circumstances to further his ambitious plans are close to blasphemy, for they have protested those very acts by which God makes known His hand. Cromwell appealed to the victory of the army, and the failures of the Parliament as 'divine sanctions' to his own actions. To understand the doctrine of Providence in Cromwell it is vital to understand his use of 'necessity.' For him, 'necessity' is nothing more or less than the active providence of God. To those cavillers who insisted that he made his own 'necessities' he answered that they "do vilify and lessen the works of God, and rob him of his glory, which he hath said he will not give unto another, nor suffer to be taken away from him."[1]

If we are to comprehend Cromwell, we must do so within the context of Cromwell's association with Independency. It was from the Independents that he received the seed of the doctrine of Providence, which in his fertile mind grew and gave birth to convictions about his own celestial calling to the high post of governor for God in England. It may well be that Cromwell's doctrine of Providence furnishes the first clue to the enigma of the man. Since Baxter reflected once that religion had a profound influence even upon the ungodly of the seventeenth century, it is not presumptuous to assume that a man who was avowedly religious, scarcely opening his mouth without a Scriptural quotation, who claimed to derive all his power from the 'covenant of grace' can

1. Abbot, p. 591, quoted in Pettit, The Religion of Oliver Cromwell, p. 203.

be better understood from within the framework of his own scruples than from anywhere else. What was unique was not his belief in Providence, but in what he deemed to have been divinely ordained for his time, and in the powerful impetus he gave personally to the fulfillment of these purposes. The success of his armies, the victory of the Puritans, and the personal power granted him were all fodder for the cannon. As R.S. Paul in his definitive work on Cromwell writes,

> His significance is made more pointed by the fact that his Independent or Congregational churchmanship, with roots in Separatism and spiritual "democracy," appears to run counter to so much within his life, and we submit that his life and thought must therefore be of interest not only to historians and students of political institutions, but also to any who are concerned about the relationship between personal religion and the call to public action.[1]

Corroborative of Paul's statement is the reflection of Bishop Burnet.

> Cromwell thought moral laws only binding on ordinary occasions, but that on extraordinary ones these may be superceded. When his own designs did not lead him out of the way, he was a lover of justice and virtue, and even of learning, though much decried at that time.[2]

How much Howe shared Cromwell's conception of his appointed task in the Providence of God is not known. In all his writings, he studiously avoided political comments of any kind, and even while suffering severe persecution, maintained a lofty silence which refused to admit the rise and fall of circumstances. He certainly understood Cromwell's position; Cromwell never conceived of his own will as absolute. Rather, he ruled on behalf of a Cause. That Cause was the Puritan interest. It was the advancement of

1. R.S. Paul, op.cit., pp. 7, 8.
2. Burnet, op.cit., II, 79.

this Cause that was the controlling aim of his life, and he always viewed himself as an instrument, divinely appointed to be sure, but withal, an instrument to further that Cause. The Puritans are the Chosen People, on whose behalf the Lord has worked. His extraordinary success in war as a general, and his lesser success as a ruler, assured him that God was supporting him personally as well as his Cause and his People. Only this active Providence of God could explain adequately the phenomenal rise of the Puritan party and the singular set of circumstances which had brought him to the head of England.

Clearly, Cromwell's conception of Providence was of central importance in his decision not to accept the Crown. Howe evidently played no role in the decision. On April 3, Cromwell had rejected the Crown because of the opposition and protests of Puritan churches and army men. In addition, he felt that the very title of 'king' had been blasted in God's obvious rejection of the Stuarts. Without entering into the trial of the king, Baxter's picture of Cromwell as simply a 'rebel' and 'traitor' does not bear the acid test of historical research. It is true that the machinery used to try Charles was illegal, but it was not illegal because brigands employed it. As Paul says,

> It was illegal machinery because the charges were in fact higher than those of which the law took cognizance, and it broke down because they tried to translate into terms of English Common Law crimes which called into question the very foundation of the Law itself. No serious historian could condone the methods used, but, granted their premises and their convictions, the justice of their claim must be

> admitted: arbitrary power was being used to destroy arbitrary power.[1]

Wedgwood drily remarks,

> It is a curious commentary on Charles that had he been either more honest or less honest he would have probably escaped with both his life and his throne.[2]

Previously, one of Scotland's most careful logicians, Samuel Rutherford, had said, "We hold that the king, by office, is the church's nurse father, a sacred ordinance, the disputed power of God."[3] He understood all jurisdiction of man over man to be artificial and positive and that it involved some servitude. Mere conquest by the sword is no just title to the crown, because God has ordained that the people shall elect their ruler.[4] Further, he states,

> The people have a natural throne of policy in their conscience to give warnings and materially sentence, against the king as a tyrant, and so by nature are to defend themselves.[5]

The upshot of this is that if the king breaks his royal contract with the people, they can defend themselves by whatever means they choose. Without knowing it, and indeed against his will,[6] Rutherford's close reasoning furnished fuel for Oliver's fire. If the king broke his word, and Charles seemed to be constitutionally unable to tell the truth, then it was the duty of the Chosen Instrument to defend God's Cause. It was a simple case of Good against Evil. Had not Archbishop Laud, one of the king's most

1. Ibid., p. 194.
2. Wedgwood, The King's Peace, p. 151.
3. Woodhouse, op.cit., p. 191.
4. Deut. 17:15.
5. Woodhouse, op.cit., p. 210.
6. D.N.B. XVII, 497.

faithful servants, written that the man he and Strafford served was not worth serving - "he knew not how to be or to be made great"?[1] The king had the unenviable reputation of deserting his friends. Therefore, when Oliver was offered his title, he could not accept willingly. It is true that temporarily he gave way to the powerful arguments of Lord Broghil, leader of the court party. When his own officers objected, however, threatening resignation from the army, he returned to his former position. Thus his own ideas of providence changed between phase one and phase two of the decision, and he was really forced to return to his first position, not by a 'divine sign' but by the growing pressure of the army. In this we can see the pragmatic character of Cromwell's religion. He was no Platonist, borne aloft by mighty principles transcending the work-a-day world, but a realistic pragmatist, assured that the leadings of Providence came through the certain guide of experience.

It is not surprising, therefore, to discover Cromwell as warrior and fierce partisan finding the Lord of Hosts of the Old Testament, the Deity pre-eminently equipped to vindicate His Cause through godly Puritans. He is particularly indebted to the Psalms, many of which he seems to have memorized with wholesale abandon. If it is the Old Testament which he quotes most frequently in regard to civil and military affairs, it is on the New Testament that his personal religion pivots. In the Pauline epistles we find the real native air and the natural language of Cromwell.[2] The doctrine of Providence is not so much a bludgeon

1. Wedgwood, op.cit., p. 427.
2. Pettit, op.cit., p. 274.

by which he beats his enemies into submission to his political ambitions, as it is personal comfort to a man inwardly convinced of a gracious Hand working behind the scenes of history. Howe also finds providence the governing hand of a gracious Lord. He orders this world, and makes everything in its peculiar place and station "subserve the purposes for which they were visibly made; they are sustained, guided, governed and ordered" in all their natural tendencies and notions "that they may glorify God."[1] Baxter finds every work of God good; even those things which seem odious to us, such as toads, serpents and mosquitos. The Christian is to take warning.

> Let us not therefore vilify or detest the works of God, but study the excellencies of them, and see, and admire, and love them as they are of God ... to love the world and not to love it; to honour it, and dispise it; to exalt it and to tread it under our feet; to mind it, and use it with delight, and yet to be weaned from it as those that mind it not.[2]

Where Cromwell differs from these Puritan theologians is in the application to his own life as a personal instrument of Providence, a position these worthy men felt could not be arrogated by one man to himself. It was probably the personal application of this doctrine that led Baxter to become a declared foe to the Commonwealth, even while he freely admitted the beneficient results that it offered to organized religion.[3] The certitude Cromwell entertained that the God of his personal experience was indicating His unmistakable will by existing circumstances in the larger

1. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 93.
2. Baxter, Works, ed. Orme, XII, 88.
3. Thomas, op.cit., p. 64.

history of the nation, was not the kind of conviction that could be tested with certainty by the categories of theology.

It is true that Cromwell might misinterpret the biblical standards, he might be guilty of faulty exegesis, but he never deliberately misquoted or mishandled Scripture. He could not, for his personal religion demanded that he break himself over the Word of God. Similarly when we come to the doctrine of Providence, he could not believe God was with him, unless he could assure himself of a clean conscience according to his own lights. He squared such a glaring blot as the Irish holocaust in much the way the Old Testament condoned complete destruction of the Midianites. Paul comments,

> ... According to his own beliefs, his success was entirely due to the singleness of purpose with which he and his troops had tried to obey God's will ... Cromwell acted like a prophet, and the true prophet is one who can say with Paul, 'I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.'[1]

In keeping with this facet of the doctrine, there is considerable substantiation in Calvin. He was equally loath to wait in idleness for God to work. He must prepare himself to play the man, yet leaving the outcome in the hands of God.[2] No,

> when this light of Divine Providence has once shined on a pious man, he is relieved and delivered not only from the extreme anxiety and dread with which he was previously oppressed, but also from all care. For, as he justly dreads Fortune, so he ventures securely to commit himself to God.[3]

Or, as Howe puts it in terms more acceptable to the unbeliever,

> The universal Power which is everywhere active in the world,

1. Paul, op.cit., pp. 386, 387.
2. Calvin, op.cit., I, XVII, 237.
3. Ibid., p. 238.

> in conjunction with the Unerring Wisdom which guides and moderates all its exertions or operations ... is nothing else but common Providence.[1]

But if this doctrine is of great comfort to the believer, let the unregenerate beware. Every foul oath he swears, every lie he tells, every lustful action he commits, every sin he does, is done through the forebearance of God. His patience withholds his hand from striking, his mercy prevents the sinner from being slain; thus those who believe not must listen to the concluding words of Baxter with humility. "How oft hast thou provoked him to take thee in thy lust, in thy rage, or in thy neglect of God, and give thee thy desert. Would any of you support your enemy, as God doth you?"[2]

Perhaps the most striking failure in Cromwell's doctrine of Providence was a lack of the sense of divine judgment upon himself and his policies. He found the decisions clear cut, and strangely enough, the verdicts were always returned in his favour. Thus a Day of Humiliation called on March 20, 1654, in which he suggested that sins of the nation had provoked the divine anger, Vane answered with his pamphlet, A Healing Question. He named as the sin which had earned the divine wrath, Cromwell's personal ambition for power. Cromwell never forgave his former friend. This was a sore point with him, for the charge of excessive ambition was probably unjust.[3] To cite just one example of many,

1. Works, III, 54, 55. 2. Baxter, op.cit., XIII, 91.
3. Paul, op.cit., p. 124 ff. Paul makes out a very convincing case against inordinate ambition in Cromwell and seems to feel his mistaken sense of duty drove him to extremes. This would explain his extraordinary addresses to Parliament, which were so full of statements of personal unworthiness, all the while Cromwell was increasing his personal power.

Cromwell had said to Sir John Berkeley on June 12, "That whatever the world might judge of them, they would be found no seekers of themselves farther than to have leave to live as subjects ought to do and to preserve their consciences."[1] Another instance was seen when singlehanded, Cromwell quelled a soldiers' revolt for the peace of the kingdom. If he had ever intended to break with Charles simply for his own ambition, this was his golden opportunity. Even Clarendon was forced to admit that if the Levellers' meeting

> had not been encountered at that time with that rough and brisk temper of Cromwell, it would presently have produced all imaginable confusion in the parliament, army, and kingdom.[2]

It may perhaps be said that it was not until the Irish expedition that Cromwell came to regard himself as the man destined to save the Great Rebellion from failure - a vocation which must be fulfilled in those public services "for which a man is born."[3] This expedition proved to be a terrible blot upon Cromwell. Up to this time, Oliver held his troops in an iron discipline which earned the grudging admiration of even hostile Baxter, but here he sanctioned a holocaust which blackened the reputation he held for justice tempered with mercy. Yet Clarendon says,

> He was not a man of blood, and totally declined Machiavel's method, which prescribes, upon any alteration of a government, as a thing absolutely necessary, to cut off all the heads of those, and extirpate their families, who are friends to the old. And it was confidently reported, that in the council of the officers it was more than once proposed that there might be a general massacre of all the royal party as the only expedient to secure the government; but Cromwell would never consent to it.[4]

1. Ibid., p. 126. 2. Ibid., p. 154.
3. W. Scott (ed.) Original Memoirs written during the Great War (including Hodgson's Memoir), 1806, II, 102 ff.
4. Paul, op.cit., p. 385.

