

Knowers by Nature and Their Burdens and Blessings: On John Goodwin’s Arminian Turn

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Much of John Goodwin’s theological output can be viewed as a backlash against the “orthodox” doctrine of God. That God, as Goodwin conceived him, was too eager to command the “impossible” and too inclined to “delight” in the punishment of the noncompliant. During the early 1650s, Goodwin turned to the pagans in order to articulate the gracious countenance of a wise and equitable deity. In the process, he went close to canceling the operational distinction between grace and nature. For nature, according to Goodwin, preached unlettered sermons about “atonement.” And because, as Paul declared in Romans, the blessings of creation render the sins of creatures inexcusable, it is only because they willfully repudiate the deity’s gracious overtures that pagans deprive themselves of excuse. The doctrine, as Goodwin presented it, horrified his many opponents. It seemed to them that Goodwin had lodged in the “free will” of rational creatures the power to attain salvation. He put himself on a collision course with the magisterial masters—Bucer, Vermigli, Calvin, Pareus, and others—whose lead he professed, in many respects, to follow. There is reason to suspect that Goodwin had been particularly indebted to Arminius, Episcopius, and Corvinus.

HAVING turned “Arminian” during the 1640s, John Goodwin kindled the odium of a host of contemporaries. Learned, authoritative, voluble, and combative, Goodwin could not be ignored. Ministerial colleagues needed to confront him. And in confronting him, they resolved to douse a newly lit Dutch flame that threatened to incinerate the English church.

Goodwin melded Arminian generosity with pagan religiosity. He contended that a pagan’s veneration for the blessings of nature need not denote irredeemable estrangement from God; nor need it follow that blessings so venerated must obstruct the passage to Christian devotion. This was a cultural recalibration that rubbed roughly against settled seventeenth-century prejudices. If nature lacked salvific means, persons who depended upon natural resources for their knowledge of God might find themselves treated as tokens of humankind’s predicament—dupes of Satan, idolatrous and

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superstitious, lovers of self and flesh. Goodwin thought his way into a different outlook.

This article examines an audacious switch of theological allegiance. In 1642, John Goodwin, long-serving vicar of Saint Stephen's, Coleman Street, adverted to shortcomings in the theology of the continental masters. He detected cracks in "orthodox" pillars: "*Luther, Calvin, Musculus* and other learned and *Orthodox* Writers of that Centurie, are suspected, . . . even detected of misprision and mistake, by many of the most learned of this age."¹ Goodwin, at that time, professed no esteem for Jacob Arminius and his followers,² but this would change in 1647.

Arminianism posed problems for English churchmen. Some—among them Thomas Taylor, William Pemble, William Twisse, Robert Bolton, John Prideaux, and Thomas Hill—pushed back ferociously against the Dutch threat; others, it is said, "softened" the edges of their articulations of the faith. The softeners—James Ussher, John Davenant, John Preston, and Richard Baxter—were not Arminians, though their gestures at universal grace might furrow Calvinist brows.³ It is as a thoroughgoing exponent of a minority trend that Goodwin is particularly interesting. Among the learned

¹John Goodwin, *Imputatio Fidei* (London: Andrew Crooke, 1642), c1r, also c2r–v, e2v–e3r. A fine study of the many-sided Goodwin is John Coffey, *John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution: Religion and Intellectual Change in Seventeenth-Century England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006).

²Goodwin, *Imputatio Fidei*, sigs. b3r–v, pt. 2:187, 189–190; and Goodwin, *Impedit Ira Animum* (London, 1641), pt. 2:9–17.

³On English responses to Arminianism, see, for example: William Robert Godfrey, "Tensions within International Calvinism: The Debate on the Atonement at the Synod of Dort, 1618–1619" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1974), 179–188; Dewey D. Wallace Jr., *Puritans and Predestination: Grace in English Protestant Theology, 1525–1695* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), chap. 3; Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987); Tyacke, *Aspects of English Protestantism, c. 1530–1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); David Como, "Puritans, Predestination and the Construction of Orthodoxy in Early Seventeenth-Century England," in *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560–1660*, ed. Peter Lake and Michael Questier (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2000), 64–87; S. Mutchow Towers, *Control of Religious Printing in Early Stuart England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003), 38–45, 178–179; Jonathan D. Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism: John Preston and the Softening of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007); Moore, "The Extent of the Atonement: English Hypothetical Universalism versus Particular Redemption," in *Drawn into Controversie: Reformed Theological Diversity and Debates within Seventeenth-Century British Puritanism*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and Mark Jones (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 124–161; Richard A. Muller, *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition: On the Work of Christ and the Order of Salvation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2012), 127–144, 156–159; Richard Snoddy, *The Soteriology of James Ussher: The Act and Object of Saving Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); and Peter Lake and Isaac Stephens, *Scandal and Religious Identity in Early Stuart England: A Northamptonshire Maid's Tragedy* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2015), 101–103.

godly of mid-seventeenth-century England, Goodwin was the arch-softener, tagged by one opponent as “a meer Brat of *Arminius*.”⁴

Goodwin fixed an appalled gaze on the orthodox God. This was a God who, having identified reprobates via an eternal and unconditional decree, proceeded to demand that such persons comply with his law. But, withholding resources by virtue of which his demand might be met, he entangled humankind in a “necessity” to sin. He imposed an “impossible” task of compliance, yet—as Thomas Hooker put it—would “rejoyce” at the “everlasting destruction” wrought by his “judgements.”⁵ But for the Spirit’s aid, Luther averred, a divine precept will be “impossible” to fulfill. Those, said Luther, who labored under such impossibility were “forced to sin,” bound “necessarily” to will evil.⁶

Pagans, the knowers of God by nature, might valuably test the sort of discourse that speaks of God as a setter of impossible tasks, as a presider over necessitated transgressions, as a derider of victims of his vengeance. Around the middle of the seventeenth century, John Goodwin enlisted pagans into a provocative revisionary project.

I. REDEEMABLE PAGANS

Pagans were problematic. As John Marenbon has shown, intrepid Christian intelligences negotiated “the Problem of Paganism” by endorsing the salvability of pagans. Most early Protestant theologians, however, were content “simply to unproblematize the Problem of Paganism” by disallowing pagan salvation.⁷ Some, such as Huldrych Zwingli and Martin Bucer, entertained generous expectations for the destinies of virtuous pagans, though their views were not widely held; Calvin, delivering a more standard adjudication, recycled Paul to the effect that pagans “were without God and bereft of the hope of life.”⁸ During the mid-seventeenth century, John

⁴Marchamont Nedham, *The Great Accuser Cast Down* (London: George Sawbridge, 1657), 54.

⁵Thomas Hooker, *The Unbeleivers Preparing for Christ* (London: Andrew Crooke, 1638), pt. 1:183.

⁶Martin Luther, *De servo arbitrio*, in *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Schriften, ed. J. R. F. Knaake, Gustav Kawerau, Paul Pietsch, D. Knaake, Karl Drescher, Gustav Koffmane, Wilhelm Walther, et al., 73 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–2009), 18:671, 676–677.

⁷John Marenbon, *Pagans and Philosophers: The Problem of Paganism from Augustine to Leibniz* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2015), 294.

⁸*Ibid.*; George Hunston Williams, “Erasmus and the Reformers on Non-Christian Religions and *Salus Extra Ecclesiam*,” in *Action and Conviction in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honour of E. H. Harbison*, ed. Theodore K. Rabb and Jerrold E. Seigel (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), 319–370, esp. 355–359; W. P. Stephens, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Martin Bucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 122–126; Frank A. James III, *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination: The Augustinian Inheritance of an Italian Reformer* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 211–213, 233–236; and John Calvin, *Institutio christianae religionis*

Goodwin addressed himself to “the Problem.” Goodwin was a product of Queens’ College, Cambridge, where, during the presidency of John Davenant, he shared the company of another bright light, John Preston, destined for fame as an articulate exponent of practical divinity. In post-Cambridge days, Goodwin would set himself theologically apart from Davenant and Preston.

When John Preston glared at reprobates—or, at least, at impenitent sinners—he spied the church’s inner pagans. These—fraudulent Christians—were fodder for Satan; their affections were fixed on the world, not on God. Interrogate yourself, and see the pagan within: Preston’s lesson was penitential, but, since God aims wrath at the wicked, the lesson’s drift was edgily punitive.

John Goodwin would come at practical divinity from a different angle. For him, pagans were incipient Christians, and the God who ministered to them was minded more by mercy than by wrath. What Goodwin’s God was sure to do was to provide means for the repentance and faith that he required of all rational creatures. Unlike Preston, Goodwin saw in pagans the well-resourced Christians upon whom God’s favors flowed.

Something like a midpoint may be found between Preston and Goodwin. Philippe Duplessis Mornay—the worth of whose *De veritate religionis christianae* Goodwin avowed when investigating the knowledge available to pagan exploiters of the light of nature⁹—offered promising material in parading an ancient theological past. Mornay’s pagans, using reason and looking to nature, found a God, one yet trinitarian, who provided justly for his creatures.¹⁰ The rectitude of pagan theology could be explained by embedding it in the wide effluxion of God’s special revelation to Moses. Mornay traced the ancestry of pagan utterance to the very word of God.¹¹ Yet other gods discharged a fatal attraction; notwithstanding their panoply of theological insights, Mornay’s pagans stood helpless before the lures of superstition and idolatry.¹²

Goodwin offered an alternative conception. Posing, “for Argument sake,” the supposition that pagans heard the Gospel by “letter and oral

2.6.1, in *Ioannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia* (hereafter cited as *CO*), ed. Guilielmus Baum, Eduardus Cunitz, and Eduardus Reuss, 59 vols. (Brunswick: Schwetschke, 1863–1900), 2:248.

⁹John Goodwin, *The Pagans Debt, and Dowry* (London: Henry Cripps, 1651), 39.

¹⁰Philippe Duplessis Mornay, *De veritate religionis christianae* (Herborn: Corvinus, 1632), chaps. 1–13, 19–20.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 68, 72, 89, 98–101, 119, 121, 364–369, 402. On Mornay and the wider discourse of ancient theology, see D. P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972).

¹²Mornay, *De veritate*, 40, 314–315, 317–319, 323, 325–326, 329–330, 335–360, 460, 511–512.

Administration,” Goodwin committed himself but half-heartedly to the speculative complexion of this enterprise. Large leaps needed to be taken from a scattering of biblical fragments.¹³ The key lay in nature, not in scripture. Nature’s instruction would carry reasoners to Christ. And their journey would not be hazarded by superstition and idolatry. Where others gazed at the darkness into which pagans had “inexcusably” cast themselves, Goodwin insisted that the removal of excuse depended upon a prior shedding of light, and that the light thus shed—through nature’s gospel—might ready its beneficiaries for the grace of the Spirit. Knowers by nature, then, might experience the breadth and efficacy of God’s gifts to creatures.

But the orthodox, Goodwin maintained, had made a tyrant out of a giving God. They had denatured the deity. And they, exalting the unsearchable mystery of divine justice, would not take kindly to the unmysterious mercies of Goodwin’s Arminian deity.

An important Arminian voice was that of Simon Episcopius, for whom natural knowers of God might make headway and find that the blessings of nature, such as those enumerated in Acts 14:17, were self-revelations of the deity. But Episcopius added a rider: nature’s blessings might prove profitable—if only knowers by nature would trouble themselves to *make use of reason*. Goodwin would chart a similar route to God, and betray no surprise in finding that the route may be taken. Episcopius tended rather to frown at the defaults of natural knowers and to expect the deserved condemnation of negligent unreasoners. Through natural reason, pagans might learn of a creative and providential God. Reason divulges the need to glorify God and fear his retribution, and to abstain from the idolatries and impurities that deserve mortal punishment. Episcopius’s pagans renounced the lessons of reason. They refused to adore God; they surrendered themselves to shameful villainy. Since reason had left them without the excuse of ignorance, their irreverence gave them no cause to query the ignition of God’s wrath and vengeance.¹⁴

Yet what if pagans *did* trouble themselves to make due use of reason? Could they know God not only as creator and governor, but also as redeemer? This was Goodwin’s inquiry.

The sins of pagans are “inexcusable.” For Goodwin, the point of such Pauline terminology was that it made plain that pagan compliance with divine requirement was not “impossible.” One lost one’s excuse in forfeiting an obediencial course that otherwise might be pursued, *should one wish to*

¹³Goodwin, *Pagans Debt, and Dowry*, 23–35.

¹⁴Simon Episcopius, *Institutiones theologicae*, in *Opera theologica* (Amsterdam: Joannes Blaeu, 1650), pt. 1:6–13, 16–20, 23, 129–132, 289–290, 343, 393; see also John Platt, *Reformed Thought and Scholasticism: The Arguments for the Existence of God in Dutch Theology, 1575–1650* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1982), 196–201, 222–238.

pursue it. This the orthodox could not claim, and would not seek, to have taught; their God refused to excuse the sins of pagans, but also withheld from pagans the means of complying with the terms of salvation. Goodwin, concurring with Arminius and Episcopius, insisted that God did not demand the impossible, and that, were God to do so, it would be he himself, not the creature, who sinned. With his departure from the orthodox view that God neither excuses the sins of the gentiles nor offers them grace that suffices for salvation, Episcopius coupled a potentially salvific rendering of the office of reason. Goodwin may have approved Episcopius's insight, but not his denouement. Whereas Episcopius resigned himself to reason's negligence, Goodwin looked to the increments of saving grace that reasoners might find in nature. Here, if Goodwin walked with an Arminian guide, that guide may, we shall see, have been Johannes Corvinus.