When Cromwell agreed to become the leader of the Army against the Irish, he invited John Owen, the minister of Coggeshall to become his chaplain in Ireland. Owen later became Cromwell's chief adviser in ecclesiastical affairs. This was a significant foreshadowing of his future conduct of church interests. Thus Owen, not Howe, had the ear of Cromwell in the major settlements of ecclesiastical problems in the state.

Cromwell was noted for excellent judgment in the choice of men. His selection of Howe proved no exception. The youthful Howe - only twenty-six years old - expected his office as chaplain to prove far more decisive in the court than it proved to be, but there is no reason to doubt that Howe exercised his office with dignity, and what is more difficult, integrity. The latter quality later led to the only altercation between the two. When it is recalled that Howe was added to Cromwell's court only under pressure from the full persuasive powers of the not undictatorial ruler, it is no surprise to discover Howe voicing his discontent with court life to Richard Baxter in no uncertain terms. Baxter's position in relation to the government is enigmatic. He strongly recommended Howe's retention of his post at court, further warning the young preacher to be extremely cautious in the use of admonishment in his sermons.[1] Probably Baxter's letters were more influential in causing Howe to remain at court than any other combination of circumstances. On the other hand, Baxter himself refused to have anything to do with Cromwell, nor did he allow the

1. Rogers, The Life of John Howe, pp. 92-101. Calamy evidently did not know about these letters, for he makes no mention of the influences that prevailed upon Howe to remain at court while his beloved Torrington was undergoing fresh schism.

town and parish of Kidderminster to sign the Covenant of the Commonwealth.[1] His Autobiography leaves no doubt as to his almost seditious statements. He records,

> I did in open conference declare Cromwell and his adherents to be guilty of treason and rebellion, aggravated with perfidiousness and hypocrisy, to be abhored of all good and sober men. But yet I did not think it my duty to rave against him in the pulpit, nor to do this so unseasonably and imprudently as might irritate him to mischief. And the rather because, as he kept up his approbation of a godly life in the general, and of all that was good, except that which the interest of his sinful cause engaged him to be against; so I perceived that it was his design to do good in the main, and to promote the Gospel and the interest of godliness more than any have done before him, except in those particulars which his own interest was against.[2]

Whether Baxter changed his opinion between the time he publicly accused Cromwell of "treason and rebellion" and May, 1658, when Howe was sending his pitiful letters seeking release to his venerable friend at Kidderminster, is not known, but this is an admitted difficulty in assessing Baxter's final estimate of the Commonwealth.

Relations between the Lord Protector and his gifted young chaplain were on the whole, harmonious. Howe was often sent upon secret errands, even after his famous sermon had cooled Cromwell's affection.[3] His contemporaries observed that there was scarcely a man at court so free from censure as the talented preacher from Great Torrington.[4] So disinterested was Howe that Cromwell once asked, "I wonder when the time is to come that you will move for anything for yourself, or your Family."[5] On the

1. Thomas, op.cit., p. 64.
2. Ibid., pp. 69, 70.
3. Calamy, op.cit., p. 24.
4. Ibid., p. 18.
5. Ibid., p. 21.

other hand, it is only too evident that Cromwell had obtained a reluctant servant at best. Howe's discatisfaction stemmed first of all from a failure on Cromwell's part to give him free play in his appointed task - "the setting up of worship and discipline of Christ in this familie."[1] The second cause of discontent was the outbreak of new schism in his parish, and the parties involved promised to reunite only if Howe returned. Coupled with this was the lack of anticipated success at court, his natural disinclination to the ostentation of a powerful and wealthy government, and a felt need for the more personal contact with anxious souls that a parish provides.[2] Howe was never happy for long away from the arduous labours of the pastorate, and to the day of his death regarded himself primarily as a pastor - "a dying man preaching to dying men" in the same tradition as his great contemporary at Kidderminster.

Clearly, from Howe's point of view, the Cromwellian assurance that he, Oliver, was the appointed instrument of Providence bear-:ing much the same relation to the people of England that Moses had borne to Israel, was to be distrusted, if not to be attributed to blatant arrogance. Howe believed that Cromwell oversimplified the issues, but he was equally convinced that the over-simplifica-:tion was valid for him: one may doubt whether Cromwell was indeed "the instrument of the Almighty in England, but one cannot serious-:ly doubt that Cromwell believed himself to be so."[3] After all,

1. Rogers, op.cit., p. 93.
2. Ibid., pp. 95-98.
3. Paul, op.cit., p. 244.

throughout nine years of almost continuous fighting, begun as an obscure captain, "no single operation of war that he ever undertook had failed."[1] If it was this conviction that made Cromwell great, it was also this conviction that brought violent collision with the ideas of his contemporaries. It was the corollary of this conviction, the certitude of an answer to a particular faith in prayer,[2] that raised John Howe from his knees to the pulpit in a thundering blast against the pretensions of those who felt they had pried out the secrets of prayer from the innermost chambers of the Almighty. According to Calamy, the religious zealots who surrounded Cromwell had evolved a theology of prayer that combined prophecy, causality and intuitive knowledge in one fell sweep that would have staggered the imagination of a Paul.[3] What Scripture they employed to support the view is not known. Those so favoured of God could offer prayers for themselves or others, apparently at will, and receive such an inward guidance from a "Divine hand," (it does not say how they knew) that not only were their requests certainly to be answered, but it was also sometimes intimated to them in what manner they would be answered, and what future events were coming to pass.[4] What finally triggered Howe's response to this notion was a sermon delivered at court by a noted preacher sustaining these views. Integrity prompted Howe to "beat down the Spiritual Pride and confidence,"[5] in his next sermon before Cromwell. Only sketchy notes of the sermon remain, but the text was chosen from James 5:15

1. Ibid., p. 247.
2. Calamy, op.cit., p. 22.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 23.

"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick; and the Lord shall raise him up ..." The sermon began by demolishing the postulate of a certain answer to all prayer in faith by a reference to mort-:ality. Obviously, if, in every case where life is in jeopardy, a person of faith prayed, no one need die. The text applies solely to those special and extraordinary cases where God gives a particular faith, at the same time effecting the cure. The doctrine of immutability makes it impossible to change the mind of God concerning an event; in fact prayer has no proper "efficacy" to move God even instrumentally. Unlike Pascal who thought of prayer as giving to man the "dignity of causality," Howe maintains it is only a condition, and that condition is that God will do wha is best. Does this rule out the validity of prayer? Not at all "For perhaps he hath wisely and rightly determined, that he will not do it but upon the truth of his being acknowledged."[1]

Calvin struggled with the same problem. If God has ordained from eternity what is to be, prayer can neither change affairs for good or bad. Why take medicine, or bother with precautions agains danger, or avoid contagious diseases? If God's decrees are immutable and his counsels inscrutable, why employ all the energy necessary for such enterprises? Calvin answers that "the arts of deliberation and caution in men proceed from the inspiration of God" and they serve God best who preserve their lives, but if neglectful, they receive the evil He has appointed.[2] Thoughtfully,

1. Ibid., pp. 263-268.
2. Calvin, op.cit., I, XVII, 230.

Calvin ponders that if this answer is unsatisfactory, it seems so because the providence of God ought not to be considered "abstract-:edly" but in connection "with the means he employs."[1]

A century later in the same tradition, Howe pointed out that God may 'count' on the prayers of His saints to make His desires ef-:ficacious.[2] The effects of the sermon are well chronicled by Calamy. Cromwell did not take kindly to the explosion of one of his pet doctrines by the young theologian. During the discourse he knitted his brows and fidgeted.[3] At the close, a courtier de-:scending with wrath upon Howe, informed him that he had probably lost Cromwell's favour permanently. Howe calmly replied in the unanswerable fashion Peter had responded to the infuriated authori-:ties who called his healing into question, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye."[4] Although Cromwell became perceptibly "cooler in his carriage to him than before,"[5] Howe never regretted his action.

This altercation, at its deepest level, is indicative of a fun-:damental cleavage in the theological thought of the two men. This cleavage reaches its climax in the doctrine of Providence, and its culminating apex in the corollary of that doctrine; absolute cer-:tainty that the prayers of the favoured few would be answered ac-:cording to prearranged specifications. For example, the fate of Charles is a case in point. Before Cromwell reached a decision he

1. Ibid.
2. Calamy, op.cit., p. 268.
3. Ibid., p. 23.
4. Acts 4:19.
5. Calamy, op.cit., p. 23.

spent many hours and days in prayer and meditation. At last he was certain the divine verdict of death was delivered in answer to his prayer of faith. Thus Cromwell was like a rock, while the other regicides wavered in their decision.

Theological divergence between the two men was not confined to the doctrine of Providence. The seventeenth century witnessed a tremendous upsurge of interest in the whole field of prophecy, and nowhere was that interest keener or more highly speculative than in Cromwell's court. John Howe was notably cautious in all his state-:ments about the predictive elements of contemporary pronouncements, probably to the chagrin and disgust of the Lord Protector, who was naturally dependent upon such prophecies to bolster his peculiar doctrine of Providence. Apocalyptic ideas were not the monopoly of the Fifth Monarchists, and many sober Christians, including Peter Sterry, Cromwell's favourite chaplain, looked for a great cataclysm in 1656 to usher in the Millenium. Cromwell was at least partially convinced that Sterry's view was correct. Later the sun of their faith was to set, blood-red at Cromwell's death, and no portent was given that it would rise again. Howe never had the intimacy with Cromwell that Peter Sterry enjoyed, and this was due to no subtle nuance of theology, but to deep-seated theological convictions which divided the two. The theologically minded Plato-:nist and the busy, practical man of affairs, looking for new signs from Heaven, were too different in temperament and training to be-:come fast friends.

However, we do have in Howe's attitude to prophecy and strange portents signs of the influence Cromwell's court had upon him.

Undoubtedly unusual prophecies did take place at Cromwell's court and were fulfilled. Thus, although Howe writes with commendable caution, he does accept in principle at least, the possibility of new prophetic utterances.

> It is indeed a part of prudence not too hastily to embrace or lay much stress upon modern prophecies; but I see not how it can be concluded, that because God hath of latter time been more sparing us to such communications, that therefore pro-:phecy is so absolutely ceased that he will never more give men intimations of his mind and purposes that way. He hath never said it, nor can it be known by ordinary means. There-:fore for any to say it, were to pretend to prophecy, even while they say prophecy is ceased.[1]

Personal observation moved him to comment that if some noted servant of God, "remote from all suspicion of levity or sinister design," foretells a coming event with "earnestness and vehemency," and if God sets his seal to it by warning signs, "methinks it doth not savour well to make light account of it, or think it signifieth nothing."[2]

He finds nature gives signs that foretell events. To be stoic-:ally indifferent to such portents is not so much a token of manly courage as it is a mark of unconquerable stupidity.[3]

> When therefore the face of Providence seems more manifestly threatening, and clouds gather, all things conspire to infer a common calamity, and all means and methods are from time to time frustrated, - if we so far allow ourselves to think it approaching, as that hereby we are excited to prayer, re-:pentance, and the reforming of our lives, this, sure (sic.) is better than a regardless, drowsy slumber.[4]

Providence has some other strange facets, of which death is one. To such as cavil against a universe in which God lets death

1. Works, IV, 143.
2. Ibid., p. 146.
3. Ibid., pp. 141, 142.
4. Ibid.

reign, Howe gives solemn warning concerning rash censures of Divine ways. Although he seldom speaks of the 'secret counsels of God,' a favourite phrase with the great Reformer,[1] he admonishes men to be content with the knowledge that death shall be "swallowed up in victory."[2] It is indeed a frightening prospect to view a world where through "one first delinquent" all men are drawn into a "like defection," so that death extends its cancerous grip, holding all under sway, "committing such wastes, making such desolations, from age to age, in so great a part of God's creation."[3] However gruesome the thought of 'horrid death' might be, there are some consolations: (1) this globe is but a 'punctilio' of God's universe, (2) despite death, much vitality still reigns here, (3) there are unquestionably higher forms of life in God's other creations, (4) perhaps death reaches only our bit of the cosmos, (5) the Redeemer's seed is steadily increasing in each age, and finally, when in the Providence of God, death is done away, the victory will be complete and entire.[4] Cold comfort as this might be to the suffering pilgrim, it furnishes an interesting insight into the mind of a man, who though a convinced Christian himself, thoroughly understood the cultivated pagan outlook, and sought with unremitting labour in a way which was scarcely equalled in his century, to reconcile the obvious inequities of the present world system with the mercies of the Omnipotent loving Father who numbers the hairs of our head.