Goodwin let off a powerful theological explosive in 1651. The time bomb that was *Redemption Redeemed* had been ticking for some years. Its author's incendiary qualities had been exhibited during the course of public disputations conducted with Vavasor Powell and John Simpson in late 1649 and early 1650, wherein arguments later fleshed out in *Redemption Redeemed*, and elsewhere, were tabled for examination.¹⁵ By mid-century, Goodwin's argumentative habitude was already notorious. His liking for the theologically unconventional had been amply demonstrated since the 1630s.

Goodwin implored colleagues to rethink theology. The truculence of his expression was made to measure: stakes were high and shortcomings were serious. "Misprisions and mistakes," repackaged as "Orthodox truths," needed to be "evicted" from the mind, devilish deceptions exposed, "crooked" thoughts set straight, and "thick Darkness" scattered.¹⁶ Goodwin played prophet to the closed mind of the godly ministry. Only by opening its collective mind to doctrinal truth would the brotherhood come to recognize the bounty of God's grace—of a grace whose office, Goodwin affirmed in 1650, is "to enrich the whole world, and all that is called man in it," thereby encompassing, "like the Sun in the firmament of Heaven, . . . the whole Earth from the one end of it unto the other," and stretching itself "unto all men."¹⁷

Goodwin looked askance at the "chimerical" divinity—symptomatic of a debased Calvinism—that would "imprison" or "confine" the expanse of

¹⁵*Truths Conflict with Error* (London: Robert Austin, 1650). This is an anonymously authored account of the public disputations in which Goodwin debated various points of doctrine and biblical interpretation with Powell and Simpson.

¹⁶Goodwin, *Imputatio Fidei*, a2v–a3r, c1r–v, e2v; and Goodwin, *Απολυτρωσις απολυτρωσεως; or, Redemption Redeemed* (London: Lodowick Lloyd and Henry Cripps, 1651), a1v–2r, c4r–v, 570.

¹⁷John Goodwin, *The Remedie of Unreasonableness* (London: Lodowick Lloyd and Henry Cripps, 1650), 6–7.

grace within “a narrow compass.” A deity whose moral fibers were so opaque was the substance of an “abomination,” the “horrid foulness” of which could not be washed away by “all the water in the Sea.” The foul thinking of the likes of the master of Trinity College, Cambridge, gloried in humankind’s subjection to the “lawlessness” of a “sovereign” God. On Thomas Hill’s view, wayfarers’ experience of divine governance was reduced to “miserics, punishments, torments.”¹⁸ And George Kendall, thinking likewise, delivered “a quench-coal to all desires and workings of heart in men towards God.”¹⁹

Goodwin saw that such heart-work would be inexplicable were it not for God’s gracious demeanor in respect of “all men.” The language sounds Arminian, and contemporaries hastened to demonize the heretic. Kendall discharged heavy fire at his opponent’s “wanton speculations” and “metaphysical briars.”²⁰ Smiting Goodwin where the belly was soft, Kendall reviewed the chaos over which Goodwin set himself to preside. Heresy imperils praxis. Goodwin would “utterly *ungrace*” grace by making it “as common as nature.”²¹ With the Pelagians, he would have grace “*equally* derived to *all* the sons and daughters of men,” thus qualifying them “with *power enough to believe* even without any other Preacher calling them, then those dumb ones, *Sun, Moon, and Stars*.”²² If Gospel mysteries were revealed in the “sunbeams,” it ought be needless for the godly to proselytize on the frontiers of the new world or raise schools for the instruction of the young. Sardonic Kendall offered a further observation: Geneva and London were equidistant from heaven, so the misdeeds of papists and “imperious Prelates” need cause no alarm “as long as the Sunne, that *grand Itinerant Preacher*, was in no peril of being *suspended*.”²³

Nature did indeed play the preacher. Goodwin’s God provided means, encased in nature, to compensate for any shortfall in the reach of the Gospel’s “vocal” ministry.²⁴ Churchless under a blazing sun, Goodwin’s

¹⁸Ibid., 7–8; and John Goodwin, *Moses Made Angry* (London: Henry Cripps and Lodowick Lloyd, 1651), 6.

¹⁹John Goodwin, *Triumviri* (London: Henry Eversden, 1658), 101.

²⁰George Kendall, *Θεοκρατία* (hereafter cited as *Theokratia*) (London: Thomas Ratcliffe and Edward Mottershed, 1653), pt. 1:28, 208.

²¹Ibid., pt. 1:29.

²²George Kendall, *Sancti Sanciti* (London: Thomas Ratcliffe and Edward Mottershed, 1654), pt. 3:96.

²³George Kendall, “A Verdict in the Case Depending between Master J. Goodwin, and Master Howe, Concerning the Heavens Preaching the Gospel [. . .],” in *The Pagan Preacher Silenced*, by Obadiah Howe (London: John Rothwell, 1655), 2–8; also Kendall, *Theokratia*, sigs. [*]4r, ***2r–v, pt. 1:107, 207–208, pt. 2:1, 14, 173–174; Kendall, *Fur pro tribunali* (Oxford: Thomas Robinson, 1657), pt. 2:18–19; and Anthony Tuckney, *None but Christ* (London: John Rothwell and S. Gellibrand, 1654), 25–26.

²⁴*Truths Conflict with Error*, 41–42; and Goodwin, *Pagans Debt, and Dowry*, 40–42. Goodwin addresses the supposition that heathens “were in a capacity of being made Partakers even of the letter and oral Administration” of the Gospel: *Pagans Debt, and Dowry*, 23–35, quoting, on

pagans were no less than Christians of a kind. God might communicate directly and savingly with reasoning minds—though, Kendall rebutted, reason was the image but of the first Adam, not of the second, a gift of creation rather than of regeneration.²⁵

II. TROUBLES WITH ORTHODOXY

One sins, Goodwin declared, in neglecting the use of any of the “plurality of means” that “God hath prescribed and vouchsafed . . . for the enabling of men to the performance of any duty.” Goodwin gloried in grace’s “plurality,” in its “diffusiveness.” These words intimated a magnanimity that rebuked the parsimonious bent of the orthodox God.²⁶ That God took delight in hobbling his creatures. Why, Goodwin wondered, would God withhold grace for the very purpose of “making men unable to do righteously”? Is it not rather the case that they are rendered “inexcusable” who bear “the shame and whole demerit of sinning” because they had scorned God’s *generosity*—because, notwithstanding their possession of God-given “sufficient means . . . to refrain [from] sin, and to do righteously,” they perversely opted for sin?²⁷

Grace could be described as “supernatural, or special,” as a gift of “power” to believe. Goodwin cautioned against the deterministic potentiality of such language. Insisting that God’s power is moderated by his wisdom, he held that grace operates by “assisting,” not by “compelling,” its beneficiaries. He denied that believers are “necessitated,” that they are made “to act necessarily and unavoydably” or “to act physically, or as meer natural Agents.”²⁸ The idiom is redolent of that of Episcopius, for whom grace was fittingly administered by “wisdom,” but became “physical” and “determining” when

p. 28, Hugo Grotius, *Annotationes in libros evangeliorum* (Amsterdam: J. and C. Blaeu, 1641), 886 (on John 4:38). The supposition is supplementary to the principal thesis that nature itself propagates an unlettered gospel to pagans.

²⁵Kendall, *Theokratia*, pt. 1:30.

²⁶John Goodwin, *Πληρωμα το Πνευματικον; or, a Being Filled with the Spirit* (London: Henry Eversden, 1670), 135; and Goodwin, *Confidence Dismounted* (London: Henry Cripps and Lodowick Lloyd, 1651), 9–10.

²⁷Goodwin, *Remedie of Unreasonableness*, 9. For the avoidance of excuse, see also, for example, Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed*, 502–503; Goodwin, *Pagans Debt, and Dowry*, 14, 22–23, 29; Goodwin, *Triumviri*, 98–99; and Goodwin, *A Door Opening into Christian Religion* (London, 1662), pt. 1:123–124, 383–384. Sufficient means are discussed in many of Goodwin’s utterances, esp. *Truths Conflict with Error; Redemption Redeemed; Pagans Debt, and Dowry; and An Exposition of the Ninth Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans* (London: Henry Cripps and Lodowick Lloyd, 1653).

²⁸Goodwin, *Remedie of Unreasonableness*, 7–8.

doing the work of “power.”²⁹ There would be, Goodwin contended, no need for the necessitating descent of God’s “forcible and strong hand.” Grace, a “morall” operative, affects the will “perswadingly, not Ravishingly.” How may a “Moral Inducement” operate, Goodwin wondered, “where a Physical Necessity hath done the execution”? A wayfarer is capable of “nilling, or of remaining unwilling,” until the point at which the act of faith is “produced.”³⁰ The means of production, moreover, were of universal scope. The more that Goodwin stressed grace’s universality, the less inclined he became to freight his language with references to enigmatic interventions of divine power. Means of grace were accessible in nature. Pagans might present themselves to illustrate this truth. The matter, though, was controversial.

What recourse did pagans have once they darkened nature’s light or ran afoul of its law? Might they be saved whose light, compared to the light of faith, is but “a glow-worme to the Sun”?³¹ Given that heathens “worshipped their gods in the form of beasts, and fishes, . . . what argument can we have of their salvation, who both lived, and died for ought we know, in so grosse idolatrie?”³² Such questions were not idly asked. Physicians of souls deployed heathen habits to investigate the claims and presumptions of the believer. How genuine is your belief? Have you escaped Satan’s snare? Have you succumbed to “selfe-love”?³³ These were questions of pastoral asking; and a skilled exponent of practical divinity might find, when asking them, ready employment for the trope of the deceived pagan or the gullible heathen.

“Covetousness” might be a Christian “idolatry,” but John Preston, applying a “remedie” to that sin, evoked heathens to make the point that Christian idolaters had confederated themselves with Satan. Heathens “worshipped the creatures as Gods.” Censuring their reverence for “stockes and stones,” Preston called the godly to punctilious scrutiny of the objects and intensities of their affections: “Let us therefore examine our hearts, and consider how much we have loved and trusted the creature.”³⁴ To reflect, in this mood, on heathen idolatry is to interrogate the motives of misbegotten desires: “why is [God]

²⁹Simon Episcopius, *Apologia pro confessione sive declaratione sententiae eorum, qui in Foederato Belgio vocantur Remonstrantes, super praecipuis articulis religionis christianae* (n.p., 1630), 163r: “Gratia enim, quae administrari dicitur per sapientiam, proprie est gratia congrua, . . . Gratia vero quae per potentiam administrari dicitur, est determinans physica gratia.” See also 159r, 165v–168v, 175v, 180v, 186v, 187v.

³⁰Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed*, 23, 237, 304–305, 319, also 508; and Goodwin, *Being Filled with the Spirit*, 48, 58, 281–282.

³¹Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis* (London: Thomas Underhill, 1646), 65, also 66, 68.

³²Andrew Willet, *Hexapla* (Cambridge: Leonard Greene, 1611), 66, also 68–72, 76.

³³For an example of the handling of such inquiries, see: John Preston, *The Saints Qualification* (London: Nicholas Bourne, 1633), pt. 1:237–244.

³⁴John Preston, *Foure Godly and Learned Treatises* (London: Michael Sparke, 1636), 1, 26; also Preston, *Saints Qualification*, pt. 1:241–242; Preston, *Life Eternall* (London: Nicholas Bourne, 1631), pt. 1:88–91; and Preston, *Sins Overthrow* (London, 1633), 217–218, 239.

forgotten? and why doe men joyne other things with him?" God's glory was being transposed, wrongfully attached to the outward things that misaligned the loyalties of the idolatrous heart.³⁵

In gratifying sensory urges, Preston's portentous heathens "darkened" their minds and "imprisoned" truth.³⁶ They possessed "many glimmerings and sparkles of true light," yet it "is a little light . . . very little," and "darknesse" has its measure.³⁷ Nature, in its "corruption," lit a faint torch: "Thou mayest have a common light, and mayest carry it to hell, for it is no better than darknesse."³⁸

John Goodwin spoke admiringly of John Preston,³⁹ but Goodwin addressed the pagan problem from a perspective that was not Preston's. As refashioned by Goodwin, the pagan is blessed with spiritual insight, is disconnected from unsanctified churchgoers, and is set free of conniving Satan. Goodwin's pagans have been carried out of the field of betrayal, where Preston's "adultrous love" of fellow creatures—the "lust" enflamed by the "wrong" or "wicked eye"—supplants the love of God.⁴⁰ Instead, Goodwin's ambience is upbeat. His pagans have tales to tell about conversion and piety. They show a way, indeed, to Christ himself. Their purpose on the page is to stimulate meditation not on the unholy loves and self-made frauds of the dark heart but on the boundless grace of God and on the incipient motions of faith and repentance.

Goodwin spent many years conducting, as it were, a soteriological audit of his brethren. Given the auditor's belligerent manner and the unusual views that he ventured to espouse, his discourse was bound to test the deportment of interlocutors, opening channels to indecorous speech. Though professing to "delight not in Contests with men," Goodwin lodged at the eye of a succession of ideational storms.⁴¹ His preaching had nettled brotherly temperaments in the late 1630s, and hostilities with various brethren would be pursued in manuscript and print from the outset of the following decade. By 1646, Goodwin could deliver sullen adjudication on the resultant

³⁵Preston, *Life Eternall*, pt. 1:90; see also John Dod and Robert Cleaver, *A Plain and Familiar Exposition of the Ten Commandments* (London: Joane Man and Benjamin Fisher, 1635), 27–28, 60–65.