1. Calvin, op.cit., I, XV - XVII.
2. Works, VI, 202.
3. Ibid., p. 203.
4. Ibid., pp. 202-206.

In connection with the doctrine of Providence, and its corol-:lary, Divine Prescience, we may say Howe's outstanding contribution to seventeenth century thought was to indicate the way for a poss-:ible reconciliation between God's foreknowledge and man's freedom, while charting a biblical course between the Charybdis of double predestination on one side, and the Scylla of Arminianism on the other. Cromwell's claim to fame lay not so much in original think-:ing on the subject, as in the most daring and courageous personal application of the doctrine to the arena of history the seventeenth century witnessed. This man, who "stands unshakably in the seven-:teenth century as its greatest figure,"[1] borrowed less from his distinguished chaplain on the conception of Providence than would be desired, but it remains an unchallenged fact of history that his sense of personal destiny changed the destiny of the world.

1. Paul, op.cit., see fly leaf.

Chapter Five

CHRISTIAN UNITY AND TOLERANCE

John 17:20-22 Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in three ... that they may be one, even as we are one.

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John 17:20-22 Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee ... that they may be one, even as we are one.

If there is a single word to characterize the ecclesiastical activity of Howe, it is the word 'catholicity.' Whether it was in Cromwell's court, where he ventured assistance to many of the Establishment, or in the more trying years following the Restoration, when he became the living embodiment of ecumenical interest for many others, his life was always characterized by a concern for the unity of believers. This concern comes close to being unique for his day. The range of Puritan literature gives few instances of such an ecumenical spirit. In the cacophony of diverse opinions, Howe's appeal to unity strikes a welcome chord, if one too infrequently heard.

Since the test of the pudding is in the eating of it, it will serve our purpose best to demonstrate by a brief summary of his efforts the undeniable fact that he not only preached, but practised, church unity. Howe's life as a catholic churchman divides into three periods; the years up to the Restoration; the years following the Restoration to the Edict of Toleration in 1689, and the closing years of his life, which witness his final struggle for unity among nonconformists.

In the first period, we find this passion for unity evidenced

in an incident which occurred at Oxford. Dr Thomas Goodwin, president of the college, asked Howe why he refrained from joining a Christian study group, which was held particularly for those of serious piety. Howe replied that he was wary of certain "distinguishing Peculiarities," but that if he were admitted to the society upon "Catholick terms" he would readily assent.[1] After his ordination, and the beginning of his singularly successful pastorate at Great Torrington, he healed a breach in his own church, and founded a ministerial fellowship for the pastors of various denominations.[2] Later, when in Cromwell's service, the divisions of the congregation recurred, and representatives of the two factions promised to reunite only if Howe returned. This was the origin of the contract Howe later made with Cromwell providing for four months absence from court in order to serve at Great Torrington. While at court, Howe gained an enviable reputation among his contemporaries as a man "free from censure," and he was particularly noted for generosity in his treatment of the clergy in the Established Church. Dr Seth Ward, later bishop of Exeter and Sarum, is a case in point.[3] Howe represented Dr Ward's interests so successfully that Cromwell gave the learned professor the full annual stipend of the principalship of Jesus College.[4] His services to the displaced clergy became universally known.[5] One other instance of his assistance must suffice. Dr

1. Calamy, Life of John Howe, pp. 10, 11.
2. Ibid., pp. 14, 15.
3. Ibid., p. 18.
4. Ibid., p. 20.
5. Ibid.

Thomas Fuller, a merry punster, feared the formidable Triers before whom he had to appear. Armed with the advice of Howe, he passed the examination without difficulty.[1]

Cromwell's attitude toward religious liberty was strikingly similar to that of Howe. He was shocked and then angered to find sectarianism assuming all the characteristics of the intolerance that had marked the previously dominant religious group. In theory, England was committed to toleration, but in practice she had not accepted the idea with enthusiasm. Further, Cromwell's tolerance was limited, as Howe's was not, by the realities of political necessity. He was prepared to extend liberty to every Protestant communion in England, but he was thwarted by the harsh facts of ecclesiastical reality. It was not the religious worship of Anglicans that troubled him, but their devotion to the Crown. All he deplored in Presbyterianism was its arrogance. And the Fifth Monarchy men and Levellers were not imprisoned for their fantastic religious beliefs, but for the grave political danger that attended those beliefs.[2] Howe religiously avoided writing or speaking on topics of political interest,[3] but he certainly agreed with Cromwell about the rights of the magistrate.[4]

In the period preceding the assembling of the Nominated Parliament, Cromwell had striven earnestly to unite the various

1. Ibid., p. 21.
2. W.K. Jordan, The Development of Religious Toleration in England, 1640-1660, 1940, p. 147.
3. He writes, "But I repent not that I have been so little engaged in the hot contests of our age ... I must profess to have little inclination to contend about matters of that kind." Calamy, op.cit., p. 56.
4. See "Duty of the Civil Magistrate," V, 384-408.

sectarian groups on a religious programme which would guarantee religious liberty. It was a barren attempt, for the Fifth Monarchists were already preaching for the overthrow of Cromwell's government in favour of the saints. Yet Cromwell held firmly to his conviction that each man has the right to worship God according to conscience, so long as that worship is confined to spiritual matters.

In the second period of Howe's life, from the Restoration to the famous Edict of 1689, Puritan interests in general suffered relapse. The ideal of the 'holy community' lost some of its magnetic appeal, because it seemed to be incapable of realization.[1] The continuity of Puritanism itself was in jeopardy, and it was to Geneva, the main seed-ground of the Puritan movement, that most Puritans cast longing eyes during the sad estate of their own affairs in England. There Calvin's ideal of a 'holy community' remained constant, and although supremacy still resided in the state, it was far from being absolute. As Choisy points out,

> Non plus au pouvoir spirituel, comme au moyen âge, où la popauté prétendait à la domination universelle, mais au pouvoir politique, émancipé de latutelle de la hiérachie romaine ... Le Magistrat ne saurait gouverner que selon Dieu ... et ce role du Magistrat dans l'exercise de la dicipline morale et religieuse n'est pas celui d'un tyron, ni d'un inquisiteur, il est celui d'un bon père de famille.[2]

In his turn, Howe was arraigned twice, hounded[3] by the authorities, and finally silenced by the Act of Uniformity, effected August 24, 1662.[4] His valued friend, Dr Wilkins of the

1. Woodhouse, Puritanism and Liberty, p. 36.
2. Eugene Choisy, Calvin Educateur des Consciences, pp. 67,70,71.
3. Calamy, op.cit., pp. 27, 28, 29.
4. Ibid., p. 30.

Establishment, asked why a minister of such latitude as Howe should find it impossible to acquiesce in the discipline of the Church of England. Howe replied that it was his very latitude which made this impossible.[1] It was this tolerance working like a double-edged sword against the excesses of both parties that enabled Howe to sign the Five Mile Act in 1665.[2] There was an unconfirmed rumour to the effect that he spent two months in prison on the Isle of Saint Nicolas,[3] but this seems improbable. The power of his friends in the Establishment, and the absence of any records of the incident, make it unlikely.

In Ireland, while living as chaplain to Lord Massarene in Antrim, Howe earned such a reputation for tolerance that he was given liberty to preach in the Established Church every Sunday afternoon.[4] Upon his return to London he enjoyed the friendship of several eminent divines of the Church of England, including Dr Whitchcot, Dr Kidder, Dr Fowler and Dr Lucas.[5] In 1680 there seems to have been considerable agitation for a peaceful settlement with the nonconformists. Laws against them had been relaxed, perhaps largely because of the Popish Plot, but nevertheless real concessions had been made.[6] Bishop Lloyd asked Howe to represent the nonconformists, but when the latter proposed to bring the ecumenically-minded Baxter with him, the suggestion was rejected in favour of Dr Bates.[7] All evening the two men waited in vain for the absent Dr Lloyd. The next morning the Bill of

1. Ibid., pp. 30-32. 2. Ibid., pp. 40-43. 3. Ibid., p. 43.
4. Ibid., p. 54. 5. Ibid., p. 67. 6. Ibid., pp. 70, 71.
7. Ibid., pp. 72, 73.

Exclusion was voted down, and no more was heard of comprehension.

Burnet informs us that this gave rise to a new wave of persecution.

> ... the Clergy struck up with zeal for the Duke's Succession: as if a Popish King had been a Special Blessing from Heaven, to be much long'd for by a Protestant Church. They likewise gave themselves such a loose against the Nonconformists, as if nothing was so formidable as that party ... the force of their zeal was turn'd almost wholly against the Dissenters.[1]

It may have been more than coincidence which caused Howe to remark in his sermon On Self-Dedication, written in this period, "Every true Christian is, in the preparation of his mind, a martyr; but there are few whom he actually calls to it."[2] However acute the sense of persecution might have been, it did not prevent him from reproving Dean Tillotson for an ill-advised sermon, which struck at the roots of Reformation theology.[3] His own catholicity protected him from the charge of sectarian interest, and the worthy dean fully repented his action. Conditions in England worsened steadily,[4] and finally, Howe took refuge in Utrecht. In 1687, after James published his Declaration for Liberty of Conscience, Howe returned to his London congregation. Most historians are agreed that King James favoured a move to Rome, and to that end, sought the "Dispensing Power." As Howe was recognized as the leading moderate among nonconformists, James conferred secretly with him for advancement of his cause, but to no avail. The Anglican clergy were extremely restive under the king's design, and Dr Sherlock, master of the Temple, asked Howe what he would

1. Burnet, History of His Own Times, I, 501.
2. On Self-Dedication, p. 192.
3. Calamy, op.cit., pp. 77, 78.
4. Burnet, op.cit., I, 591.

do if offered his post. When Howe answered that he would accept it, but turn the emoluments over to the rightful owner, the fearful doctor was overjoyed.[1] Not long after came the 'Glorious Revolution,' and Howe made a "handsome speech" welcoming the Prince of Orange.[2] In this stormy period, we cannot summarize Howe's thought better than by a reference to his own words,

> What shall be thought of any such Protestants, that, without any colour or shadow of a ground, besides differing from them in some very disputable and unimportant opinions, shall presume to judge of other men's consciences, and consequently of their states Godward, which such a one as he thought it so presumptuous wickedness to attempt to overrule or govern.[3]

In the third period, that dating from the Toleration Act to the end of his life, Howe was forced into the distasteful task of uniting his own warring nonconformist brethren. A few days after the Act was passed, he published a sheet to promote charity between both parties. He urges them: (1) not to exaggerate the differences that separate them,[4] (2) to refrain from mutual judgment Godward upon these differences,[5] (3) not to value one another on the party basis,[6] (4) not to be offended that such differences should exist.[7]

The Act of Toleration is often regarded as one of the milestones in the struggle for religious liberty. Yet in and of itself, it really represented no great change. In 1687 James had introducted his Declaration for the Liberty of Conscience. The older legislation of the Conventicle Act and the Five Mile Act was not repealed, but the number of people to whom it was applied, was

1. Calamy, op.cit., pp. 139, 140. 2. Ibid., p. 142.
3. Works, IV, 349. 4. Calamy, op.cit., p. 165.
5. Ibid., p. 166. 6. Ibid., p. 168. 7. Ibid., p. 174.

lessened. Presbyterians and Independents escaped on condition that they should subscribe to all the Thirty-nine Articles save those bearing on polity and liturgy. Baptists were permitted believers' baptism. Quakers received a special exemption from the necessity of taking an oath. But Roman Catholics and Unitarians were still left without the pale. Roger Williams was far in advance of his day in pleading toleration for the former.

> I answer ... that for their conscience and religion they should not there be choked and smothered, but suffered to breathe and walk upon the decks, in the air of civil liberty and conversation in the ship of the commonwealth, upon good assurance given of civil obedience to the civil stage.[1]

The Act was nonetheless epoch-making. Bainton writes,

> Its significance is less to be found in its actual enactments than in its position on the boundary between two eras. Behind lay the Inquisition, the wars of religion, the dragonnades, imprisonments, and exiles ... The eighteenth century was the age of Enlightenment, with its war upon superstition, fanaticism, and bigotry even to the point of its extinguishing all enthusiasm. The Act of Toleration stands at the threshold of this change. Its ambiguity lies in the effort to combine religious liberty with a national Establishment, to bring together a union of the Church and freedom of religion.[2]

Interest in the Act for us lies in the fact that it gave Howe absolute freedom to develop his thought in reference to church comprehension and unity without civil hindrance. In 1689, Howe wrote a letter which indicates the broad interests of his ecumenicity. Certain French Protestants, who sought refuge in England, were heaping abuse upon their compatriots who could not conform. They not only called them "schismatics," but went so far as to judge them unworthy of relief. Howe protested, "their

1. Woodhouse, op.cit., p. 280.
2. Roland Bainton, The Travail of Religious Liberty, 1953, pp. 229, 230.

common Enemy never yet past (sic.) so severe a Judgment on any of them, that they should be famish'd."[1]

In 1691, Howe undertook a major portion of the work of drawing up Heads of Agreement, which attempted to bring Congregationalists and Presbyterians into a coalition.[2] The Congregationalists not only resisted the effort, but drew their more moderate brethren into open schism. The jealousies and feuds these fomented drew forth a second paper from Howe entitled, The Agreement among the Dissenting Ministers.[3] This only engendered new quarrels until the "World was wearied out with Pamphlets and Creed-Making."[4] His The Carnality of Christian Contention breathed such a moderate spirit that an eminent divine of the Establishment professed a willingness to sacrifice his life, "if such a state of things ... might obtain among Christians."[5] The sermon provides for a demarcation between striving for the faith, and striving against each other. The latter characteristic is a distinguishing mark of carnality.[6]

Without entering into the unedifying quarrels which defeated Howe's efforts to unite Congregationalists and Presbyterians, or relating anew the dissensions and altercations which finally split the meetings at Pinner's Hall,[7] suffice it is to say that Howe represented such an impartial charity, that almost alone, he escaped the scathing denunciations of his fellow ministers. Calamy compares him to Martin Bucer in catholicity of spirit and willing-

1. Calamy, op.cit., p. 145. 2. Ibid., p. 181. 3. Ibid., p. 183.
4. Ibid., p. 184. 5. Ibid., p. 186. 6. Ibid. 7. Ibid.

:ness to compromise unessential differences.[1] He was an able representative of his own definition of a Christian communion: "The more truly catholic the communion of Christians is, it is the more truly Christian."[2]

As far as aligning Howe with any of the various Church parties it is perhaps safe to place him among the moderate Presbyterians. The latter were younger men, some of them trained at Cambridge, who were prepared to extend toleration to Independency as well. They were not strict Calvinists, but retained the hard core of Calvinism while minimizing the importance of the points, which for a decade had been in most violent dispute.[3] Yet at this early stage, its good features notwithstanding, the party proposed a National Church which would have permitted no toleration of error and dissent outside its bounds. To this extent, Howe shared Cromwell's implacable devotion to the principle of toleration; the latter's position being the principal reason for the failure of this party to carry out its programme. Later, it was to broaden its interest to comprehensive toleration for all branches of Protestantism, and in the famous lectures delivered at the Merchants Lecture in Broadstreet,[4] party lines ceased to hold a united front, and the clashes which proceeded arose about personalities, not principles. It was in his attempt to keep nonconformists united that Howe made his greatest contributions to the principle of toleration in the life of the Church. Otherwise, his opinions are practically

1. Ibid., p. 238.
2. Works, V, 431.
3. Jordan, op.cit., p. 317.
4. Calamy, op.cit., p. 185.

indistinguishable from the theory, if not the practice of moderate Presbyterianism. In three respects Howe agreed with their beliefs and practices:[1] (1) in the conception of the duties of the magistrate as 'nursing father' to the state, (2) in the common aim to produce unity in matters of faith and practice, (3) in the tolerant attitude adopted to Independency. Howe's role of leadership did not begin until his return to London, after the successful five years he had spent at Antrim Castle. From that time on, his position was assured, and his judgment respected by all the moderates of both parties.[2]

Unity in the Church

The Bible underscores the unity of believers. This, for Howe, was the primary reason for insisting upon it in an age when most men were too consumed with party interests to listen seriously to that part of the biblical message. It is for that reason that Howe's exposition of John 17 is of consummate importance in giving insight into the secret of his stand against the stream.

That union for which Christ prays is "no other than a love union."[3] The union of believers one to another is analagous to the relation existing between the Father and Son. There are two principles which are presupposed in this prayer, and they undergird the whole biblical concept of Christian unity: (1) it is a union of which Christians are capable, since the Lord would not pray for an impossibility, (2) it is a visible union. The exemplary or

1. Ibid., p. 321.
2. Calamy, op.cit., pp. 67-77.
3. Works, I, 147.

'pattern-union' which Jesus has in mind is a union in mind, in love, in design and interest; wherein He prays, that saints on earth might be one with them, "that the world might believe!"[1] The Lord prayed that "all might be one,"[2] not only for the sake of the church, but also because it is the most effective testimony to the unregenerate world.[3]

> Whereupon all good men have a mighty inducement to unite in this request for more entire visible oneness in the Christian church, not only from the example of our Lord leading them in this request, but from the reason also by which he enforces it, that otherwise the rest of the world must be confirmed and obdured in their infidelity.[4]

Later, this principle is likened to a marriage union, where to be "joined to the Lord," means nothing less than to be one spirit with Him - "for the eternal God to cleave in love to a nothing-creature"[5] is the real truth of church unity.

The only means by which Christians are to gain this visible unity is through mutual love one to another.[6] This is the clear meaning of Col.2:2, "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and the Father, and of Christ." Sincere love among Christians, and a clear decisive faith in regard to the substantials of Christianity, are the best possible means of establishing and uniting Christians in a common front against their enemies.[7] This love is a peculiar love, reserved particularly for the breth-

1. Ibid.
2. Jn. 17:21.
3. Works, IV, 306.
4. Ibid.
5. Works, I, 147.
6. Works, IV, 258.
7. Ibid., p. 261.

:ren, and is superadded to common love of all humanity.[1] It cannot be restricted to one sect or party, but must be extended to all who acknowledge Christ as Saviour. Any other love is "to love factiously, and with an unjust love, that refuses to give indifferently to every one his due."[2] First, this disinterested love would contribute greatly to the vigour of Christian life. Secondly, it would inspire Christians generally with a sacred courage to know that they were mutually bound together in love. Thirdly, it would extinguish the "unhallowed fire of our anger and wrath towards one another."[3] Mutual kindness would grow, prejudices cease, and the final culminating effect would be to make Christians covet "an entire union in all the things wherein we differ."[4] This is a visible union of all churches into one catholic community of love. One common external form in the Church of God, "wherein all good men would agree, were a most amiable thing, very useful to its comely, better being, and the want of it hath inferred and doth threaten, evils much to be deplored and deprecated."[5] The divine principle of love is necessary to the very being of the church, and whatever violates this principle is the "most destruct-:ive, mortal schism." Bishop Dovenant is right -

> he that believes the things contained in the Apostles Creed, and endeavours to live a life agreeable to the precepts of Christ, ought not to be expunged from the roll of Christians, nor be driven from Communion with the other members of any church whatsoever.

1. Ibid., p. 264.
2. Ibid., p. 265.
3. Ibid., p. 269.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 172.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 271.

Actually, however, men assign Christ to their own arbitrary, narrow limits; they erect 'closed circles' to enlist Christ for themselves alone. This savours less of truth than it does of pride and vanity.[1]

If love is the first great principle, the second is a clear practical faith in the Gospel.[2] If union is to be anything more than a union in external formalities, we must have a firm grasp of the essentials - the definition of a Christian and his place in the church is the minimum.

> Christians, then, are a sort of men tending to God and blessedness under the conduct of Christ, to whom they have by covenant devoted themselves, and to God in him. Visible Christians are such as are in this visible tendency, - with their children yet in minority, and not capable of making an understanding profession themselves. Such as have carried to that capacity are no longer to be considered in their parents, but apart in themselves ... It is plainly the mind of Christ, that, those be received into that plenary communion which belongs to the Christian state, and particularly unto that sacred rite which is the communion of his body and blood.[3]

The mystery of God and of Christ as the true source of our union, is the real business of the Gospel.[4] The "unenlivened, outward forms of religion," will do us no good if we do not enjoy the inner power of the Gospel faith. This carries with it the serious responsibility each bears to understand the mind and will of God.[5] Even here, there is no possibility of escaping "a great exercise of love, that the heart may close with it."[6]

1. Ibid., p. 173.
2. Ibid., p. 290.
3. Ibid., p. 302.
4. Ibid., p. 291.
5. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 387.
6. Ibid., p. 389.

Faith as a unifying principle, however, is operative only when it attends a previous transformation of the heart. This requires an actual application of the message of holy writ to our present situation.[1] The inattentive hearer, the inconsiderate hearer, the stupid, unaffected hearer, and the prejudiced hearer will benefit nothing from any union of the church.

Desirous as he was of union, Howe was not willing to compromise with conscience to achieve it. It is impossible to "unite with them who insist upon terms of union that we judge unlawful."[2] The essential thing is to keep united in spirit and in mind with all serious Christians in the necessary things of the Gospel. Realistically viewed, to achieve unity means to overlook a great many minor differences, and to take as essential, only the lowest common denominator of Christianity. Unity is defeated, not so much by doctrinal issues, as it is by an absence of the spirit of peace. A return to the lustre of primitive Christianity requires a new coming of the Holy Spirit through prayer.

> And let us supplicate more earnestly for the effusions of that Holy Spirit, which alone can give remedy to our distempers, and overcome the lusts of the flesh, of whatsoever kind, and restore Christian religion to itself, and make the Christian name great in the world.[3]

On the other hand, it would be a mistake to assume that uniformity can be legislated. The bishop of Lincoln has attempted to do this without success.[4] In a letter to the bishop, Howe asks some pointed questions. Is there no difference to be put between

1. Ibid., p. 390.
2. Works, IV, 307.
3. Ibid., p. 311.
4. Calamy, op.cit., p. 104.

essentials and non-essentials? Would the bishop, if he were father of numerous progeny, allow one of his children to perish from hunger because he objected to a particular kind of sauce? There are those in the Lord's house who would rather be put to the stake than to kneel at the Lord's table. Would the bishop "necessitate such, perdere substantiam propter accidentia?"[1] Is he prepared to stand before the Judgment seat and plead that he has driven believers from the Lord's table "like dogs and swine" because they refused to accept his own peculiar emphasis? Can he, "by undoing men, change the judgment of their consciences?"[2]

The attempt to legislate unity by force is to confuse two kingdoms - the secular and the spiritual. In his well-known, The Blessedness of the Righteous, Howe underscores the one principle that will unite all Christians. It is love.[3] Our enemies bear the image of God, and love overcomes their evil, blunts the edge of their revenge, secures us from wounding them, turns our hot anger into gentle pity and substitutes Christian forgiveness for study of retaliation.[4]

The theme of love is a recurring one in Howe. In his published sermon, What may Most Hopefully be Attempted to Allay Animosities, etc. he recommended love as the great solution of Protestant problems. Mutual confidence would result from more love. Desire for union in unessential matters would motivate the lives of Protestants and enable them to compromise their differences.[5] It would oblige each member of the Christian community to forbear

1. Ibid., pp. 108, 109.
2. Ibid., p. 111.
3. Works, I, 306.
4. Ibid.
5. Calamy, op.cit., p. 81.

reviling, and religion would then become "a vital powerful thing; and consequently more grateful to God and awful to men."[1]

After all, the agreements are basic. A sinner can never be saved until he is justified and sanctified. The first makes his state safe; the second prepares him for communion with God in this world and the next.[2] We are also agreed that any person who believes in God through Christ is united to Him, and is prepared for the exigencies of both worlds.[3] Since this is so, "let us draw as near one another as we can, and particularly unite in the most vigorous endeavour of carrying on this excellent design which is now before us."[4]

In conclusion of this section, Howe best summarizes his own views on unity in a funeral address preached for Dr Bates.