³⁶Preston, *Saints Qualification*, pt. 1:199–202, 222–224, 228–229.

³⁷*Ibid.*, pt. 1:128–129, 131–134.

³⁸*Ibid.*, pt. 1:80, 91–92, 95.

³⁹Goodwin, *Imputatio Fidei*, pt. 1:53–54.

⁴⁰Preston, *Four Treatises*, 26, 28, 36, 179, 222, 224–225; Preston, *Sins Overthrow*, 239, 241, 248; Preston, *A Heavenly Treatise of the Divine Love of Christ* (London: John Stafford, 1640), 75; see also William Perkins, *A Commentarie, or, Exposition upon the Five First Chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians* (London: John Legate, 1617), 269.

⁴¹Goodwin, *Moses Made Angry*, 4; and Goodwin, *Confidence Dismounted*, 7–8.

logomachy: “Never was this poor ignorant world more abused with a word, then it is at this day with the word, *Orthodox*.”⁴²

The orthodox divines, according to Goodwin, were spoilers of their own provenance. Thomas Hill was one such offender. Calvinist Hill, the hater of Arminianism, had managed not only to “blaspheme” God but also to contradict Calvin. Goodwin asserted that Hill’s esteem for Calvin was misplaced, and malignly so, since Calvin—generously disposed and minded by universal blessings—was not the proponent of the narrow-compassed grace that Hill lauded as a Calvinist hallmark.⁴³ Richard Resbury, too, was offered a mirror designed to show him up as a demolisher of a tradition. In attacking *Redemption Redeemed*, Resbury was contradicting his own “Prophets,” the “Great Founders” of his faith. Calvin, Musculus, Bullinger, and Peter Martyr, according to Goodwin, had “frequently delivered and asserted” the principles that had provoked Resbury to enter the lists against *Redemption Redeemed*. Elsewhere, similar roll calls included Luther and Melancthon, along with Bucer, Ursinus, Piscator, Pareus, and the divines of the Synod of Dort.⁴⁴

Reformed divines trained fierce sights on sinners. One of the triggers to Goodwin’s doctrinal rethinking was the question of sin’s inexcusability. It was a question that bore upon the breadth of God’s salvific intent. And it was a question in the posing of which Goodwin, at least by implication, was engaging with the masters of the Reformation.

One might know one’s sinfulness by attempting to satisfy the requirements of the moral law. This deferral to the law may prove to be beneficially humbling and preparatory—though not, the orthodox would say, for reprobates. At some point, nearer to gallows than to glory, the law deprives the sinner of excuse; and the reprobate, untouched by the regenerative Spirit, will face condemnation before the divine tribunal. Unlike grace, the law could not give what it required. Commonplace doctrine held that the law could curse the noncompliant but could not enable compliance, could not cure the sinful.⁴⁵

⁴²John Goodwin, *Anapologesiates Antapologias* (London: Henry Overton, 1646), 102. On Goodwin’s battles with the orthodox, see David Parnham, *Heretics Within: Anthony Wotton, John Goodwin, and the Orthodox Divines* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic, 2014), 36–49, 167–420.

⁴³Goodwin, *Moses Made Angry*, 9.

⁴⁴Goodwin, *Confidence Dismounted*, 14–15, 19; see also, for example, Goodwin, *Imputatio Fidei*, pt. 1:10–11, 76–83, 175, pt. 2:11, 54, 81–82, 124–125, 163–164; Goodwin, *Remedie of Unreasonableness*, 9–11; Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed*, A4r–v, 47–53, 84–85, 90–91, 102–103, 110–112, 122–123, 186, 225, 227, 240, 242, 280–281, 320, 326, 328–329, 356–358, 364, 384–402, 416–417, 471, 546–560; Goodwin, *Pagans Debt, and Dowry*, 14–17, 20, 26–28, 45; Goodwin, *Exposition of the Nineth Chapter*, 15–17, 37–38, 90, 108–112, 202–203, 217, 242–243, 297, 324–325; and Goodwin, *Triumviri*, o4v, 12, 15, 20–21, 43–44, 141, 151, 160, 162–163, 167, 265, 279, 338, 340–341.

⁴⁵I. John Hesselink, *Calvin’s Concept of the Law* (Allison Park, Pa.: Pickwick, 1992), 219–221, 231.

Like Pharaoh, who “required brick, but allowed no straw,” the law appeared on the scene “demanding obedience, but vouchsafing no assistance.”⁴⁶

But if the law’s accusatory purpose is to render inexcusable the sinner’s sin, must the deprivation of excuse not rely upon the presumption that inexcusability is a corollary of unacted capability? Would it not be the case that one is divested of one’s excuse, and accordingly should stand deservedly condemned, because one has negligently failed to do that for the doing of which one has been sufficiently resourced by the commanding authority? Yet this was not the case. For the “orthodox” authority had *not*, by Goodwin’s lights, sufficiently resourced the wayfarer. The law condemns someone for failing to do “the impossible,” and then certifies the justice of the scenario by saying that the condemned had been told that he or she had no excuse for not doing what could not be done. Goodwin lurched at the grotesqueness of such instruction; one entered the “depths of Satan” in maintaining that “God commandeth many things which he intendeth not that any man should perform; yea, and which he knoweth are impossible for any man to perform.”⁴⁷

It was an Arminian staple that God may not rightly demand impossible deeds of obedience. One occupied “the summit of cruelty and tyranny,” Episcopius protested, in imposing an obligation impossible to fulfill, and then, at the point of unavoidable default on the part of the obliged, in proceeding to administer heavy sanction by way of penalty for sin. How, formally considered, could such noncompliance be deemed sinful? And how was one to escape the predicament wherein avoidance of punishment depended upon the performing of the impossible?⁴⁸ It was in similar mood that Goodwin exposed the atrocities of the orthodox God. Were God to “punish men for the non-performance” of such acts “as absolutely require the Omnipotent Power of God to effect them,” he would *not* be punishing “sin,” for “it is no ways more sinful in the Creature not to exert or perform them, then it is, not to be God.”⁴⁹ Pagan experience could make the point; since their sins were inexcusable, pagans were neither unresourced nor energized by omnipotence.

⁴⁶James Ussher, *A Bodie of Divinitie* (London: Thomas Downes and George Badger, 1647), 203; Preston, *Saints Qualification*, pt. 1:37–38; and Preston, *The Golden Sceptre Held Forth to the Humble* (London: Nicholas Bourne, 1638), 69, 79–80.

⁴⁷Goodwin, *Being Filled with the Spirit*, 355.

⁴⁸Of those creaturely acts that follow upon abandonment or deprivation on God’s part, Episcopius allows that, “materially,” they may be called “sins”; however, the Remonstrants “negant eos formaliter esse peccata, quae scilicet ad poenam obligent eos, a quibus sunt. Nemo enim obligari iure potest ad impossibilia, quae quidem ex actione eius, cui obligatus est, prorsus sunt impossibilia, nedum ut obligetur ad poenam, eamque maiorem, imo omnium gravissimam, nisi impossibilia ista faciat. Crudelitatis et tyrannidis apex foret eiusmodi obligatio.” Episcopius, *Apologia*, 86v, also 161v–162r, 223v; and Episcopius, *Confessio, sive declaratio* (Harderwijk: Theodore Daniel, 1622), 57–58.

⁴⁹Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed*, 500.

Pagans would play a part in delivering Goodwin's God from the invidious web-spinning of orthodox divines. How was God to deal wisely and justly with persons who may not be acquainted with the letter of his word or who live beyond the confines of the Christian community? Can such persons be viewed otherwise than as collateral damage of God's soteriological "lottery"?⁵⁰ Is it truly for them to suffer the destiny of impenitent sinners for failing to do the undoable? If they were indeed *inexcusably* sinful, by what mediation were they put in mind of their duty? How had they come by such resources of moral responsibility as left them blamefully dogged by the punitive consequences of their rebellion against God? Need they, indeed, have been rebels?

We shall pursue Goodwin's handling of such questions. In developing answers, Goodwin formulated a soteriology of unusual generosity. He abandoned some of the significant commonplaces of a less generous tradition.

III. REFORMED TRADITION

In *Pagans Debt, and Dowry*, Goodwin paraded universalist renderings of grace from Calvin and Musculus. He called Bucer to testify to the Spirit's animation of persons unacquainted with "the Gospel of Christ."⁵¹ Bucer had spoken of the gentiles' profitable reception of "seed" and "Spirit,"⁵² but he, with other masters, glared fiercely at the deficits of fallen nature. Goodwin's masters addressed the inexcusability of the sins of natural knowers. Since God's law was administered on a universal scale, any human breaches of moral duty could be taken to be deliberate violations of an obligatory code. Violators could allege ignorance neither of the divine existence nor of the deity's providential attributes. God's "glory," Bucer and Musculus proclaimed, had been announced in the heavens and on earth.⁵³ This, however, was an abbreviated blessing. Natural knowledge of God was insufficient to save its beneficiaries.⁵⁴ Not only, as Vermigli averred, are natural powers "corrupt, weak, and damaged by sin," but natural knowers are denied access to the

⁵⁰Peter Harrison, *"Religion" and the Religions in the English Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 27.

⁵¹Goodwin, *Pagans Debt, and Dowry*, 14–16.

⁵²Stephens, *Bucer*, 122–126; and James, *Vermigli*, 233.

⁵³Martin Bucer, *Metaphrases et enarrationes perpetuae epistolarum D. Pauli apostoli* (Strasbourg: Wendelin Rihel, 1536), 85: "Coeli enarrant gloriam eius." Wolfgang Musculus, *In epistolam apostoli Pauli ad Romanos* (Basel: Johannes Hervagius, 1555), 31: "Quid enim est ex operibus Dei in toto hoc mundo, quod non gloriam Dei praedicet?"

⁵⁴Bucer, *Metaphrases*, 84, 89; Musculus, *Romanos*, 31; and Peter Martyr Vermigli, *In epistolam S. Pauli apostoli ad Romanos* (Basel: Petrus Perna, 1558), 27–29.

mysteries of grace and forgiveness. Apprehenders of “truth,” such persons lack the “efficacious” blessing of faith.⁵⁵

Natural knowledge was to be distinguished from the Spirit-borne knowledge collated only upon the elect.⁵⁶ This being so, the question arose as to how it is that natural knowers are justly condemned. The key was that such persons *knowingly* violated divine law, failing to do as they *knew* they ought. “Every excuse is grounded upon ignorance,” Musculus put it, “but there can be no excuse wherever knowledge is coupled with wickedness.”⁵⁷ Those who know God’s law, and who know that almighty God “surpasses all things to be feared, honored, and worshipped,” could tender no excuse for sin.⁵⁸ In putting before our eyes “the open book of created things,” Vermigli’s God “teaches and calls us constantly”; and we, willingly repudiating such benevolence, render ourselves inexcusable.⁵⁹

It is “the consequence of their depravity” that natural knowers, according to Vermigli, are “deprived of excuse.”⁶⁰ Moral knowledge need not be complemented by performative power. Vermigli glanced at the apparent inequity, but insisted that sinners, being knowingly sinful, were on that account inexcusably negligent. Whence the absence of excuse, he asked, if indeed “we are unable, through our own powers and free will, to fulfill the law of God that we know?” Tutored in divine law by “natural light,” knowers by nature “lacked the strength to fulfill so much as they knew.”⁶¹ But this was the nub: knowers, being responsible for their moral department, stand self-convicted by the knowledge of their own dereliction.

It was a message to which Calvin gave eloquent expression. “In his creatures,” Calvin effused, “God offers to us a bright mirror of his admirable

⁵⁵Vermigli, *Romanos*, 27–28: “Vires naturae corrupta sunt, infirmae, ac vitatae per peccatum. Ideoque veritatem, quam apprehendunt, non habent efficacem . . . multa sunt divina mysteria, quae naturaliter minime possumus attingere.”

⁵⁶Bucer, *Metaphrases*, 84–96; Musculus, *Romanos*, 31; and Vermigli, *Romanos*, 27–29.

⁵⁷Musculus, *Romanos*, 31: “Est enim omnis excusatio in ignorantia sita. Ubi vero scientia adiuncta est malitiae, ibi nulla est excusatio.”

⁵⁸Bucer, *Metaphrases*, 86–87, 91: “Deum cum sit, possit, et facit omnia, idque ratione optima esse supra omnia metuendum, suspiciendum, colendum . . . Cum itaque Dei sempiternam potentiam, atque divinitatem cognovissent, quae eis foret tantae impietatis, huius tam portentosi sacrilegii excusatio reliqua?”

⁵⁹Vermigli, *Romanos*, 28, 30: “Semper enim nobis apertum librum rerum conditarum statuit ob oculos: semper nos illustrat et vocat. Nos vero a doctrina eius semper avertimus animum, atque alii agimus. Idcirco Deus nos abiiciet, ut pessimos discipulos, . . . cum scientes et volentes male egerint, non habuerunt excusationem.”

⁶⁰Ibid., 30: “Neque putandum est, Deum propterea concessisse illis praeclaram hanc notitiam naturalem, ut inexcusabiles essent. Nam eorum id vitio consecutum est.”