> He was for entire union of all visible Christians, (or saints or believers, which in Scripture are equivalent terms;) meaning by Christianity what is essential thereto, whether doctrinal or practical, as by humanity we mean what is essential to man - severing accidents, or not being of the essence; and by visibility, the probable appearance thereof: and for free communion of all such, of whatever persuasion in extra-essential matters, if they pleased ... Accounting also in the meantime, that notwithstanding misrepresentations, it was better to cast a mantle over the failings of Brethren, than to be concerned to detect and expose them.[5]

Tolerance

It is extremely difficult to draw clear cut distinctions between unity and tolerance, since the two frequently overlap in Howe's thought. For convenience, however, we shall allocate

1. Ibid., p. 82.
2. Works, IV, 330.
3. Ibid., p. 331.
4. Works, V, 407. Calamy does not inform us what the "excellent design" was, other than to note it was preached before certain societies for reformation. op.cit., pp. 223, 224.
5. Works, VI, 302, Calamy, op.cit., p. 239.

generally to this section those matters which concern his spirit of tolerance arising out of the problem of ordinary human relations. For instance, when Daniel Bull, Howe's trusted assistant, fell into immorality,[1] Howe's magnaminous attitude undoubtedly saved Bull's future ministry from destruction. Clearly, Howe's views on the unbending rigour of certain Anglicans, the duty of civil magistrates and liberty of conscience are also evidences demonstrating tolerance On the other hand, his views on the carnality of religious contention and "occasional conformity" could be discussed equally well in either section.

How far advanced was the concept of religious toleration in England? Was it universally accepted, or was it still the pet theory of a few ecclesiastics such as Howe and Williams, and a few politicians such as Cromwell and Harrington?[2] Jordan writes,

> The theory of religious toleration stood substantially complete in 1660. We may believe that responsible opinion in England was by that date persuaded of the necessity, if not of the positive virtue, of religious freedom. Despite the bitterness of reaction during the early years of the Restoration, the discussion, now mature in theory, was transferred to the forum of political consideration. Delicate institutional accommodations had still to be made before England gained peace, stability and a larger freedom as the fruit of her long travail. Religious liberty was to undergird not only parliamentary government, but that temper of mind which we denominate liberal by teaching men valuable lessons on the art of living peacefully together in a complex society.[3]

The Cambridge Platonists seem to have had a decisive influence on the development of Howe's ideal of toleration. Whichcote gave

1. Horton, John Howe, p. 149.
2. Woodhouse, op.cit., p. 82.
3. Jordan, op.cit., p. 9.

a convincing and noble vindication to the freedom of the intellect. The validity of our faith must be measured strictly by the dictates of our own judgment, and no human power may rightfully violate the sanctity of that judgment.[1] This is essentially Howe's case against the bishop of Lincoln.[2] When the bishop presses for the execution of laws which ruin nonconformists, he is pleading for a severity which denies the individual sanctity of conscience.[3] In substance, Whichcote, like Howe, reduced religion to individual terms and destroyed the possibility of persecution by his elucidation of the nature of faith and morals. He writes,

> It is not to be expected that another man should think as I would, to please me, since I cannot think as I would to please myself: it is neither in His nor My power[4] to think as we will; but as we see reason, and find cause.

Nor was this all. He was fully persuaded of the soundness of the Latitudinarian position that the fundamentals of faith are very few. Howe used this same argument in attempting to unite warring sections of Christians a quarter of a century later.[5] He agreed with Whichcote, who taught that a substantial Christian unity had always existed, which the impious arms of the persecutors had despoiled.[6]

The reasonable Christian understands that differences arising among fellow-Christians originate not in indifference to the truth, but in a real desire to pursue the truth. He may honestly believe that he is offending God by accepting the standards of others.[7] "He will be persuaded that those who differ

1. Ibid., p. 105. 2. Calamy, op.cit., pp. 104-112.
3. Ibid., p. 108.
4. Whichcote, Moral and Religious Aphorisms, pp. 10, 11.
5. Works, IV, 330, 331.
6. Jordan, op.cit., p. 105. 7. Calamy, op.cit., p. 111.

from him in faith may be as devoted to the pursuit of truth and as honest as he."[1] Every Christian should have absolute liberty to form his own judgment and to abide freely in that decision. Not all Christians have the same understanding, for the same latitude is not granted to all. Rather than try to regulate the minutiae of the Christian life, the Apostle Paul lays down one general principal against judging one another.[2]

The principle of accepting the intellectual honesty of those who differ, stems from a complete trust in the power of reason. In this Howe is the perfect disciple of Whichcote. The latter wrote, "Keep indifferency of Judgment, till the Verity of the thing does appear; so long as there is any Uncertainty. Have no Bias, but what is received from truth."[3] The corollary to this doctrine was that men endowed with a rational faith, would by nature be tolerant. This stands as a basic ingredient in Howe's plea for religious toleration. Although more aware than the Platonists of the depths of difference separating the various Protestant groups, all his appeals to toleration find their ultimate genesis in the Puritan view of man. John Goodwin echoes this thought.

> And moreover it is come to pass ... that every man esteemeth it as properly his own ... to use his conscience without control; and what they shall be debarred of what they have so long enjoyed, and so much covet to keep, what they may attempt, let the wise judge. Therefore there is not only a reason, but also a necessity, of toleration.[4]

While this idea is significant for the development of religious toleration, it does deal a death blow to the "Church Idea."[5]

1. Jordan, op.cit., p. 112. 2. Works, IV, 271.
3. Whichcote, op.cit., p. 21. 4. Woodhouse, op.cit., p. 186.
5. Jordan, op.cit., p. 101.

Thus it is possible to trace Howe's tolerance partially to his view of reason and nature. In presenting the case of the Protestant Dissenters, he argues that all men are under obligation by the "Universal Law of Nature, to worship God in Assemblies."[1] The "dictate and impression of the universal Law" commands men to worship according to their own lights.[2] The reasonable man perceives that all existing differences are only incidental to their main business of religion. Reason which "finds out" God, pleads for unity, but failing that, is not satisfied with anything less than toleration.

Every man should have liberty to form his own judgment and to abide freely in that decision. The obligation of the universal, natural, divine law is more binding than the temporal law of the land.[3] No pressure other than reasonable persuasion should be brought to bear upon the resolute conscience. Even then, a man must not be persuaded against his will, for the old adage holds true; he is of the same opinion still.

> Where indeed a formed and fixed judgment of conscience once hath place for the practice which exposes a man to suffering; and prisons, gibbets and faggots are very improper means of illumination or of public utility, - if the civil peace and the substance of religion be not hurt by such practice. And the sincerity of that conscience is much to be suspected, that is ever altered by such methods...[4]

Reason is the great persuader.

Whichcote, too, held that when we believe with certainty of reason, we will attain a cool tolerance which flows from certainty

1. Calamy, op.cit., p. 146.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 148.
4. Works, V, 394.

of truth. We shall have learned that since men are reasonable, only reasonable methods will suffice for their conversion and persuasion.[1] Right reason and true religion are bound inseper-:ably together. Whichcote writes,

> Give me a Religion that is grounded upon Right Reason, and Divine Authority; such as, when it does attain it's (sic.) affect, the World is the better for it ... Men cannot differ, by true Religion; because it is true Religion to agree. The Spirit of Religion is a Reconciling Spirit.[2]

Here Howe could not share Whichcote's optimism, for embroiled as he was in controversies most inimical to his personal catholicity, he found in the forge of human experience passions fanned to white heat that converted and persuaded normally rational men into courses quite against reason. However, the two men were agreed that formal uniformity, attained by compulsory weapons, never produced unity of spirit.

As was the case with principles of unity, so also in tolera-:tion, biblical exegesis forms the foundation of Howe's thinking. Romans 14, Galatians and Colossians are the native element of his thought in development of the ideal of toleration.[3] The Bible commands us to receive the weak in faith, but not to doubt-:ful disputations.[4] All are to be considered as one in Christ, making no difference between Jews and Gentiles.[5] The Apostle makes two plain rules in regard to the dubious matters. First, each is to be "fully persuaded in his own mind,"[6] and secondly; Christians must receive others and judge them not.[7] Lesser difficulties can be resolved by humility, charity and patience.

1. Jordan, op.cit., p. 113.
2. Whichcote, op.cit., pp. 91, 81. 3. Works, V, 272-290.
4. Rom. 14:1. 5. Gal. 3:28; Col.3:11. 6. Rom.14:5.
7. Rom. 14:10.

We must each make the best use of the judgment God has given by bringing it to the light of holy writ.[1] There is nothing to be gained in censuring those of different persuasion, and it is wrong to enter into controversy needlessly.

If this biblical basis is presupposed, it is not difficult to understand Howe's blending of reason and Scripture in formulating an articulate expression of the rights of the individual to personal liberty. Reason, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, discovers the course of true toleration. Thus controversy is unreasonable. In his preface to Of Delighting in God, he writes to his former parishioners at Great Torrington the tenor of his constant thought.

> But I repent not I have been so little engaged in the hot Contests of our Age, about the things wherein they differ. For as I pretend to little Light in these things ... so I must profess to have little inclination to contend about matters of that kind.[2]

The sanctity of individual conscience must precedence over all other laws.[3] The principles of nonconformists are basically found in those rights which are the inheritance of each man as a being before God. When they are caught in a conflict between the law of conscience and the law of the land, they must choose the former.[4] On the other hand, the Church of England has not only fought to arrogate to itself the ordinances of Divine worship, but also to gain all civil power.[5] Thus Anglicans have made necessary things which are only accidental, and contribute nothing to the making of persons either better Christians, or better men.[6] A man's conscience can

1. Works, V, 265. 2. Calamy, op.cit. p. 56.
3. Ibid., p. 148. 4. Ibid. 5. Ibid., p. 149.
6. Ibid.

no more be represented in a council than in the day of judgment.[1]

Among the principles underlying Howe's view of tolerance is abstention from controversy. Refusal to enter controversy stems from: (1) the fact that his own practice is firmly settled in his mind, (2) such disputes do nothing to further the Kingdom of God, (3) altercations seldom better men's spirits, (4) sincere religion is not confined to one party or excluded from any, and, (5) the matters disputed are the least necessary to the Christian faith.[2]

It would be an easy matter to resolve differences if one conscience served the whole church, but "every one of us must give an account of himself to God."[3] It is as impossible for another to decide for us as it is for another to represent us at the day of judgment.[4] The day is coming when each will have liberty to serve God as he chooses,[5] but in the meantime it is great consolation to realize that it is easier to please God than man.[6] There are two main rules to be followed in dubious matters; namely, that each be fully persuaded personally, and, that each receive the fellow-Christian of weak conscience.

Although Howe is primarily interested in tolerance as a religious phenomenon, he is well aware of the secular repercussions. Thus he represents the nonconformists as champions of the "Civil Interests of the Nation" in an unremitting warfare against a royalist plot to destroy the personal liberty of English freemen.[7]

1. Ibid., p. 151, Howe attributes this illustration to Dr Sherlock.
2. Works, V, 266. 3. Rom. 14:12. 4. Works, V, 267.
5. Howe's prediction came true with the Toleration Act of May 24, 1689.
6. Loc.cit. 7. Calamy, op.cit., p. 154.

Anglicans ask that all nonconformists be barred from civil power. Is this reasonable? It is precisely as reasonable as to insist that voters have the same colour of hair.[1] Yet a man cannot even be keeper of an alehouse without coming in the prescribed fashion to the communion table.[2]

Closely allied to this civil interference by the church is its claim to exclusive control of the Lord's Supper. To whom does it belong? To the Church of England? Or does it belong to the Lord? If it belongs to Christ, does He not have the right to include or exclude?

> Never can there be Union or Peace in the Christian World till we take down our arbitrary Inclosures, and content ourselves with those which our common Lord hath set.[3]

Howe quotes with approval Emperor Maximillian II, who said that there was no sin more grievous than to affect dominion over men's consciences. They who do so, go about to invade the tower of heaven.[4]

The best example of Howe's attitude to Anglican intolerance is seen in his answer to Dean Stillingfleet. In 1680, nonconformists were represented as the real danger to the Crown. Dean Stillingfleet preached a sermon to this effect on the "first day of Easter term"[5] before the Lord Mayor and the Aldermen. In his sermon, entitled The Mischief of Separation, he represented all nonconformists as schismatics and enemies of the peace. A "person of quality" in the city, presumably a member of Howe's church, took great exception to the sermon and protested with more heat than light. Howe's

1. Ibid., p. 159.
2. Ibid., p. 160.
3. Ibid., p. 161.
4. Works, IV, 349.
5. Calamy, op. cit., pp. 73, 74.

answer, A Letter Concerning Dr Stillingfleet's Sermon, was printed in a pamphlet, and received a very civil answer from the dean himself. In this letter, Howe develops some of the distinctive principles which made him justly famous as a leading advocate of tolerance. Dis-:passionately, he shows that the doctor's arguments are indefensible, and with equal forbearance, he cautions his own party against ex-:cessive indignation.[1] First, the principles involved in the dean's sermon really commend paganism for a large share of Christendom, since none, according to his principles can enjoy the sacraments except through the Establishment. "He seems rather contented we should not be Christians at all, than not to be Christians of this particular mode; that we should rather want the substance of Christ's gospel and sacraments" than to follow conscience in the matter.[2] After all, there are those who cannot agree with Established principles, and by the dean's reckoning, there is no hope for them.

> ... but when also we are satisfied that we cannot enjoy the means of salvation in his way without sin, and he tell us, we cannot without sin enjoy them in our own; we hope every door is not shut up against us, and we cannot think the merciful and holy God hath so stated our case, as to reduce us to a necessity of sinning to get out of a state of damnation![3]

The sum is this: we are under the obligation of Divine law to wor-:ship God in the use of His ordinance in society. Christ has not given any man the power to oblige an observation which goes against the conscience of other men.[4] Furthermore, men should not be forced to communicate with churches where ungodliness is universal, and the "minister is grossly ignorant of the principles of religion."[5] The

1. Works, V, 214.
2. Works, V, 220.
3. Ibid., p. 224.
4. Ibid., p. 232.
5. Ibid., p. 238.

ceremonies of religion are scarcely so profitable as the real business of the church, the faith of the gospel, the fear of God, and eternal life.[1] This is not to deny that it is permissible for some to communicate sometimes with some parish principles,[2] but to argue from this to a universal principle that all ought to do so always is not only faulty logic, but bad advice.[3] What does the dean consider to be of greater importance; "the saving of souls which He bought with his blood, or, the preserving inviolate certain human institutions and rules"?[4] Does the dean suppose no one who disagrees with him can be honest or conscientious?[5] On the other hand, it serves the cause of Christ badly for nonconformists to show too great resentment and anger.[6] If Dr Stillingfleet had known and conversed with the persons he now derides, he should not have judged them so harshly.[7] In summary, all are enjoined by Christ to the substance of the ordinances, but as "to uninstituted modes we are free."[8] Christian liberty permits each man to use the ordinances according to the Scriptures and the light of conscience. If a man cannot admit questionable, devised additions to worship, he is not to be deprived of the sacraments on that account.[9] Paul warns us above all, to beware of causing a brother to fall.[10]

1. Ibid., p. 239.
2. Works, IV, 261-290. This tract on occasional conformity is one of the most noteworthy contributions to that difficult problem in the seventeenth century.
3. Works, V, 241, 242. 4. Ibid., p. 246. 5. Ibid., p. 248.
6. Ibid., p. 250. 7. Ibid., p. 252. 8. Ibid., p. 259.
9. Ibid. 10. Rom. 14:13.

The principle of toleration in Howe applies not only to differences of religious opinions, but also to the foibles of fallen brethren. The unfortunate incident of Bull's immorality points up this characteristic. In his sermon, On Charity in Respect of Other Men's Sins,[1] he distinguishes between the old and the new covenant by the principle of love. The whole Christian faith is summarized in the two commandments of our Lord - "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God ...," and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."[2] This second commandment comprehends all mankind under the name of neighbour or brother.[3] But it carries a corollary which is summed up in the apostolic observation that it rejoices not in iniquity.[4] This means that a Christian is not to delight secretly in his own sins, reviewing them again for sly enjoyment, nor is he to count it a grateful sight "to see another stab at once the Christian name and his own soul."[5] To rejoice in the sins of others is contrary to the pure essence of love.[6] We are members one of another, and to rejoice in the fall of one of our brothers is as mad as to rejoice that a hand or a foot is unsound and rotten.[7] In the case of a fallen believer, there are two principles which should order our relations: (1) we must fulfil the law of love by taking heed not to tempt his inclinations,[8] by preventing his sin as much as possible,[9] by suspending judgment and endeavouring to recover him in a spirit of compassion,[10] (2) we must also practice some things

1. Works, IV, 175-202, preached to his own congregation where Bull served as assistant.
2. Ibid., p. 175. 3. Ibid., p. 177. 4. I Cor. 13:6.
5. Works, IV, 179. 6. Ibid., p. 183. 7. Ibid., p. 187.
8. Ibid., p. 189. 9. Ibid., p. 190. 10. Ibid., p. 191.

which charity does not expressly command; we must avoid the contagion of his sin, we must take warning from his example,[1] and we must humbly thank God for sparing us such a calamity,[2] since we are all prone to the same failures.

However, there is a place for reproof in the church and we must "admit a conviction of the matter of fact."[3] As cruel as this may seem to some, this means we must decline the sinner's society if no repentance is apparent.[4] Sin is a serious matter, and the remedy requires serious measures.

> If any will yet, in spite of Divine love itself, laugh on at so foul and frightful a thing as sin is, it is too likely to prove the Sardonian laughter; that is, as some explain that proverb, of them that die laughing, conclude their lives and their laughter together, and only cease to laugh and to live in the same last breath.[5]

Bull was afterwards restored, and closed his life as a useful and respected minister.[6]

One of the most distressing features of seventeenth century ecclesiastical life was the dissension which divided the brethren. After Howe left Pinner's Hall with the ejected Williams, he preached two sermons to promote unity, entitled, The Carnality of Christian Contention.[7] There he distinguishes between lawful and unlawful contention. Not all contention is evil, for there is one sense in which every Christian is enjoined to "contend for the faith," but when we survey the contemporary religious scene, we see too much contention which is carnal.[8] The distinction is this. Contention

1. Ibid., p. 192. 2. Ibid., p. 193. 3. Ibid., p. 194.
4. Ibid., p. 195. 5. Ibid., p. 202.
6. Horton, op.cit., p. 149. 7. Calamy, op.cit., p. 185.
8. Works, IV, 299.

which unites the church against her enemies is to be commended, while contentions arising within the church itself, are an unqualified evil.

> The difference is very great, and most discernible in the effects, between the church's contentions against the enemies without it, and contentions within itself. The former unite it the more, increase its strength and vigour; the latter divide and enfeeble it.[1]

The first question to be decided is whether any party of Christians has the right to set up any limits of communion other than what Christ has made. The Eucharist, as a symbol of Christian unity, belongs exclusively to Christ. "Then certainly it ought to be free to his guests, and appropriate to them. And who should dare to invite others, or forbid these?"[2]

Carnality does not belong merely to the side where truth is absent. Even when a man has the truth, he can contend for it in such a way that it becomes sin.[3] Among the Galatians, for example, Paul found a sound body of believers,[4] who sinned against their brethren by their arrogance in handling truth. Another characteristic of carnality is that it devours divine truth. "Monstrous thought! Consider I beseech you, my friends what this comes to; the feeding an impure lust upon sacred things, or upon that which is divine."[5]

What is to be done, however, when through ignorance or prejudice, tolerance does not obtain? Why, there is nothing for it, but to wait patiently until men are ready to receive the truth.

1. Ibid., p. 300.
2. Ibid., p. 301.
3. Ibid., p. 327.
4. Gal. 6:1,2.
5. Works, IV, 328.

In all our counselling, it is absolutely essential to wait quietly, without using force or persecution, to lead men to discover divine truth.[1] Too much strife arises out of being overly zealous to mould and square gospel truths and doctrines by human measures. We attempt, unsuccessfully, to make God's transactions with men fit into the scheme of our own notions, and this always ends in frustration. The mind, which is naturally similar to the eye, can see everything but itself.[2] Strangely, it does not preserve its self-reflecting power when viewing itself, and becomes blind. An object may be too near the eye to be seen. So with the mind. It is too carnal, "sunk too deep into our flesh," to make mature unbiased reflections upon itself. The cause of this fault is depravation.[3]

> ... it for the most part thinks itself to see what is not to be seen; certain imaginary excellencies which make the man his own idol ... In this case, every man is however, most commonly innocent in his own eyes, or still thinks he is in the right ... All are for the truth, and they all are for peace and union; by which some indeed more gently mean, they hope all will quit their former mistaken opinions and ways ... and come wholly over to them.[4]

On November 5, 1703, Howe preached a sermon in commemoration of Guy Fawkes day.[5] From this address, it is an obvious inference that although he was one of the most catholic church leaders,[6] tolerance was not to be granted to Romanism. The reason for this is that it stems from the devil.[7] By their character we see "the devil's power at work in them," and by their works we see that the thing called man

1. Ibid., p. 338. 2. Ibid., p. 350. 3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., pp. 350, 351. 5. Works, V, 410-435.
6. He wrote, "The more truly catholic the communion of Christians is, it is the more truly Christian." Ibid., p. 431.
7. Ibid., pp. 418-420.

in them is "metamorphosed and transformed into so brutal and diabolical a monster."[1] "Infatuation" deceives them into the delusion that their power to oppress and to destroy the true church comes from Jesus Christ.[2] What they have done is beyond belief.

> The things themselves are full of black horror. But that they should be said to be done in that name, speaks the most monstrous impudence and infatuation. As if Christ had changed names with the devil, and laying aside that of a Saviour, had chosen to be called Abaddon or Apollyon, the common destroyers of mankind; and having changed his mind and his very nature, did now set himself to counteract and defeat the design for which he came into the world.[3]

But tolerance is to be denied them also because they represent a "monstrous degeneracy" not only from Christianity, but from common humanity itself.[4] If a man refuses to believe they are deputed by Christ as the successors of Peter to pillage and plunder where they will; if he refuses to worship a piece of bread as Diety, he is to be tortured to death for this disbelief.[5] This indicates a transformation of the mind into that of "ravenous wild beasts, into lions, tigers, bears, wolves, destroying and tearing in pieces whatever comes their way."[6] This transformation proceeds from "their plenary consent with the devil, as an actuating spirit in them."[7] Their doom is certain, because they have voluntarily given themselves over to the devil.[8] Against such an implacable enemy, our disagreements are only "little circumstantial things,"[9] and we ought to bind ourselves together in love and united effort. We have been delivered from the powers of darkness; therefore we are to be serious in our thanksgivings, and endeavour to arrive at greater degrees of

1. Ibid., p. 421. 2. Ibid., p. 422. 3. Ibid., p. 423.
4. Ibid., p. 424. 5. Ibid., p. 425. 6. Ibid., p. 426.
7. Ibid., p. 427. 8. Ibid., p. 428. 9. Ibid., p. 431.

gratitude, that our hearts may be more warm and raised in thanksgiving.[1] Thus Howe would not grant Romanists liberty, not because they differed so widely in belief, but because he felt that as agents of Satan, they would plot anarchy and the overthrow of English government. In this he agreed with Cromwell.

One of the thorniest problems facing a moderate nonconformist was to decide whether or not to remain in partial communion with the Established Church. From 1662 on, many of the nonconformists had practiced "occasional communion" with the Church of England; partly because it was a church under which they were willing to submit with some modifications, and partly for the purpose of recognising the essential unity of all Christians.[2] True to his principles of tolerance, Howe gave utterance to the opinion that occasional conformity was permissible. Left-wing nonconformists were shocked. The climax came in the famous case of Sir Thomas Abney. In 1701, Sir Thomas Abney, Mayor of London, and a distinguished member of Howe's congregation, went to public worship in an Established Church. This precipitated an incendiary pamphlet entitled, An Inquiry into the Occasional Conformity of Dissenters. In Howe's answer, he formulated the case for occasional conformity upon the principle of individual liberty. Occasional conformity lies within the scope of Christian conscience. If a man judges one church more suitable to his own inclinations and more in keeping with the common Christian rule, and

1. Ibid., p. 435. 2. Rogers, Life of Howe, p. 427.

worships regularly there, this does not mean that he cannot worship at another church when the occasion arises.[1] There is no perfect church, and as long as this remains true, a man has the right to vary his communion without prostituting conscience.[2]

Is a man to be judged insincere because he sometimes worships with the Establishment, and sometimes with nonconformists? Even those who have yielded wholly to the Church of England, apparently only for the emoluments attached to it, cannot be judged censoriously by us. They may be doing it for the glory of God.[3] On the other hand, if a man abandons public worship entirely, have we the right to judge him peevish and sour? Clearly, the embellishments of the Established Church are not the signs of spiritual maturity, and if these brethren desist from worship from a holy fear of sinning, who are we to judge them wrong?[5] Matters of ceremony can never be understood to be major distinctions of the Christian church. Bishop Davenant was quite right in saying, '*non ad fidem fundamentalum, sed ad peritiam theologicam*; - not to the foundation of our faith, but to the skill of the divines'; and perhaps not to this either, but sometimes only to satisfy their curiosity do they make such distinctions.[6] Different tastes account partially for differences of worship. Some enjoy God in an elaborate service of ritual; others worship better in a simpler service. We must accommodate ourselves to this fact, and view these differences with equanimity, understanding them in the spirit of love.