⁶¹Ibid.: “Si enim verum est, nostris viribus, ac libero arbitrio, nos minime posse legem Dei, quam novimus, praestare, quomodo isti dicentur inexcusabiles? Nam si, quod dicimus, est verum, facile possent excusari, se quidem novisse hanc legem ex naturali lumine: sed tamen defuisse vires, quibus exequerentur, quantum noverant. Ideo non videntur fuisse inexcusabiles.”

wisdom, in order that whosoever gaze upon the world and the other works of God, will necessarily experience—if a single spark of sound judgment be possessed—a sense of wonderment for God bursting forth.”⁶² In the cosmic mirror, divine wisdom glowed with matchless pellucidity, clearing a way to the sublime and the invisible.⁶³ One could not but “be touched by a sense of divinity.” This sense God “fixed deep within.” He instilled it in perceptions and memories, and stamped it indelibly upon the mind’s “marrow.”⁶⁴

Yet minds are blighted by “terrible ignorance.” This is a Calvinist staple. The light of reason barely glimmers through sin’s “thick darkness.”⁶⁵ Natural knowers are complicit in the besetting calamity of their estrangement from God. “Blinded” and “disabled,” Calvin’s natural knower is uncomprehending in the presence of the “clear manifestation” of divine “glory”; “in the midst of light,” such a mind “sees nothing.” The unseeing scholar in “nature’s school” will lapse into negligence, ingratitude, idolatry.⁶⁶ Though divine works in the world shine forth as lamps, they do not of themselves disclose “the right way,” and sinners repay their favor by “smothering” the light that they radiate.⁶⁷ Wayfarers are quick to “corrupt the seed of the knowledge of God” sown in their minds out of “nature’s singular workmanship.”⁶⁸ Dark-minded transgressors will rout “universal justice” by violating “God’s holy

⁶²Calvin, *Commentarius in epistolam Pauli ad Corinthios I* 1:21 (CO 49:326): “Deus ergo in creaturis praeclarum admirabilis suae sapientiae speculum nobis profert, ut quicumque mundum et reliqua Dei opera intuetur, necesse habeat, si vel scintillam unam sani iudicii habeat, in eius admirationem prorumpere.” See also 13:12 (CO 49:514); Calvin, *Institutio christianae religionis* 1.5.1, 3, 11; 2.14.21 (CO 2:42, 43, 49, 132); and Calvin, *Commentarius in epistolam ad Hebraeos* 9:3 (CO 55:145–146).

⁶³Calvin, *Commentarius in epistolam Pauli ad Romanos* 1:20 (CO 49:23–24); see also Calvin, *Institutio* 1.5.1–2, 6–10; 1.14.21 (CO 2:41–42, 46–48, 132); Calvin, *Praelectionum in Ieremiam prophetam* 10:7, 10 (CO 38:67–68, 71–72); Calvin, *Commentarius in acta apostolorum* 17:27 (CO 48:415–416); and Calvin, *Comm. Romanos* 1:21 (CO 49:24).

⁶⁴Calvin, *Institutio* 1.3.1–3 (CO 2:36–37): “Quamdā sui numinis intelligentiam universis Deus ipse indidit, cuius memoriam assidue renovans, novas subinde guttas instillat . . . insculptum mentibus humanis esse divinitatis sensum . . . penitus infixam esse quasi in ipsis medullis.”

⁶⁵Calvin, *Commentarius in evangelium Iohannis* 1:9 (CO 47:9).

⁶⁶Calvin, *Comm. I Corinthios* 1:21 (CO 49:326–327): “Patet quanta sit humanae mentis caecitas, quae in media luce nihil cernit . . . caecutimus, non quia obscura sit revelatio, sed quia nos mente alienati sumus . . . non ita mera ignorantia errare homines quin et contemptus, et neglegentiae, et ingritudinis sint rei.” See, similarly, Calvin, *Institutio* 1.5.14 (CO 2:51–52); Calvin, *Comm. acta apost.* 17:27 (CO 48:416); Calvin, *Comm. Romanos* 1:20–21, 24, 26–27 (CO 49:24–28); and Calvin, *Comm. Hebraeos* 9:3 (CO 55:144–146).

⁶⁷Calvin, *Institutio* 1.5.14 (CO 2:51): “Ergo frustra nobis in mundi opificio collucent tot accensae lampades ad illustrandum auctoris gloriam: quae sic nos undique irradiant, ut tamen in rectam viam per se nequaquam possint perducere. Et scintillas certe quasdam excitant; sed quae ante praefocantur quam pleniorē effundant fulgorem.”

⁶⁸Ibid. 1.5.15 (CO 2:52): “Hominum vitio imputandum sit, quod semen notitiae Dei, ex mirabili naturae artificio mentibus suis inspersum, mox corrumpunt.” See also David Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 28–32.

law in every respect.”⁶⁹ The “vaporous malice” of errant gentiles “chokes, and at length extinguishes, the sparks in whose gleaming the glory of God may be discerned.”⁷⁰

That glory, Calvin insists, was sufficiently resplendent to undo the pleas of the obtuse. So glorious were the signs of his workmanship that God had traced upon the crust of creation that the excuse of ignorance could not be ventured.⁷¹ None of the nations would be left unknowing; knowledge of God was available to “all.”⁷² Since their own deeds betrayed their possession of “some rule of justice,” the gentiles, as Calvin portrayed them, could but “vainly” allege the excuse of ignorance.⁷³

Calvin turned his sights to Acts 14:17 in order to articulate the equivocal station of knowers by nature. The text’s refreshing rains and fruitful seasons speak of the God who lavishes care on wayfarers. But, according to Calvin, the blessings expressed here fall short of the “true knowledge” conveyed by the light of faith. The naturally blessed are hampered by “blindness”; and though, “by feeling,” they might yet “discover God,” their pious praises for the creator are likely to be overtaken by the pursuit of “fatal errors.”⁷⁴

In the line of eternal fire are those who know and yet fail to know, who know that God exists yet see only up to a point and through a lesser light. Not that their unknowing could mitigate their plight: what they do know “avails only for the removal of excuse,” and this, Calvin adjudges, “differs greatly from the knowledge that brings salvation.”⁷⁵

Bearing the tradition into the seventeenth century, Johannes Piscator and David Pareus enumerated the spiritual treasures available to receptive gentiles: apprehension of a good and almighty God; of a wise and just God;

⁶⁹Calvin, *Institutio* 1.4.3–4 (CO 2:39–40).

⁷⁰Ibid. 1.4.4 (CO 2:41): “Tandem se tanta errorum congerie implicant, ut scintillas illas, quae micabant ad cernendam Dei gloriam, suffocet, ac demum exstinguat malitiae caligo.”

⁷¹Ibid. 1.3.1; 1.4.1; 1.5.1, 14; 2.2.22, 24 (CO 2:36, 39, 41–42, 52, 203–205); Calvin, *De aeterna Dei praedestinatione* (CO 8:285, 340, 342); Calvin, *Commentariorum in quinque libros Mosi* 4:20; 26:10; 31:55; 43:23 (CO 23:100, 361, 434, 542); Calvin, *Commentarius in Exodi* 7:23 (CO 24:96); Calvin, *Commentarii in librum psalmorum pars prior* 19:7; 40:8 (CO 31:199, 412); Calvin, *Commentariorum in Isaiam prophetam* 26:11 (CO 36:434–435); Calvin, *Praelect. Ieremiam* 10:7, 10 (CO 38:67–68, 72); Calvin, *Praelectionum in duodecim prophetas minores: Amos* 5:18 (CO 43:90); Calvin, *Praelectionum in duodecim prophetas minores: Ionam* 1:5 (CO 43:213); Calvin, *Praelectionum in duodecim prophetas minores: Habacuc* 1:16 (CO 43:515); Calvin, *Comm. acta apost.* 14:17; 17:27 (CO 48:327, 415–416); Calvin, *Comm. Romanos* 1:24; 2:1 (CO 49:27, 30–31); Calvin, *Comm. 1 Corinthios* 1:21 (CO 49:326–327); and Calvin, *Comm. Hebraeos* 9:3 (CO 55:145–146).

⁷²Calvin, *Institutio* 1.5.1 (CO 2:42); and Calvin, *Comm. Romanos* 1:21 (CO 49:24).

⁷³Calvin, *Comm. Romanos* 2:14 (CO 49:37); and Calvin, *Institutio* 2.2.22 (CO 2:203–204).

⁷⁴Calvin, *Praelect. Ieremiam* 10:10 (CO 38:71); Calvin, *Comm. acta apost.* 14:17 (CO 48:328); and Calvin, *Institutio* 1.5.14 (CO 2:52).

⁷⁵Calvin, *Comm. Romanos* 1:20 (CO 49:24): “Multum itaque haec Dei notitia, quae tantum ad tollendam excusationem valet, a salvifica illa differt.”

of a God worthy of love, fear, obedience, and adoration.⁷⁶ God's invisible attributes, they argued, were intelligible through inference from the spectacle of visible works. One knew the omnipotent God by reasoning, Piscator remarked, "from effects to efficient cause." It was of God's gift, moreover, that creatures may perceive the attributes of the creator, having first beheld the effects of his creativity.⁷⁷ One might contemplate the bright mirror of God's cosmic works and discover, shining in them, the divine eternity, immensity, power, wisdom, and goodness.⁷⁸

Converting nature's light into darkness, sinners renounced the "greater part" of their knowledge of God. Some, singularly perverse, were bent on denial of God's very existence.⁷⁹ The blind and the depraved, according to Pareus, "extinguished" the natural light that God had vouchsafed, and answered his gift with the affront of idolatry. Therein, they provoked a punitive response from a just judge: "The truth concerning God, which they hold in unrighteousness, suffices to render them inexcusable in God's judgment, even though it avails not at all for the procuring of salvation."⁸⁰ Piscator, too, called to account the knowers by nature. Charged with having failed to glorify God the creator, the false foundations of their defense were exposed in the prosecutor's quick-fire interrogation. No excuse would hold up; the accused could plead ignorance neither of God, nor of his existence, nor of his providential attributes. God's worldly work rendered him knowable.⁸¹

Knowers by nature lack "that efficacy by which their hearts are roused to faith and obedience"; they would seem, therefore, to hold a rightful claim upon the plea of unavoidable ignorance and weakness.⁸² To this, Pareus responded in inclement mood. Depravity was unexonerable because

⁷⁶Johannes Piscator, *Analysis logica omnium epistolarum Pauli* (London: George Bishop, 1608), 7–8, 17, 19, 194, 199, 202–203; and David Pareus, *In divinam ad Romanos S. Pauli apostoli epistolam commentarius* (Geneva: Paulus Marcellus, 1617), 82.

⁷⁷Piscator, *Analysis logica*, 7–8: "Deus sese patefecit per creationem mundi; hominibusque mentem dedit, cuius vi ex effectis de efficiente et conditore Deo ratiocinarentur: concludentes, Deum aeterna et immensa potentia, sapientia, iustitia ac bonitate praeditum esse . . . invisibilia attributa Dei cognosci possunt ex visibilibus eius operibus, ratiocinando ab effectis ad causam efficientem."

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 17, 202–203.

⁷⁹Pareus, *Romanos*, 82.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 85–86, also 44–50, 84, 94; and Piscator, *Analysis logica*, 17, 199, 202–203.

⁸¹Piscator, *Analysis logica*, 202: "Accusati coram tribunali Dei, quod Deum creatorem suum non glorificarent, ut merito debuerunt, non possint afferre hanc excusationem sive defensionem, se Deum prorsus non cognivisse; nescivisse scilicet, Deum esse, et conditorem esse mundi potentissimum, sapientissimum, iustissimum, benignissimum: alioquin se illum glorificaturos fuisse debito cultu. Hanc defensionem afferre non poterunt: quia ex opificio mundi Deum, eo quo dictum est modo, cognoverunt."

⁸²Pareus, *Romanos*, 85: "Quomodo notitia Dei naturalis gentiles reddere possit inexcusabiles: cum per se sit inefficax, et insufficientis ad salutem? Quibus enim non datur notitia Dei salutaris et efficax, ii videntur habere ignorantiae et imbecillitatis praetextum."

self-confected. Nor is it true that God, in delivering wayfarers into “base passions and a reprobate mind,” therein authors the very sin that he avenges.⁸³ The reprobate mind is not a sin; rather, it is a work of justice. As *iudex mundi*, Pareus’s God abridges no liberty, compels no wickedness—but simply permits sinners to orchestrate their own ruin.⁸⁴

The Synod of Dort upheld against the Arminians the inexcusability of the “natural man,” who, unable to be led to salvation via the path lit by natural light, “pollutes” that light in whose “glimmerings” God, and the difference between good and evil, may be known. “Good use” of nature’s light, conceived as “common grace,” could not operate as a step to the reception of “evangelical or saving grace” and neither, moreover, did God reveal Christ to “all.”⁸⁵

The judicial framing of the masters’ thought found English echoes. Audiences in England were told that God revealed himself “by the knowledge of nature.” The English were told, too, that knowers by nature were sufficiently informed to be blameworthy for their sins, for natural law deemed them inexcusable in the presence of the divine judge. Guilty parties—irradiated but by “moon-light or glimmering of Nature,” or by a star “which doth not take away the darknesse”—had willfully blinded and hardened their own minds and hearts.⁸⁶

Occasionally, the English sources will betray signs of dissatisfaction with the teaching as it stood. Preston took the trouble to douse the spark that glared at the injustice of God’s condemnation of wayfarers whose obligations to God were impossibly rigorous. There exists, Preston responded, natural ability to abstain from punishable faults, from which it follows that God is tied to infliction of punishment in respect of acts of disobedience that cannot be

⁸³Ibid., 88: “Quomodo Deus si tradat homines in passiones ignominiae et in reprobam mentem, non fiat author peccati: et hominum scelera non excusentur.”