1. *Works*, V, 276.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Works*, IV, 276.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, p. 279.

> Upon the whole, nothing is more agreeable, either to this divine principle of love - nothing, within our compass, more conducible to our end, ... the ceasing of our differences ... - than to bear with calm and placid minds towards one another under them, to banish all hard thoughts because of them.[1]

Apart from differences of taste, another principle, liberty of conscience, dictates tolerance. Some by kindness and flattery, others by threats and warnings, seek to persuade men to their peculiar beliefs.[2] Love refuses to stoop so low, for this is a violation of conscience. However, let us suppose that a man does yield against his conscience, and joins the communion of another church. He is now a hypocrite, and what has the new communion gained? The shadow of a man, "the carcass only," for the true man is inside and is <u>still</u> opposed to the new service.

Perhaps for modern thought, there is nothing new or revolutionary in these doctrines, but seventeenth century England found his words strange indeed. If a case cannot be made for Howe's pioneering in the field, at least it can be stated unequivocably that he consistently reaffirmed doctrines which finally became foundation stones for modern liberty of conscience. In this, he was one link in the chain of toleration which found its source in Geneva[3] and its culmination in England in the enlightenment of the eighteenth century. Clearly, Spademan captured the spirit of his catholicity in good measure.

His charity was not a narrow spring, limited and confined

1. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 281. 2. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 283.
3. In an epistle to Bullinger, Calvin, speaking of Luther's severity to him said, "If Luther a thousand times call me devil, I will acknowledge him for a famous servant of God." <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 290, see also Choisy, <u>Calvin, etc.</u> p. 72.

> to a small spot, but like an ocean, sent forth refreshing streams without distinction. How oft have the bowels of our persecuted brethren in a neighbouring kingdom, been refreshed by his concern for them.[1]

Howe's pursuit of the ways of peace in a warring generation stemmed from an unshakeable conviction that the Scriptures taught the unity of all believers. This conception was strengthened by an implicit trust in redeemed reason. From the Platonists he had learned that tolerance is a quality possible only to a reasonable man. Nor was this all. His whole life reflected the tenor of this belief in a continuous and unremitting attempt to practice what he preached. Perhaps it is impossible to assess properly at a distance of two and a half centuries, the tremendous impact of this ecumenical spirit upon his age, but it is certain that his devotion to the cause of Christian unity was not a forgotten virtue, among his contemporaries who had an eye for greatness.

1. Works, VI, 401.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

"Reason having first found out God, religion adores Him."[1] This epitomizes the thought of John Howe and is basic to an understanding of his theology and his ambivalent attitude to reason. He is drawn irresistibly by the latter's appeal to a natural understanding of the universe, but he is equally repelled by its inability to recognize the limits of its penetration. From Reformed theology, and ultimately from Augustine,[2] he received an unshakeable conviction that reason was a 'bruised reed' which could not stand alone in the polar blasts from the Unseen World. From the Cambridge Platonists, and eventually from Plotinus and the pagan philosophers, he held the optimistic assumption that right reason, properly guided, could come to true knowledge of God.[3] Faced with the problem of the mendacity of the intellect, we find Howe sounding his "yes" and then immediately his "no." The "yes" and "no" are held in tension whenever he speaks of God's self-manifestation in nature and reason. This is an important consideration to remember in our summary and analysis of his thought, because only by grasping this conception of reason, is it possible to understand his articulation of Christian truth. The inner coherence of his system pivots on the belief, that although man lives continually in error, if he will but apply his natural powers to contemplation of God, he will become one of the redeemed.[4] This explains the bewildering

1. Works, I, 406. 2. Miller, The New England Mind, p. 66.
3. Dr John Baillie quotes a modern theologian, who says, "Next to the foolishness of denying God is that of proving him!" Our Knowledge of God, p. 147.
4. This is the underlying assumption of The Living Temple, and indeed, of all his apologetic material. Rogers calls it "the ablest work on atheistical and deistical controversies which had yet appeared." Life of John Howe, p. 275.

rapidity with which he moves from an utter denunciation of man's depravity to a complete admiration of man's natural beatific vision.

The four topics chosen for discussion in the body of the thesis are representative of the main emphases in his thought. The first, development of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, was crucial for the seventeenth century. Nuttall observes that the doctrine received " a more thorough and detailed consideration from the Puritans of seventeenth century England than it had received at any other time in Christian history."[1] Together with Richard Baxter and John Owen, Howe was one of the foremost pioneers[2] in developing a biblical position that, on the one hand, answered the sectaries and followers of Fox who were clamouring for an exaltation of the Spirit above the Word, and on the other, aroused the ministers of the Establishment who were disinclined to give the Holy Spirit His true place in the life and work of the Church. Although a conservative Puritan,[3] Howe nonetheless accepted in full the radical principle of the Spirit's personal indwelling, and this involved him in the problem of distinguishing between ordinary and extraordinary illumination, apostolic and contemporary indwelling, and the relation of the Holy Spirit to Scripture. His commendable caution left him in the enviable position of earning the respect of moderates in both parties, while the door was left open to receive new truth from the sectaries. There is nothing of startling originality in Howe's development of the doctrine, but in the

1. Nuttall, The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience, p.viii.
2. Howe published nearly five hundred pages on the Holy Spirit, covering every major aspect of His work.
3. Nuttall, op.cit., p. 48.

exhaustive practical treatment to which he subjected it, he was surpassed by none.[1] It was the individual's inward life,[2] his personal appropriation of the Spirit,[3] and his inner transformation by the Spirit's sanctifying power[4] that claimed his attention. Thus we may place Howe along with Baxter, as an apostle of the middle way, charting a course between the sterility of dead orthodoxy, and the excesses of left-wing radicals.

The second section, which deals with Howe's anthropology, particularly in reference to reason, sums up the weightiest part of his theology. Here his striking originality is most evident, for in the attempt to formulate a synthesis between the two hostile traditions which comprised his intellectual inheritance, he was forced to rethink the whole doctrine of man in a manner which did justice to both. We have already noted that his interest in the pagan philosophers made him an authority in the field.[5] This undergirded his feeling of personal rapport with the contemporary Pagan. How was a cultivated unbeliever to bridge the gap between natural and supernatural Revelation? Howe gave his answer in The Living Temple. On the other hand, his biblical realism, interpreted through the Calvinist tradition of Puritanism, demanded the most exacting denunciation of the depravity of man. In defining man as "darkness,"[6] in whom the image is "erased, vanished,"[7] Howe bids fair to out-Calvin Calvin. He affirms that there is no system "of coherent truths to be found."[8] The three great character

1. Owen's πνευματολογια was undoubtedly a more detailed discussion of the theological development of the doctrine, but in the two years that Howe lectured on the subject, he overshadowed Owen in the practical aspects.
2. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 241.
3. Works, ed. Gordon, p. 83.
4. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 254.
5. Supra, p.6.
6. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 137.
7. Ibid., p. 135.
8. Ibid., p. 139.

:istics of intellect: its power of understanding, its ability to connect thoughts, and its consistency in methodizing thoughts, still remain,[1] but they are turned against God. It is the task of the theologian to reorient Reason with reference to God. This explains his whole apologetic approach. Whether he is proving that a "good man is the temple of God," or whether he is reconcil-:ing God's goodness with His foreknowledge of evil, he makes his appeal to the bar of reason. Where Calvin resorted to the 'secret counsel' of God, Howe employed the argument of 'congruity'; and for him 'congruity' meant that which was obviously plain to the reasonable man. The inner coherence of his theology rises or falls upon the correctnessof his presupposition that God has put the power of discovering Himself into the inmost structure of mind. When we realize that up to the middle of the seventeenth century, not a single eminent English writer, except Lord Herbert of Cherbury,[2] had openly avowed a disbelief in Christianity, we can easily understand the tremendous appeal of Howe's apologetics.[3]

The distinctive elements in his doctrine of man are three: (1) the division he makes between the positive and permanent image of God in man, (2) his emphasis upon the primacy of the will, (3) his conception of man as a living temple that needs to be refurbished by God. The first indicates the tensional stress he was forced to maintain, in mediating between a functional and a

1. Ibid., p. 152.
2. Rogers, op.cit., p. 275.
3. Three centuries later, Barth wrote, "The creed of Christian faith rests upon knowledge ... Pistis rightly understood is gnosis; rightly understood the act of faith is also an act of knowledge. Faith means knowledge." Dogmatus in Outline, p. 22.

substantival view of reason. Because belief in the autonomy of reason was part of Howe's inheritance from the Platonists, he incorporated this into his biblical view of the Fall.[1] When he speaks of man's loss in the Fall, therefore, he is thinking only of the positive image, which involved retraction of God's Spirit, aversion to God, and the termination of communion and intercourse.[2] The permanent image, comprising reason, intelligence, understanding and knowledge was not lost,[3] but became disoriented and misguided. Thus, although reason retains its autonomy, it uses its full powers against the knowledge of God. Howe's originality at this point arose directly from his synthesis of biblical realism and philosophical Platonism.

His second distinguishing characteristic, the primacy of the will, is a crucial dividing point between his anthropology and Calvin's. Calvin sees man in total disjunction with God; and Natural theology is but a hindrance or a "kind of veil, by which the mind is prevented from a discovery of God."[4] For Calvin the whole mind is debilitated, ruined by the Fall, and it can become truly reasonable again only when it reflects the image of God and His glory. Howe however, finds man a rational creature, who is irrational only because he will not listen to the voice of Reason in nature. In a word, Calvin maintains that man cannot

1. Dr Torrance writes, "Christianity brings no indictment against reason as such (the neutral reason) ... But Christianity does insist that the reason be brought back to a place of dependence on God, and that it learn to exercise its proper function within that dependence. Only then does the reason of man become reasonable in the true sense of the term. Christianity disputes with the autonomous reason its use of the word 'rational' as only that which is relative to the Word of God through which and for which the reason was created. E.Q., XIV, 29.
2. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 135. 3. Works, ed. Hunt, VII, 355-370.
4. Calvin, op.cit., II, ii, 297.

come to the Truth, while Howe insists that he will not.

Finally, Howe's development of his thesis that a good man is the temple of God, is unique in the seventeenth century. Rogers claims that The Living Temple is the finest philosophical work on apologetics that had yet appeared.[1] Its claim to fame stems from two facts: Howe's personal ease in the realm of current philosophy as well as theology, and his anticipation of future thrusts in the field of apologetics. While his conception of man as a temple is not original,[2] his development of the theme which refutes the philosophical systems of Hobbes, Epicurus, Deism and Spinoza, most certainly is. The a posteriori reasoning does not commend itself to the modern reader, nor do his "proofs" of God, but in doing the spadework for the apologetical work of Paley and Clarke,[3] he rendered real service.

In Howe we have an epitome of the Puritan view of logic and Reason. He personifies precisely the elusive quality of its rationalism; a rationalism that is impeccably orthodox on the one hand, and on the other, holds out promise to become a thing entirely divorced from theology; an autonomous, coherent and self-evident system of truth. He illustrates the paradoxical consequence in practical life of the attempt to hold in tension the Reformation doctrine of total depravity, while subscribing wholeheartedly to Platonic optimism concerning the nature of Reason. Nonetheless, Spademan's appraisal is on the whole, accurate. "He had peculiar

1. Rogers, op.cit., p. 274.
2. I Cor. 3:9, 16, I Pet. 2:5, 6.
3. Rogers, op.cit., p. 276.

advantages for understanding the oracles of God; ... a rich treasure of human learning ... a thorough knowledge of pagan theology,"[1] which he subordinated to the Christian faith.

In Howe's doctrine of Providence, and its corollary, prescience, we hear most clearly and distinctly the voice of the Reformation. When this articulation is contrasted with the deep-seated theological convictions of Independent Cromwell, we are obviously in a better position to assess the real divergence of the sectaries from conservative Puritan thought. Basically, the differences lie in the importance assigned to the attestation of external events.[2] Although Howe cautiously allowed some place to the confirmation of God's will by historical events,[3] he stedfastly refused to add fuel to the fire of Oliver's sense and conviction of personal destiny. The reason for this is that in his view, nature and history are conducted by "second causes" which God seldom over-rides.[4] In this emphasis, Howe was right in affirming the Reformation principle that all signs, portents, and feelings of personal guidance must be judged at the bar of holy writ. The mistake that Cromwell made was in exalting these purely secondary considerations, such as the favourable turn of battle, into unmistakable signs of God's providence, to be put on a level with the Bible and Christian experience.

The contemplative genius of Howe is at its best in his heroic attempt to reconcile human freedom and God's foreknowledge. How

1. Works, VI, 398.
2. Woodhouse, opicit., p. 42
3. Works, IV, 107, 141, 142.
4. Works, VII, 191, 192, 193.

is it possible, he asks, to reconcile God's wisdom with his certain knowledge of all that is "sure to come to pass"? A precursor of modern theology, Howe prefers to view the problem concretely, as evidenced in the life of Jesus.[1] Here the wisdom of God and His foreknowledge concur supremely. The contribution Howe really made to seventeenth century thought was to draw theological attention back to the person of Jesus. This meant not only a repudiation of the extreme Calvinism which held that God "irresistibly determined" the damnation of some, but also avoided the extremes of Arminianism, which insisted on the complete freedom of man.

There is little question but that Howe was best known in his century as the leading spirit of nonconformist concern in church unity.[2] The intellectual heritage and doctrinal content which formed the background for his unremitting efforts stemmed from two sources; the Bible as viewed through the eyes of Puritan thought, and the ideal of tolerance taught at Cambridge. The former of these was the more compelling. He believed in the visible unity of all believers because it was an essential part of Pauline theo-:logy.[3] Hence he was able to stand against the stream. It was this basic conviction, reinforced by his personal character and

1. Dr Torrance writes, "It is with this point that a doctrine of predestination must start: In Christo. Nor must it ever be allowed to trespass those bounds ... Predestination cannot therefore be made an independent principle of theology or viewed as subordinate to a wider doctrine of Providence. Predestination adds nothing new to the doctrine of salvation by grace alone... If there is a paradox in the fact that election is grounded in Jesus Christ and yet in the eternal decree of God, it is nothing else than the central paradox of the Christian faith, the Incarnation of the Son of God." "Predestination in Christ." E.Q., 1941.
2. See chapter five.
3. I Cor. 3, Eph. 4:4-13, Col. 3:15 etc.

and sincerity, that saved him from the opprobrium that inimical spirits were heaping indiscriminately upon the moderates of both parties.[1] The second of the sources, Cambridge Platonism, was important because it shaped his ideal of unity, and especially toleration, as a necessary corollary of his view of reason. Whichcote's teaching of the autonomy of reason made toleration an absolute necessity.[2] The validity of faith must be measured strictly by the dictates of judgment, and no one has the right to violate the sanctity of that judgment.[3] To do so is to be disrespectful to the image of God in man, and reduces true religion to mockery.[4] Thus unity and toleration in Howe arise not from the exigencies of political necessity, but from deep-seated theological convictions which were, in turn, coloured by the philosophical postulate that affirms the autonomy and sanctity of reason.

In estimating Howe's influence, we are surprised to discover that a man so obscurely known to our age, could have enjoyed such prominence in his own century. Scarcely a king or committee met with nonconformists, but that Howe was consulted.[5] Not even the ecumenically minded Baxter could compete with his reputation for tolerance.[6] That Howe was the recognized crown prince of nonconformist unity is amply attested by history.[7] William and James II sought his advice; a lord of Charles' profligate court approached him as the leading representative of nonconformists, and even at

1. Calamy reports that there were few indeed as "free from censure" as Howe. op.cit., p. 18.
2. Whichcote, Moral and Religious Aphorisms, pp. 10, 11, 12.
3. Jordan, op.cit., p. 105.
4. Works, IV, 283 ff.
5. Vide Supra, pp. 204-208.
6. Calamy, opcit., pp. 72, 73.
7. Ibid., pp. 170-225.

Cromwell's court, he was distinguished by a spirit wholly free from animosity.[1] In view of his great popularity as a nonconformist leader, particularly in the second half of the century, why then, has he been denied his rightful place in present day chronicles of seventeenth century church life? Why is the star of Howe so dim in the galaxy of Puritan greats? There seems to be only one valid reason. Style. Rogers bluntly states, "Howe is totally careless."[2] Horton says, "His style is the main reason for the neglect of his writings."[3] Calamy admits that they are "full of parentheses, making it difficult for the common people to understand."[4] Thus it is understandable why his writings have been so largely neglected.

A second gift Howe made to his time was the contribution of a coherent system of thought. The Living Temple, Rogers tells us, is a "system of theology, - an exposition of all the great principles of religion, both natural and revealed."[5] Dunn writes, "among his contemporaries he had no superior, and it will be difficult to find men in modern times uniting a judgment so sound and discriminating to an imagination so strong and brilliant."[6] These comments illuminate the chief elements in Howe's intellect. He was extremely systematic in exploring all the logical possibilities of any theological problem, and he combined this imaginative genius with a dispassionate concern for truth. Both by training and by temperament, therefore, he was eminently qualified to speak

1. Ibid., op.cit., pp. 72, 73, 138, 140.
2. Rogers, op.cit., p. 277. 3. Horton, op.cit., p. 228.
4. Calamy, op.cit., p. 235. 5. Rogers, op.cit., p. 274.
6. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 41.

for his age. It is dubious if any other theologian of the seventeenth century articulated so well the delicate balance existing between philosophy and theology. Impeccably orthodox though he was, the underlying rationalism of his Platonic thought gave him a rapport with the educated secularists of his day that was second to none.[1] The very fact that he challenged Spinoza, and that his challenge was read, is astonishing to an age where the gap between philosophy and theology could scarcely be wider. The reason for this, of course, was that Puritanism still belonged to the age of faith. Yet Howe was keenly aware of the great changes Hobbes, Spinoza, and others had made in their daring speculations. Thus it was to hold the line against such atheistic notions that he wrote his magnum opus. The contribution of this coherent system, unacceptable as it may be today, was threefold: (1) it seemed to the seventeenth century mind that it combined the latest scientific facts with contemporary philosophy, (2) it gave the educated Christian an articulate system which seemed to answer Hobbes and Spinoza[2] while remaining true to the biblical message; (3) it had an apologetical value for the seeking man who was troubled by intellectual problems of a philosophical nature. It is not too much to say that this "theologian of the very first order"[3] helped to check the rising tide of the "new" enlightenment, and this was no mean achievement.

Every man has his strengths and his weaknesses. Howe is no

1. The Living Temple, part two.
2. Baxter's voluminous work on Christian evidences was published before Hobbes' was printed, and before Spinoza was well-known.
3. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 2.

exception. His doctrinal and philosophical errors are rather too evident to an age which, in many respects, is the direct antithesis of his. In his century, proof of God seemed an obvious possibility, indeed a necessity. In our age, the philoso-:pher who proves God is laughed out of court. Most would agree with G.W. Bromiley, "The philosopher who proves God is not proving, he is not even talking about, God at all, what he discusses and proves is an abstraction of his own mind."[1] In Howe's century, it was quite common for a theologian to be master both of science and philosophy; in ours, the tremendous range of science makes it almost impossible for a theologian to be much more than a rank amateur in the vast chambers of science.[2] Then, reason seemed to be "in God Himself ... a kind of steady immovable reason, discover-:ing the connation of all things at once."[3] Now, theologians tell us,

> ... the place of the autonomous reason is very limited, only relative to the fallen world. It ought to be kept there, but the difficulty is that the self-assertion of autonomy insists that the fallen reason breaks these boundaries and press toward universal validity. Therefore so long as we live in a fallen world there will always be a serious tension between the abstract type of thought and the existential thought of faith.[4]

This is not to suggest that present day faith is irrational. As Dr Barth points out, "Christian faith is not irrational, not anti-rational, not supra-rational, but rational in the proper sense."[5]

1. G.W. Bromiley, "The Biblical Concept of Revelation," E.Q., XII, 316.
2. Here a distinction must be made between a "scientific" theology and science as a field. Dr Barth has written a "scientific" theology, but this does not qualify him in the great realms of natural science.
3. Tulloch, Rational Theology, ii, 355.
4. Torrance, op.cit., xiv, 28, 29. 5. Barth, op.cit., p. 23.

Howe shared the fault of the seventeenth century in yet another area; the relation of history to theology. The reader of Howe is impressed by the fact that his historical sense is almost wholly lacking. This was true because higher criticism had not yet made its corrosive inroads into his implicit trust in biblical infallibility, and he was still relatively free from the resonsibi-:ty of reformulating his creed according to the requirements of a strictly 'scientific' theology.

From our standpoint, the whole apologetical approach of Howe is irrelevant. In an age in which rationalism is hardly a live option, any attempt to marshal the old classic demonstrations of God falls upon deaf ears. His à priori and à posteriori arguments fail to awaken any chords of sympathy in a twentieth century mind. Although his avowed purpose was to make the unbeliever see the light of theological day, we cannot escape the conclusion that his arguments could only be convincing to those who had already acquiesced to the essentials of Christianity. This is a failure, certainly, but an understandable one, in a day when all men pre-:supposed the principles of the Christian faith, even when they did not apply them personally.

A doctrinal weakness appears in his attitude to prayer. For Howe, prayer was viewed almost wholly as an act of adoration.[1] He regards prayer as "the only proper, genuine, connatural breath of the new creature, the most inward, habitual sense of a devoted soul."[2] Yet it is more the "dictate of nature" than the importun-

1. Works, ed. Dunn, pp. 334-345. See also The Use of the Name of God in Prayer.
2. Works, IV, 225.

:ate cry of travailing saints. His Platonism influenced his concept of prayer in such a way that the mysterious, yet undeniable efficacy of prevailing prayer is a foreign element to his theology. When this is said, however, it must be remembered that his insight into the influence which a prayerful life has on the upbuilding of Christian character accords exactly with the best insights of scientific psychology today.

John Howe bears the hall-mark of greatness. Whatever else might be said of him at this distance, there is no question but that he stands among the worthies of the seventeenth century. Few Puritans, if any, combined his personal catholicity with his philosophical background, which, in turn, was subsumed into a life of such holiness and beauty that Spademan called him an "inviting example of universal goodness." If Howe has just claim to great-:ness, it is inseperable from his goodness. In the final analysis, it is what he <u>was</u> - as a man and a Christian - not what he wrote or even what he <u>did</u>, that secures for him a lasting place in the history of good men. This, his life, is his lasting contribution to our age.

In his faithfulness to the Gospel, he also has a message for the twentieth century. He would have rejoiced in the decay of a shallow view of man, for his devotion to the essentials of the Christian message never wavered. His belief in the lasting signi-:ficance of the Scriptures, the uniqueness of Christ, the absolute centrality of the Cross, and the final triumph of the Resurrection made him first and foremost a defender of the faith. It is

certain that he would have warned all pioneers of theological thought to keep their eyes fixed first on "Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith," and to make all their definitions of doctrine agree with God's definition in Christ. He would have agreed with Kierkegaard - "The incarnation is God's attack upon man." Because this is true, one of the central problems confronting each age is the erection of an articulate theological schema of thought that embraces the Cross in the language of the people. In giving a solution to this problem for his age, Howe's example is a constant source of encouragement to those who seek a solution in ours. It is well to leave the sanctuary of his presence with his exhortation to bear more love to God and man. These lines epitomize the life of the man, and they still carry shining conviction to an age which desperately needs the faith which prompts them.

> When God implants his love in the minds of men, there needs no more ... Let us labour to divest ourselves, and strike off from our spirits every thing that shall not go with us to heaven, or is equally unsuitable to our end and way, that there may be nothing to obstruct and hinder our abundant entrance at length into the everlasting kingdom.[1]

So be it!

1. Works, ed. Dunn, p. 287.

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