⁸⁴Ibid., 88–89.

⁸⁵*Canons of the Synod of Dort*, Article IV, in *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes*, ed. Philip Schaff, rev. ed. David S. Schaff, 6th ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2007), 3:565; and *Canons of the Synod of Dort*, Error V, in *The Creeds of Christendom*, ed. Schaff, rev. ed. Schaff, 3:569.

⁸⁶See, for example, Perkins, *Galatians*, 266–268; Perkins, *A Treatise Tending unto a Declaration* (London: John Porter and John Legate, 1595), 2; Perkins, *A Golden Chaine* (London: John Legate, 1612), 57–73; Willet, *Hexapla*, 57–85, 95; Dod and Cleaver, *Ten Commandements*, 4; John Downname, *The Summe of Sacred Divinitie* (London: William Stansby, 1625), 250–253; Preston, *Saints Qualification*, pt. 1:5, 90–95, 101–104, 126–146, 152–171, 178–185, 199–202, 206–207, 219–223, 234–239; Preston, *Life Eternall*, pt. 1:3–19; Richard Sibbes, *The Returning Backslider*, in *Works of Richard Sibbes*, ed. Alexander Grosart, 7 vols. (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1862–1864), 2:288, 380; Sibbes, *The Fountain Opened*, in *Works of Richard Sibbes*, 5:510–511; Sibbes, *The Successful Seeker and God’s Inquisition*, in *Works of Richard Sibbes*, 6:112, 225; Sibbes, *The Rich Pearl*, in *Works of Richard Sibbes*, 7:255–256; Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, 58–96; and Westminster Assembly, *The Confession of Faith and Catechisms* (London: Robert Bostock, 1649), 1–2, 70, 87.

excused. This being so, the obligation to obey is not impossible. It is for God to sanctify whom he will, and to reveal to wayfarers the inexcusability of their sins.⁸⁷ And if we do lack “power,” this is for ourselves to answer: “by our fault we are unable.” Anthony Burgess explained that there can be no excuse for a “wicked or ungodly man” whose own “fault” has cast him into “necessity” of sinning. Operative, here, is not “constraint,” but simply “delight to sin.”⁸⁸ Inability to do as commanded does not, for Burgess, entail cruelty on the part of the commander; nor does it entail duty—on the part of the obliged—to satisfy impossible commands. God indeed responds justly to humanity’s self-wrought guilt: “If a creditor require his debt of a bankrupt, who hath prodigally spent all, and made himself unable to pay, what unrighteousness is this?”⁸⁹

As dissolute prodigals assemble before the divine creditor, they can blame their predicament on none but themselves. Their recklessness cannot be excused, since the self-care and the prudence that they ought to have cultivated are by themselves forborne. The judge, then, is to be justified in his vengeance. Of this, John Goodwin was not convinced.

IV. JOHN GOODWIN’S ARMINIAN TURN

It became clear to John Goodwin that the Reformed God was capricious, selective, punitive, and tyrannical. Animated by “delight” in creatures’ “misery” and “death,” that God would plague his victims with a plenitude of “gall and bitterness.” This was a deity who commanded the doing of the “unpossible” and who, angry at the defaults of duty that he wrote into his own system, punished whosoever fell short of satisfying the command.⁹⁰

Some might escape the divine wrath, but the anomaly of eternal and unconditional election served simply to spotlight the providential inequity under which the universe groaned.⁹¹ Goodwin’s God, forsaking “necessitation or compulsion,” would play the merciful “adjutory.”⁹² A person who lacked ability to do as commanded ought not be subject to “censure and

⁸⁷Preston, *Saints Qualification*, pt. 1:225–226, 234–239, 183–185.

⁸⁸Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, 68, 88, 95–96.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 94.

⁹⁰John Goodwin, *The Divine Authority of the Scriptures Asserted* (London: Henry Overton, 1647), 169; Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed*, 509–510; Goodwin *Triumviri*, 96–99; and Goodwin, *Door Opening*, pt. 1:117–118, 120.

⁹¹Confrontations with predestinarian doctrine may be found in Goodwin’s *Redemption Redeemed*, *Exposition of the Nineth Chapter*, *Triumviri*, and *Ειρηνομαχία* (London: Henry Cripps, 1652).

⁹²John Goodwin, *Sion-Colledg Visited* (London: Henry Overton, 1648), 25; see also John Goodwin, *Νεοφυτοπρεσβύτερος; or, the Yongling Elder* (London: Henry Overton, 1648), 50–52, 60–67.

punishment.” How could parties to God’s plan for destiny be “wholly destitute of all power to doe what he requires of them . . . viz. to beleeve and repent”?⁹³ No gracious God would bear so contemptuously upon nature.

For Anthony Burgess, nature operated as an important fault line in the confessional fights of the mid-century. In his *Vindiciae Legis* of 1646, Burgess played off against one another the antinomians—who, zealous for grace, took too much from nature—and the coalition of papists, Arminians, and Socinians, who, bewitched by nature, degraded grace by deeming it the restorer of nature’s temporarily suppressed “power.” Antinomians turned grace into a “potion” to be poured “violently” down “the sick-mans throat, whether he will or no.”⁹⁴ Contrariwise, the “patrons of Nature” conceived grace but as a “universall help, which must be made effectually by the particular will of man.”⁹⁵ This was a “physick” that could only “repaire and increase strength, not infuse strength”; those who administered such medicine espoused “a latent power in Nature to be excited and stirred up by grace.” No, Burgess rejoined, “we say, the power must first be infused.” It was not for a “naturall man” to “dispose, or prepare himself for the great works of grace.” Nor, moreover, had heathens been known to have received supernatural light “by the improvement of a naturall light.”⁹⁶

But what if nature, indistinguishable in operational mode from grace, did indeed resource heathens to make saving use of “improvable” gifts, serving a God with whose requirements it was not beyond their reach to comply? Enter John Goodwin, attended by howling protest.

Goodwin once held that faith was infused in the soul by God’s “almighty arm.”⁹⁷ In the early 1640s, he sounded like Burgess’s “we,” propagators of the doctrine of infusion from on high. But he revised his thinking as the decade advanced and effected a provocative reimagining of the knowers by nature. Thinking of them, he decamped from the mindset of the Reformed masters. He retreated from the masters’ fixation on gentile culpability and on the judicial apparatus that avenges it.

As early as 1644, Goodwin’s natural theology had raised concerns. One of his erstwhile parishioners, Samuel Lane, felt obliged to expose the “Arminian” soul of the pastor of Saint Stephen’s. The sermons that provoked this fiery skirmish with Lane had raised the matter of divine equity, and

⁹³Goodwin, *Divine Authority*, 169.

⁹⁴Tobias Crisp, notoriously, had used such language in explaining the wayfarer’s “Passive receiving of Christ”: see his posthumously published *Christ Alone Exalted* (London: William Marshal, 1690), pt. 1:98–99.

⁹⁵Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, 82, 97–98, 89.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 99, 85.

⁹⁷Goodwin, *Imputatio Fidei*, pt. 1:14; and Samuel Lane, *A Vindication of Free-Grace* (London: Michael Spark, 1645), 33.

concluded that God, who “accepts a man according to what he hath, and not what he hath not,” is hardly going to destroy a man who finds himself obliged to do something in respect of the performance of which he had been left incapable.⁹⁸ Lane bristled at Goodwin’s talk of “naturall improvements,” at his distinction between natural “power” and grace-borne “will,” and at the “striving” and “doing” that Goodwin’s God expected of covenanted souls.⁹⁹ Goodwin, still thinking of grace with a Burgess-like mind, rejected Lane’s “Arminian” aspersion. What the Arminians denied, Goodwin affirmed—the “supernaturall assistance” that produces “a saving act of faith in the soule,” the sanctification wrought by God’s “extraordinary hand,” the divine descent “from on high” wherein the Father asserts himself “with some greater power then ordinary.”¹⁰⁰ Yet Goodwin glimpsed equity breaking through the dominant motif of power. God is put on notice: he must provide for those whom he will govern and judge, and the provisions must be capable of improvement by sedulous respondents to divine command.

By 1647, following Arminian studies seemingly occasioned by the dispute with Samuel Lane, John Goodwin had shifted the bearings of nature and grace, and acknowledged that he was now susceptible to the “Arminian” smear.¹⁰¹ He would soon be telling another opponent—one who found that Goodwin had made “Gods *soveraignty* to be impaired with *mans ability*”—that “*Naturall men*” are so aided by divine “assistance, or concurrence,” that “they might *repent* and *beleeve*” by virtue of acting “according to their power, and means vouchsafed unto them.” If, for Goodwin, the “will” or “willingness” to repent or believe is not “of” the natural man but given by God, it is nevertheless the case that the will rouses itself into “true and reall willingnesse,” that those so disposed possessed power “of being *willing*, or making themselves *willing*, to beleeve,” and that power so conceived was—to the deep distaste of the likes of Anthony Burgess and Samuel Lane—improvable.¹⁰²

In order to safeguard the equity of his governance, Goodwin’s God blessed the natural man with means of complying with providential precept. The compliance constituted the pious improvement of the means bestowed. Only were this the case could the negligent be said to be liable to punishment, to have defaulted inexcusably. And only by so providing for his creatures could God himself be excused for avenging creaturely negligence. Learned voices clamored in protest. Goodwin’s “heterodox and impious” discourse, one

⁹⁸Lane, *A Vindication of Free-Grace*, 24–25, 29–30, 34–35, 40–41.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 17–18, 20–21, 23, 28–30, 32, 41.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 31, 33.

¹⁰¹Goodwin, *Divine Authority*, 202.

¹⁰²William Jenkyn, *Ἀλλοτριωπισκοπος the Busie Bishop* (London: Christopher Meredith, 1648), 28–29; and Goodwin, *Yongling Elder*, 46–47.

opponent declared in 1655, amounted to a reignition of the “flames” lit by Jacob Arminius—“no smal Incendiary”—that consumed “the peace of the *Belgick Churches*.” Goodwin’s combustions, according to Obadiah Howe, were fed by a resolve to “magnifie Nature, and exceedingly depreciate Christ.”¹⁰³

This was an accusation with a history. A generation earlier, the French Reformed pastor Pierre Du Moulin turned an acerbic pen to the causes and symptoms of the Arminian “contagion” afflicting the Dutch church.¹⁰⁴ Du Moulin interrogated the antecedent and consequent wills of God; the conditional decrees of predestination; the universal extent of Christ’s death; the power of the human will; the scope, efficacy, and resistibility of divine grace; and the salvific virtues embedded in nature. So commodious was Arminian grace, according to Du Moulin, that, on its terms, heathens and infidels could acquire access to heaven’s entrance.¹⁰⁵ Universal “sufficient grace” thus conveyed the power of belief, though it was obliged to wait upon the vagaries of the free will, which retained a power of its own over grace’s use and abuse. In choosing to obey the law of nature, the Arminian will could prepare itself for regeneration.¹⁰⁶ So exact was Arminius’s anomalous coupling of nature and grace that the reception of grace denoted simply “the right use of that natural light and knowledge implanted, by the contemplation of the creatures and by the law of nature, in everyone.”¹⁰⁷ Nature, bedecked in Pelagian fashion “with the splendid name of grace,” thus sponsored a doctrine of salvation “by works.”¹⁰⁸

By nature, Du Moulin replied, we are destitute of the means of faith.¹⁰⁹ The unregenerate are rendered inexcusable for having obstructed the light of

¹⁰³Howe, *The Pagan Preacher Silenced*, A2v–A4r. On employment of “Arminian” and “Pelagian” insults against Goodwin in the 1650s, see Parnham, *Heretics Within*, 307–308, 322, 339–340, 342–347, 350, 356–359, 364–366, 368, 418–420.

¹⁰⁴Pierre Du Moulin, *Anatome Arminianismi* (Leiden: Abraham Pacard, 1619), ¶iir.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., pt. 1:324–325.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., pt. 1:191, 238, 260–263, 265–268, 272, 277, 282–283, 290–291, 321, 323, 331, 337–339.

¹⁰⁷So minimally did the Arminians differentiate grace from nature that “huius gratiae rectum usum, nihil aliud esse volunt quam rectum usum lucis naturalis, et cognitionis quae per creaturarum contemplationem et per legem naturae omni homini insitam habetur: ut plane idem sit usus idemque officium naturae et gratiae”: Ibid., pt. 1:327.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., pt. 1:266, 331: “Quin et videbimus per gratiam illam universalem et sufficientem ac omnibus communem, intelligi dona naturalia et notiones naturaliter impressas, et naturam vestiri specioso nomine gratiae: quod et faciebat Pelagius . . . Falso ergo Arminiani censent Deum dare lucem supernaturalem et cognitionem Evangelii iis qui per liberum arbitrium recte usi sunt gratia sufficiente et lumine naturali. Hoc enim si verum esset plane vocatio esset ex operibus, et secundum opera.”

¹⁰⁹Ibid., pt. 1:212: “Sunt autem tales omnes homines sua natura, et destituti non modo fide, sed et viribus credendi.” See also 67, 70–71, 222–225, 237, 269–270, 344.

nature—it is not for them voluntarily to abuse salvifically sufficient grace.¹¹⁰ At fault, they nevertheless remain cognizant of their duty.¹¹¹ And so God may treat the negligent as would a creditor treat a profligate bankrupt. He may justly require that sinners be punished.¹¹²

For his part, Arminius had refused to countenance the synonymy of inexcusable and unavoidable negligence.¹¹³ It was because reprobates *have* been provided with grace sufficient for faith and repentance—grace through which they “might believe and be converted, if they would”—that their obstinate refusal of the means of salvation cannot be excused.¹¹⁴ By his “antecedent will,” Arminius’s God wills universal salvation. But, leashing his “absolute omnipotence,” he does not compel the resistant into faith and rectitude. He permits voluntary lapses into faults that, being avoidable and therefore inexcusable, must be punished—whereupon the “consequent will” takes punitive account of culpable rebellion.¹¹⁵

Yet, by nature, the free will in its state of sin is capable of good.¹¹⁶ Arminius’s God will “illuminate with supernatural grace” whosoever makes “right use”—or at least not “bad use”—of “natural light.”¹¹⁷ Candidacy for heaven has been restricted neither by an “absolute” decree of election nor by a limitation on the sufficiency of Christ’s death.¹¹⁸ And, self-censoring his omnipotence, God refrains from acting irresistibly.¹¹⁹ Grace persuades; it assists creatures possessed of free will, and may freely be rejected by them.

¹¹⁰Ibid., pt. 1:344: “Sunt autem inexcusabiles non quod gratia ad salutem mediate vel immediate sufficiente abusi sunt, sed quod luce naturali non sunt usi quo usque potuerunt, et insitam luce praefocare conati sunt.”

¹¹¹Ibid., pt. 1:22, 71, 195–196, 198–199, 222, 225–229, 298, 322.

¹¹²Ibid., pt. 1:22–23, 191, 198–199, 299–300.

¹¹³Jacob Arminius, *Examen modestum*, in *Opera theologica* (hereafter cited as *OT*) (Leiden: Godefridus Basson, 1629), 664.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 665–666: “Reprobationis autem decreto non negatur proprie gratia sufficiens, . . . illo decreto non negavit illis gratiam qua credere et converti possint, si velent.”

¹¹⁵Ibid., 667, 741–742.

¹¹⁶The free will “flexibile enim est natura sua: et ut malo addictum in statu peccati, ita capax boni; quam capacitatem illi gratia non donat: inest enim illi a natura”: Ibid., 768.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 754: “Deus spondet se gratia supernaturali illuminatum, qui lumine naturali recte utetur, aut saltem utetur, quantum poterit, minus male.” See also 777.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 640, 642, 651, 653, 656, 663, 666, 671–672, 674–676, 735–740, 750, 753, 756–757, 769; Arminius, *Declaratio sententiae*, in *OT*, 105–108, 119; Arminius, *Apologia*, in *OT*, 139–140, 153, 184; Arminius, *Disputationes privatae*, in *OT*, 390; Arminius, *Collatio*, in *OT*, 575, 600, 612–613; Arminius, *Hippolyto*, in *OT*, 943; and Arminius, *Articuli nonnulli*, in *OT*, 957.

¹¹⁹Arminius, *Examen modestum*, in *OT*, 753: “Deo visum non est omnipotente et irresistibili actione.” See also Richard A. Muller, *God, Creation, and Providence in the Thought of Jacob Arminius: Sources and Directions of Scholastic Protestantism in the Era of Early Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker, 1991), esp. 240–242.

God's giving of grace "is not an omnipotent action"; the gift of grace might therefore be refused.¹²⁰

Important for Arminius was that divine aid be available for the taking. God may not proclaim his disallowance of sin and yet refuse means of avoiding it, nor enact "a law impossible to be performed without grace" and then deny grace to the person "upon whom the law is imposed."¹²¹ An unavoidable act is exempted from punishment; a person obliged by a law must be equipped to honor its provisions. A legislator does not escape culpability for the sin that an ill-conceived law will occasion.¹²² That person does not sin—given that sin proceeds from a free will—who is placed, by virtue of "a preceding divine decree . . . under an unavoidable necessity of sinning."¹²³ Necessitation excuses.¹²⁴ And a God who necessitates by withholding sin-avoiding means must himself assume culpability for sin's occurrence.¹²⁵

In permitting creatures to sin punishably, Arminius's God relinquishes the prospect of universal salvation entertained by his antecedent will. But damnable sin that is freely committed is also readily prevented. And negligence, in turn, becomes inexcusable.¹²⁶

Du Moulin held Arminius responsible for confecting the amalgam of nature and grace that revived the menace of Pelagianism. Similarly blameworthy, for Du Moulin, was Johannes Corvinus, who, in a tract of 1613, had propagated the Arminian hallmarks. Forswearing applications of omnipotence, Corvinus's

¹²⁰Arminius, *Examen modestum*, in *OT*, 750, 757, 768: "Deus statuit salvare credentes per gratiam, id est, lenem et suavem liberoque ipsorum arbitrio convenientem seu congruam suasionem, non per omnipotentem actionem seu motionem, cui resistere nec velint nec possint, nec velle possint . . . voluntas illa non utatur omnipotente et irresistibili motione ad fidem ingenerandam hominibus, sed leni suasionem et accommodata ad movendam voluntatem hominis pro modo libertatis ipsius . . . necessum est ut liberum arbitrium concurrat ad conservandam gratiam datam, adiutum tamen a gratia subsequente; manetque semper in potestate liberi arbitrii gratiam datam reiicere, et subsequentem repudiare."

¹²¹Ibid., 504: "Qui enim legem fert impossibilem praestitu citra gratiam, et gratiam denegat illi, cui lex posita est; ille causa est peccati per modum removentis prohibens necessarium." See also 645.

¹²²Ibid., 504: "Qui decrevit et ordinavit ut peccatum fieret, ille peccatum perpetratum iuste punire non potest: non potest esse ultor rei factae, cuius faciendae fuit ordinator: non potest esse ordinator poenae qui criminis fuit ordinator."

¹²³Arminius, *Declaratio sententiae*, in *OT*, 108: "Peccatum vocatur *inobedientia et rebellio*: quae locum habere non possunt, ubi cui inevitabilis necessitas ad peccandum incumbit ex praecedente decreto Dei."

¹²⁴Arminius, *Examen modestum*, in *OT*, 692, 792: "Peccandi enim necessitas et inevitabilitas a peccato excusat . . . quem quis necessario et inevitabiliter perpetrat, peccati nomen censi nequit."

¹²⁵Arminius, *Declaratio sententiae*, in *OT*, 109; and Arminius, *Apologia*, in *OT*, 144: "*Deum vere peccare*; quia iuxta hanc doctrinam ad peccatum moveat per inevitabilem actum, idque ex proprio suo proposito et prima intentione . . . Deum vere et proprie et solum peccare; quia posita lege vetante istum actum, et *praedeterminatione* tali, qua actus ille non potest non patrari, sequitur Deum ipsum esse qui legem transgrediat, utpote qui faciat ipse actum contra legem."

¹²⁶Arminius, *Examen modestum*, in *OT*, 663, 666–667, 740–742, 744–745; and Arminius, *Disputationes privatae*, in *OT*, 357.

God provisioned creaturely wills with “necessary and sufficient,” though resistible, means of salvation. Dispensed, herein, were aids of law and light that, if rightly used, may lead the compliant to Christ. Fitting means of faith had been universally administered.¹²⁷ Gentiles, then, ought not peremptorily be cast out from their calling to seek God, nor “be adjudged to have been excluded from salvation.”¹²⁸ Even in the absence of the preached word, a person might acquire saving knowledge; and, answering means rightly used, Corvinus’s God dispensed auxiliary grace.¹²⁹ All persons are “called to grace,” and only by spurning grace might a person be reprobated.¹³⁰ Freely resistible is the grace that actuates faith.¹³¹ And hardened resisters render themselves inexcusable.¹³² Yet the Spirit is operative in every person and idle in none, disposing souls to regeneration.¹³³ No one is wholly destitute of grace, or devoid of “some sparks of divine light and knowledge.” All persons, “according to the measure of their gifts, may glorify God.”¹³⁴

In 1622, Corvinus enlarged upon these positions in a massive response to Du Moulin, whom he dressed as a new-age “Manichaeon.”¹³⁵ Keen to deflect Du Moulin’s “Pelagian” accusation, Corvinus argued that the human will derives from grace the capacity to make right use of its gifts. Yet God shelves his omnipotence when acting savingly.¹³⁶ It is for supernatural grace to save, but to do so by rousing natural abilities and illuminating natural minds, by persuading and teaching, and by discharging moral resources that preserve the

¹²⁷Corvinus dilates upon such matters throughout his *Defensio sententiae D. Iacobi Arminii* (Leiden: Johannes Patius, 1613).

¹²⁸Ibid., 107: “Deum quaerant et inveniant saltem palpando, sufficit haec vocatio ad ostendendum, licet ipsis Evangelii verbum palam non praedicetur, non tamen proinde a gratia esse reprobato. Neque enim praecise a salute exclusi iudicare debent, qui aliquo saltem modo vocantur ut Deum quaerant.” See also 401, 407.

¹²⁹Ibid., 118–119, 137, 155–158, 161, 381–386, 403–405, 418, 424–426, 428–429.

¹³⁰Ibid., 96: “Si Deus neminem vult reprobare, nisi post contentam gratiam, tum necesse est ut velit omnes omnino homines ad gratiam vocari.”

¹³¹Ibid., 381, 385–386, 405, 418, 424–426, 447.

¹³²Ibid., 426: “Si statuatur mensura aliqua gratiae donatae esse, qua pro mensura donationis non sint usae, tollitur excusatio: gratia enim uti non reddit inexcusabilem nisi sprete et reiecta ex accedente hominum malitia: sic tollit eadem excusationem, quando homo non facit quod per auxilia gratiae quae habet, potest.” See also 118.

¹³³Ibid., 399: “Deum per Spiritum suum in nullo homine otiosum esse, sed aliquid in omnibus agere, quantumcumque sit, quo ipsos ad regenerationem disponat.” See also 404, 406–407.

¹³⁴Ibid., 154: “Nullum esse qui omnino gratiae sit expers, sed omnes homines habere aliquas divinae gratiae reliquias, et scintillas luminis cognitionisque divinae, hoc fine a Deo ipsis relictas, ut pro mensura suorum donorum Deum glorificent.” See also 401, 403–404, 418.

¹³⁵Johannes Corvinus, *Petri Molinaei novi anatomici mala encheiresis: seu censura anatomes Arminianismi* (Frankfurt: Erasmus Kempffer, 1622), 62, 96, 426, 612, 642–643.

¹³⁶Ibid., 74, 76, 83, 85–92, 582, 642–644, 647.

liberty of the human will and that help and elevate the powers of nature.¹³⁷ Of divine power, God would deploy no more “than wisdom permits.”¹³⁸

Corvinus repudiated two deities. The Pelagian God was malignly indifferent; the orthodox God was fatally interventionist. The latter overplayed his hand in demanding obedience to a law obeyable only by means of the gracious assistance that, “by his absolute will,” he refused to provide. That refusal ensnared wayfarers in a necessity that they could not escape, and in respect of which they were unjustly burdened by deprivation of excuse.¹³⁹

Corvinus deferred to a deity who renounced “the impossible.”¹⁴⁰ This God undertook “to dispose all to vivification”—to administer preparatory grace that may bring about faith and to complement this with further grace that, in cooperating with the compliant human will, enabled the performance of the act of faith.¹⁴¹ Such doctrine, Corvinus maintained, gave grace its dues; this was no Pelagianism.¹⁴²

Knowledge of God derived from contemplation of creation, according to Corvinus, constituted a first salvific step; such knowledge “precedes the knowledge that leads immediately to salvation.”¹⁴³ Conversion reticulates into a continuum of preparatory increments or mediations; faith is approached by degrees; finally, Corvinus’s wayfarer may be blessed by a quantum of grace that discharges “immediate” sufficiency for its appointed purpose.¹⁴⁴ Universal groundwork has been laid: by his antecedent will, God desires that all persons be saved and attain knowledge of the truth; for the sake of which,

¹³⁷Ibid., 61–62, 74, 76, 83, 85–92, 505, 528, 534–535, 576, 582, 607–608, 611, 615, 632, 642–644, 647.

¹³⁸Ibid., 76: “Deus vero ipse non vult ulterius potentiam exercere quam sapientia permittit.”

¹³⁹Ibid., 534–535, 569, 571, 576–577, 591, 608, 612, 615, 643; see also Corvinus, *Defensio sententiae*, 78, 115, 235–236, 382.

¹⁴⁰Corvinus, *Petri Molinaei*, 577: “Non praeciperet Deus aliquid, quod esset humanae impossibile voluntati. . . . Execramur blasphemiam eorum qui dicunt impossibile aliquid homini a Deo esse promissum.” See also 613–614, 707–708.

¹⁴¹Ibid., 611–612, 617: “Concedimus quidem omnes per eam gratiam ad vivificationem disponi. . . . Omnibus aliqua media ad salutem adhiberi, quae licet non semper sufficient ad fidem immediate ingenerandam, tamen sufficiunt ad aliquas actiones, quibus Deus vult homines ad fidem praeparari; et ideo adhibentur ut per ea homines ad fidem perducantur.” See also 499, 527–528, 532, 534–535, 537, 563, 571, 577, 607–608, 613–616, 618, 620, 623, 626, 631–633, 642–643, 644; and Corvinus, *Defensio sententiae*, 120–121, 126–127, 130, 134–135, 137, 154, 163, 381–382, 385–386, 394–395, 398–399, 403–405, 418, 424–425, 428–429, 447.

¹⁴²Corvinus, *Petri Molinaei*, 613–619.

¹⁴³Ibid., 589: “Quamvis cognitio Dei quae ex rebus creatis hauritur per se non sufficit ad salutem, et eo sensu negari possit eam esse salutarem: eandem tamen cognitionem eatenus dici posse salutarem, quatenus ipsa etiam dirigitur ad salutem, et praecedit cognitionem immediate ad salutem conducentem.”

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 527: “Sententia nostra est, Deum ex mera sua liberalitate omnibus hominibus dare aliquam gratiam, per quam suis gradibus ad fidem perveniant; sed ipsam gratiam quae immediate sufficiat, ut ad fidem perveniant eum paratum esse omnibus dare.” See also 631.

he withholds assistance from none.¹⁴⁵ His auxiliary grace “is present to all,” such that there is “no one whom God does not vouchsafe some kind of calling and revelation, though in unequal measure.”¹⁴⁶ Gentile knowers may seek, worship, and glorify God. They are sufficiently aided by grace to achieve such outcomes.¹⁴⁷

The orthodox had disallowed the outcomes because they denied God’s interest in delivering the means. But, for Corvinus, it was only by receiving, and abusing, a measure of grace that gentiles—at once knowing and iniquitous—could be rendered inexcusable.¹⁴⁸ Yet God eyes profit before punishment: God’s first purpose in conferring grace upon gentiles is to render them “pleasing and acceptable, or at least excusable.” The flow of bounty will not be plugged: “To everyone who has will more be given.”¹⁴⁹ Acts 14:17 made this point—it told of gentile contemplators and worshippers, persons called and blessed by God’s gracious aid.¹⁵⁰

John Goodwin had acknowledged the value of Arminius’s theology in 1647, and he was acquainted with the theology of Corvinus.¹⁵¹ We may surmise, though, that, by Goodwin’s reckoning, neither Corvinus nor Arminius had done enough to slay the parsimonious soul of the orthodox God. So contiguous to nature did Goodwin’s grace become that grace’s operation and efficacy can scarcely be distinguished from those of nature itself, making Goodwin all the more susceptible even than were Arminius and Corvinus to the “Pelagian” disparagement.

By the mid-1640s, Goodwin had disposed himself to take a favorable view of the Arminian God, should that God come his way. An indicator of this welcoming disposition lies in Goodwin’s confrontation with the God who

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 78, 84, 96, 422, 498–503, 732; see also Corvinus, *Defensio sententiae*, 112, 300–301, 385–386, 405.

¹⁴⁶Corvinus, *Petri Molinaei*, 534: “Hoc auxilium dicimus omnibus praesto est; ut quemadmodum nemo est quem Deus non dignetur aliqua vocationis revelationisque; mensura, dispari tamen.”

¹⁴⁷Ibid., 563, 589–590, 618, 626, 632–633; see also Corvinus, *Defensio sententiae*, 99–100, 116–119, 154, 158, 401, 403–404.

¹⁴⁸Corvinus, *Petri Molinaei*, 590: “Dicimus tales reddi inexcusabiles qui cum Deum cognoverint: tamen ut Deum non glorificarunt, et praeterito creatore rebus creatis servierunt, Deum in notitia noluerunt retinere et opletati sunt omni iniquitate, cum tamen ius Dei, id est, eos qui talia faciunt dignos esse morte, non ignorarent.” See also Corvinus, *Defensio sententiae*, 118, 235, 426.

¹⁴⁹Corvinus, *Petri Molinaei*, 632: “Nam inexcusabiles reddi non possunt, nisi quibus aliqua mensura gratiae collata est. Illi vero non possunt reddi inexcusabiles, nisi per gratiae istius abusum. Unde fit per eiusdem usum econtrario eos reddi excusabiles . . . primum eius finem esse, ut homines ea recte utantur, et per istum rectum usum vel grati et accepti, vel saltem excusabiles apud Deum sint.” See also 97, 502, 505, 615–616, 618; and Corvinus, *Defensio sententiae*, 118–119, 137, 155–158, 160–161, 381–386, 403, 405, 418, 428–429.

¹⁵⁰Corvinus, *Petri Molinaei*, 633.

¹⁵¹Goodwin, *Imputatio Fidei*, pt. 1:177; and Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed*, 112.

demands the impossible of the insufficiently resourced. Goodwin had spoken of this God prior to his period of Arminian study. This was a God before whose assertive and capricious profile Goodwin had balked. But, as we see from the dispute with Samuel Lane, a mysterious God—as Goodwin sketched him—as yet held the reins of beneficence, and Goodwin troubled himself to contradict Lane’s evocation of “Arminian” error. Goodwin’s God, at that time, took secret counsel in making the decisions of destiny, and intervened powerfully and selectively to bestow faith upon the fortunate few.

Once Goodwin conceded, however, that Christ had died not for some—but, rather, for all—of humanity, a roadblock to pagan capability and salvability was cleared. This, most likely, was an Arminian lesson. Certainly, there is little resemblance between Goodwin’s formulation of general redemption and those of James Ussher and John Davenant, who managed, unlike Goodwin, to hold within their schemes a doctrine of absolute and eternal election and reprobation, and who, unlike him, made God’s secret will, the *voluntas beneplaciti*, do high and unaccountable work that, so far as Goodwin was concerned, tore at the fabric of supreme equity.¹⁵²

Also likely to have eased his Arminian passage was Goodwin’s subscription to the notion that God requires, by steps or degrees, the improvement of the means that he provides. To say that God does not make impossible the attainment of eternal life may also be to say that he makes possible, one step at a time, the improvement of the saving means by which life is acquired. Such theology would find its future in Goodwin’s discourse of the knowers by nature, who, stepping their way through a divinely planned art of the possible, were in some sense knowers by grace.

Goodwin, courageously, came clean in 1647. He cleared Arminius of doctrinal error.¹⁵³ He found that Christ’s blood was shed for all; that a gracious God, directed by his wisdom to moderate his power, refused to necessitate the subjects of his governance; that grace, though “fully and richly sufficient for the Salvation of all Men,” may be rejected by sinners;¹⁵⁴ and that God issued no eternal and irrespective decrees of predestination, for it was only in respect of their compliance or of their obduracy that persons were elected or reprobated. And he found that the natural world, with its rains and lights and fruits, was a preacher, and that it preached “atonement.”

Goodwin developed these views in a series of writings and public disputations of the latter 1640s and early 1650s. His revisionist soteriology was massively embodied in *Redemption Redeemed*, published in 1651, upon

¹⁵²See Parnham, *Heretics Within*, 291–294, 297–298, and sources cited.

¹⁵³Goodwin, *Divine Authority*, 26–27, 202; and Goodwin, *Hagiomastix* (London: Henry Overton, 1647), 104–105.

¹⁵⁴Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed*, 480, also 448, 486–487.

the doctrinal foundations of which he erected *Pagans Debt, and Dowry*, published later in the same year by way of response to a letter from Thomas Barlow, who, though impressed by the earlier and bigger book, found himself unconvinced by its universalist claims.¹⁵⁵ Goodwin's knowers by nature were set by *Redemption Redeemed* in the broad wash of divine beneficence, but in *Pagans Debt, and Dowry* we are given a more dedicated sighting of them and of their blessings—of light-filled seers and worshippers of God, and inductees, no less, into degrees of acquaintance with Christ himself.

Pagans played a pastoral role for the practical divine. Typically, this was a preparationist role, an affixing of faults to the marrow of the soul. By 1651, Goodwin had lost patience with the burdens of preparation and with the absolute decrees that settled destinies from eternity. Goodwin's pagan was emblematic of a flow of divine benevolence no longer delimited by an absolute, irrespective decree, and no longer administered in response to the preparative economy of the moral law. Goodwin's pagan was incipiently Christian, and needed no longer to play the part of the diabolic pawn—of Preston's "adultrous" lover destined for punitive pains. Bathed in nature's light, Goodwin's pagan was electable and capable of faith and repentance. Salvation flows from means available in nature; and it is the pagan who best exemplifies nature's grace.

Redemption Redeemed supplied the matrix for such a conception. It depicts a God who assists but does not necessitate, and who commands but does not withhold means of compliance. And it articulates a "practical" voice. From what horrors of heart was Goodwin wishing to relieve the wayfarer burdened by the God who casts judicial frowns at the covetous pagan? He tells us, memorably, in *Redemption Redeemed*. Making a case study of himself, he alludes to "the burnings of my feares within me." He recalls himself wondering, "when I am in suspence, and doubtfull in my spirit"—when enmeshed in the doctrine of redemption's limited coverage to the elect—"whether *Christ* died for me."¹⁵⁶ Needling questions surface. Does the "assertion . . . that *Christ* died for some few Particular Men only," Goodwin asks, "any wayes enable, or dispose me to believe, that I am one of those Particular Men, for whom he died?" No: such "rumination," melded with "the weaknesse and doubtfulness of my Faith, together with the sence and conscience of my many corruptions and infirmities otherwise," must "perplex"

¹⁵⁵Thomas Barlow, "To the Reverend Mr. *John Goodwin* Minister of Gods Word in *Coleman-Street*," in *The Genuine Remains of That Learned Prelate Dr. Thomas Barlow, Late Lord Bishop of Lincoln*, ed. Sir Peter Pett (London: John Dunton, 1693), 122–130.

¹⁵⁶Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed*, 93–94.

the self-interrogator. The fear would haunt Goodwin that “I am none of those Particular Men, none of those few, for whom alone *Christ* died.”¹⁵⁷

By having Christ die for all persons, and by supplying means of salvation on a universal scale, God could equitably reward the obedient and punish the rebellious, and transparently match means to ends. But limited redemption, in mysticizing gracious means and laying barricades before desired ends, engendered a mournful affectivity, heaping “coals of fire” upon wayfarers’ heads, and rendering anxious sinners “two-fold, or rather an hundred-fold more the Children of Hell, Misery, and Torment, then otherwise they had been.”¹⁵⁸

Goodwin would medicate the affective traumas here described. Restless readers might be relieved to know that Christ had died even for pagans, and that godly pagans were, in fact, implicit believers. It was an unusual message—some sort of ultra-Arminianism, opined Obadiah Howe. Goodwin, Howe remarked, made way with his Arminian “ancestors” and “forefathers”; worse still, in *Pagans Debt, and Dowry*, he carried his natural soteriology to lengths unprecedented in the utterances of his “predecessors.” Howe condensed his outrage into a bristling summary of Goodwin’s doctrine: “Every heathen man to whom the letter of the Gospel never came, is yet bound to believe in Christ, and that upon this ground: because they have sufficient means by the creatures, and light of nature, to discover Christ and the summe of the Gospel.”¹⁵⁹

If divines such as Preston had found practical advantage in assimilating Christians to pagans for the sake of putting an admonitory lens to the corruptions of the Christian heart, Goodwin turned pagans into Christians in order to explode the Christian’s anxiety about precisely for whom Christ had suffered. Goodwin drained the worry out of Christianity by dwelling upon the blessings of nature. Those blessings, moreover, had been bestowed by a God who issued no unconditional decrees of destiny, who allowed latitude for the self-determinations of human agency, who patiently awaited the repentant return of the rebellious, who rewarded the “improving” rectitude of knowers by nature.

Goodwin corrected the Reformed masters. To the congenital darkness that enveloped knowers by nature, to gentile abominations and idolatries, to the natural light that here blazes from on high but there barely glimmers, and to the sins inexcusably committed by souls illumined yet ungraced: to such Reformed staples, Goodwin gave no endorsement. Even when it occurred to him to remark that the minds of the lapsed were “much darkened,” Goodwin

¹⁵⁷Ibid., 94.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., 499.

¹⁵⁹Howe, *The Pagan Preacher Silenced*, 7, 9.

was at the point of transit to the message that pagans “are in a capacity of beleeving in [Christ], so, or so far, as to be accepted therein unto Salvation.” The very integrity of universalist doctrine required that negligence not be excused. Inexcusable negligence prompted the masters to address damnation; for Goodwin, it set a moral context for salvation: “all persons of Mankind whatsoever, are, or were, put into such a capacity of Salvation by the Death of *Christ*, that if their own voluntary neglect, and notorious unworthiness, do not intervene and hinder, they may, or might, be all actually saved thereby.”¹⁶⁰

Divine wrath is rarely encountered in *Pagans Debt, and Dowry*. It is to be expected, though, that, when Goodwin unveiled the God of justice, he would proceed to evoke the Pauline scenario of “unexcusable” sin. Thence, the God of mercy will take stage. For one is inexcusable on account of the poor use that has been made of the “sufficiency of means” that it was in one’s power rightly to use and to improve. Christ had paid “the Ransom” for heathens in order that they may believe, and so, “by the Mediation of their Faith, . . . they may obtain Salvation.”¹⁶¹ Only by engaging in “voluntary neglect, or non-improvement of the means vouchsafed,” do wayfarers sin inexcusably. But the obdurate never want for opportunities to “reduce themselves to a gracious tenderness of soul.” Illustrating a general lesson is Pharaoh, a pagan endowed with “sufficient capacity to have repented.” The means that Pharaoh received were no less effectual—despite their being, in his cautionary case, “not eventually so successful”—than those “whereby persons ordinarily are brought to Repentance.”¹⁶²

Redemption Redeemed had articulated the theological scaffolding. By his “antecedent” will, God intends “the Salvation of all Men, in, or by the Death of Christ.” And in the commission of sin, sufficient means—supplied by that will and designed “in order to the effecting” of the intended salvation—had been culpably despised and “put to ruin.” God had suffered “unworthy carriages . . . under the meanes of Salvation.” Goodwin, with the Arminians, was passing on grace-founded obligations to “all men.” But, more explicitly than the Arminians, he was invoking the Christian implications of universal means. “Except,” he averred, “all Men had a sufficient ground to beleeve, that there is redemption and Salvation for them in Jesus Christ, they were not bound to beleeve on Him as a Saviour, or to depend upon Him for Salvation.”¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰Goodwin, *Pagans Debt, and Dowry*, 56–57, 61, 63.

¹⁶¹*Ibid.*, 12–15, 22–23; see also Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed*, 457, 493–494, 498–500.

¹⁶²Goodwin, *Exposition of the Nineth Chapter*, 184, 220–222, also 152, 219, 228, 238–241, 257–258, 265, 270, 277, 279–281, 287–288.

¹⁶³Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed*, 464, also 107, 433, 448–449, 546–547; *Truths Conflict with Error*, 45; and Goodwin, *Exposition of the Nineth Chapter*, 200, 218–219, 225, 298–299, 312.

Cutting against the Reformed grain, Goodwin advanced the supposition that unbelievers were “sufficiently furnished by [God] with means, abilities, and opportunities, for beleeving.”¹⁶⁴ To contend otherwise, Goodwin argued, was to connive at inequity—to hold that grace was more concealed from, than dispensed to, the pagans and that punishment justly answered the non-performance of a duty, the performability of which was vitiated by the inadequate resourcing of the performer. So, in what manner were pagans resourced? What were the “means, abilities, and opportunities” with which Goodwin’s God, refraining from intrusions of “Omnipotent Power,” had invested pagans?¹⁶⁵

Scripture told of natural productions, outputs of earth and heaven. Acts 14:17 served as Goodwin’s preferred biblical demonstration of pagan knowledge and affectivity. It made rich allusion to the beholding of the pagan eye and offered a point of entry to the affections of the pagan heart. Of pagan piety and of the God who kindled it, the passage promised much to an inquiring interpreter; and of pagan theology, it was, when associated with complementary texts, deeply suggestive.

“Raine from Heaven and fruitfull Seasons,” in conjunction with “Sun, Moone and Starrs” and with “Day and Night”: Goodwin asserted that these providential means suffice for the preaching of Gospel truths to heathens.¹⁶⁶ The natural gospel preached universal redemption, opening access to divine “grace and goodness” and to the divine “inclination . . . to shew mercy to men upon their Repentance.” The capability “to believe,” Goodwin declared, emanated from such means. And the Acts text affirmed that pagans might become theologians, for natural blessings adumbrated the “grace, and love, and desire of the good of those, to whom they are given, in him that giveth them.” Not only that, but the giver could be known, by the works of providence, to bear “gracious and good affection . . . unto the World through Jesus Christ.” Nature preached nothing less than “the substance of the Gospel,” telling pagans that God “is by one means or other, taken off from the rigor of his Justice, and severity of his Wrath against sinners.”¹⁶⁷ Pagans knew not only that God may pardon the penitent, but that he “will” so pardon—on account, no less, of “an attonement” that has “satisfied” his “justice and severity.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed*, 503.

¹⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 500. See, similarly, Goodwin, *Divine Authority*, 169, 201; Goodwin, *Triumviri*, 290–291; and Goodwin, *Being Filled with the Spirit*, 282.

¹⁶⁶Goodwin, *Divine Authority*, 182–187; *Truths Conflict with Error*, 63–69, 79; and Goodwin, *Pagans Debt, and Dowry*, 10–13, 37–38.

¹⁶⁷Goodwin, *Pagans Debt, and Dowry*, 11–12.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 9–10, 13.

Pagans, then, profit from this “Attonement” that was “Universal”; they are beneficiaries to, and custodians of, the truth “that there was some kinde of attonement, intercession, or mediation made between God and men.”¹⁶⁹ The outcome is that, at least in an “implicit” sense, knowers by nature acquire knowledge of Christ.¹⁷⁰ It taxed credulity to think otherwise: so far had Goodwin traveled from the impossibilities consequent upon the doctrines of absolute reprobation and limited redemption that he could make the sonorous announcement that “no man lieth under an impossibility of beleeving in [Christ]; I mean, of beleeving in him upon such terms, which will be available to his Salvation.”¹⁷¹

But by the “regular and conscientious exercise and acting” of what “worthy abilities” do pagans proceed from a “remote capacity” for believing the Gospel to an “immediate capacity”?¹⁷² Does God infuse faith’s “habit” or “act”? Does the Spirit shed supernatural light or mysteriously move the will?

Tellingly, Goodwin’s manner in addressing pagan conversion was to suppress nature’s “law” in preference to its “light.” God, certainly, is the world’s “Absolute Monarch” and “Lawgiver,” but the law is simply a formalizing mechanism for God’s self-revelation in nature; its purpose is to inform “all Men” that they must “seek and enquire after God” and “submit” to the divine “Will and Pleasure” by believing.¹⁷³ Such obligations are pursuant to God’s delivery of the means of grace, in the improvement of which there is no need for necessitating pourings forth of divine power.

Goodwin retreats from the mechanics of conversion. Where once he would have invoked God’s almighty arm, he now finds the lineaments of mercy in nature, summoning “heavenly” motions and “gracious” providential courses that “joyntly speak in the ears of all flesh.” Nature’s unlettered texts told of rewards following upon belief and repentance.¹⁷⁴ For the heavens and the day and the night were apostles of “the *words of Eternal Life*.” The “capacity” for belief emerged from “the Light of Nature.” This, Goodwin clarifies, is simply “a regular and rational process of discourse,” in the employment of which God’s acceptance of an atonement for human sin may be apprehended as an “Evangelical Conclusion.” Pious rationality is the wayfarer’s “natural Talent,” upon which God’s grace is a “super-vening” benefit.¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁹Ibid., 41–42; and *Truths Conflict with Error*, 62, 66–67, also 68–69, 99.

¹⁷⁰Goodwin, *Pagans Debt, and Dowry*, 15, 17, 37–38, 41–42.

¹⁷¹Ibid., 42.

¹⁷²Ibid., 15, also 10, 17, 20, 22–23, 35, 39, 46, 61, 63.

¹⁷³Ibid., 29–30, 39–41, 43–44, 49, 55; and Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed*, 506–509.

¹⁷⁴Goodwin, *Pagans Debt, and Dowry*, 11–13, 39.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., 9–10, 17–19. At p. 39, Goodwin cites chapters 5 and 19 of Duplessis Mornay’s *De veritate* for evidence that natural light reveals “somewhat concerning *Christ*” to heathens, and that the latter might believe “both that *God was*, and that *He is a Rewarder of those, who*

The supervention, though, looks more providential than soteriological, more an occurrence of nature than of supernature. Goodwin's pagans come to know Christ through the diligent "improvement of the light they have received." The means with which God invests them are sufficient for belief and repentance, and their neglect of means renders them inexcusable.¹⁷⁶ But if the improvable light of penitent faith shines in the deductive motions of reason, it would seem that Goodwin has left a gracious God with little to do, soteriologically, once he has made the heavens and the seasons and populated the earth with reasoning seers and listeners.

For Goodwin, the means of salvation will accumulate in fragments. In the operation of "remote" sufficiency, enablement is deferred, pending the "use" of what has been given in nature. Ultimately, "immediate" enablement supplements "remote" sufficiency. That is, by the use of remotely sufficient means, potential believers "may possess themselves of such farther means, by which they shall be immediately enabled to believe. This for that."¹⁷⁷ It being contrary to his wisdom to "exhort the saints to impossibilities," Goodwin's God consoles us in the knowledge that whatsoever he commands or exhorts "us unto, he hath put us into a capacity of doing it, at least into a mediate or remote capacity, from which we may, through the grace of God, that is never wanting to us in this kind, advance unto that which is immediate, and within reach of the duty or performance itself."¹⁷⁸ The staging of increments, the passage from "mediate" sufficiency or capacity to "immediate," the God whose provision is without intermission—Goodwin seems, silently, to have pick-pocketed Corvinus.

And, like Corvinus, Goodwin tied the parable of the talents to the wide reach of sufficient grace.¹⁷⁹ He moves, eventually, from natural "capacities," and from "abilities and gifts" that are "improvable," to spiritual grace. This transition has its beginning in "reasonable improvement" of abilities, or "faithful and careful use" of the "endowments or gifts of Nature"—of reason, conscience, and understanding. It is from such industry that the improving pagan elicits "spiritual and saving" assistance from God. The assistance is not infallible; God does not deploy irresistible power when converting the users of his means. But, operating on the principle of "this for that," God gives "to him *that hath*."¹⁸⁰

diligently seek him." Goodwin overlooks the superstition and idolatry that, in Mornay's account, plagued pagan religion.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., 17, 10–14, 22–23, 29, 41, 43.

¹⁷⁷*Truths Conflict with Error*, 78–79, 82; and Goodwin, *Remedie of Unreasonableness*, 15.

¹⁷⁸Goodwin, *Being Filled with the Spirit*, 354–355.

¹⁷⁹Goodwin, *Pagans Debt, and Dowry*, 18–22; and Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed*, 507–508.

¹⁸⁰Goodwin, *Pagans Debt, and Dowry*, 21, also 18–20.

Finally, Goodwin verges on the supernatural. Christ's promise in Matthew's parable summons a grace that seems, by a whisker, to distinguish itself from the natural exertions wherein compliant pagans respond to God's call. The parable expresses "somewhat of a saving consequence, as regenerating Grace, the sanctifying Spirit of God, Faith, and the like." In promising to give "abundantly" to the person "that hath," Christ refers to such as "will provoke, stir up, and lay out themselves accordingly in the improvement of such abilities and gifts, which shall from time to time be vouchsafed unto them." And, at length, "they may, by vertue of the Bounty and gracious Decree of God in that behalf, attain and receive from *God* what proportion or measure of the Spirit of Grace, and of *God*, they can desire."¹⁸¹

Learned critics were scandalized by Goodwin's valorization of nature, by his preference for the "dumb Preachers" of the natural world—as George Kendall sneered¹⁸²—over the piercing ministry of God's word, by his presumptuous evocations of Reformed masters. He expected too much of nature's light, Obadiah Howe protested, and spoke confusingly, and contradictorily, of the means that he deemed sufficient for salvation. The little that Howe could extract from Goodwin's discourse of means was that the "sufficiency" with which Goodwin invested them certainly lacked the "efficiency" that salvific operatives might reasonably be expected to discharge.¹⁸³

By 1651, Goodwin was long used to being tarred with the "Arminian" and "Pelagian" brushes of rancorous contemporaries. It had been six years since Samuel Lane had smeared Goodwin with a disagreeable "Arminian" tag: "Facienti quod in se est, in viribus naturalibus, Deus tenetur dare gratiam sufficientem ad salutem."¹⁸⁴ In the mid-1640s, Goodwin's admonition to the dutiful godly to "ingage themselves, and all within them, according to their naturall power," and to "improve their Naturall abilities to the utmost," had been posed as a preventative both to antinomian insouciance and to legalistic preparation.¹⁸⁵ Later, the repentant pagans of his practical divinity showed, in the graduations of their "improvements" and in the march of their faith, that the tether of God's patience was lengthy and that the scope of his mercy was wide. God did not summarily condemn backsliders to a death sentence;

¹⁸¹Ibid., 21.

¹⁸²Kendall, *Sancti Sanciti*, pt. 3:96; Kendall, "Verdict," in *The Pagan Preacher Silenced*, Howe, 7–9; and Kendall, *Fur pro tribunali*, pt. 2:18–19.

¹⁸³Howe, *The Pagan Preacher Silenced*, 8–9, 15, 28–37, 41–43, 51–55, 73–76, 88, 95, 98–99; see also Kendall, *Theokratia*, pt. 1:212–214.

¹⁸⁴Lane, *A Vindication of Free-Grace*, 20: "To those who do what is in them, through their natural powers, God is bound to give grace sufficient for salvation." Also 58; and, a few years later, John Simpson speaking similarly, as reported in *Truths Conflict with Error*, 80.

¹⁸⁵Lane, *A Vindication of Free-Grace*, A4v, 2, 22–23.

he would readily “receive all such into grace and favour with himself, who shall unfeignedly repent of their sins.”¹⁸⁶

Goodwin’s orthodox masters taught that pagans had not been provided with salvific gifts, that their destinies had been unalterably fixed by an absolute decree of reprobation, and that, though ungraced, they nevertheless sinned inexcusably. Goodwin himself discovered different truths, many of which happened, to the vexation of his enemies, to have been propagated by Arminius and the Remonstrants.

¹⁸⁶Goodwin, *Pagans Debt, and Dowry*, 13.