

‘Theological Wars’: ‘Socinians’ v. ‘Antinomians’ in Restoration England

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This article examines changes in content and tone in some polemical exchanges between Anglican conformists and Nonconformists in the reign of Charles II. In response to the Dissenters’ pleas for comprehension and/or toleration because of shared Protestant beliefs, some conformists accused them of holding an antinomian doctrine of justification that undermined morality and political order – and Dissenters retorted with accusations of Socinianism. The disputes were complicated by divisions over justification within rather than between Anglican and Nonconformist groups, and by the late 1670s the perceived threats from papists brought renewed emphasis on common ground

‘I publish it because I see the contention still so hot in the Church of Christ and men’s charity destroyed against each other, one side calling the other Socinians and the other libertines.’¹

The publication of *A friendly debate betwixt two neighbours* late in 1668 or early in 1669 was a shock for English Dissenters. The timing, the mocking and abusive tone, and the assumed authorship all caused

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¹ Richard Baxter, *Of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to believers*, London 1675 (Wing B.1332), title page (for the description ‘theological wars’), sig. A2. For discussion of the theological issues to which this paper relates see John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646–1689*, New Haven 1991, 296–330; Dewey D. Wallace, *Puritans and predestination: grace in English Protestant theology, 1525–1695*, Chapel Hill 1982, 158–90; and Stephen Hampton, *Anti-Arminians: the Anglican reformed tradition from Charles II to George I*, Oxford 2008, 37–128. These studies do not stress the use of justification doctrine as a polemical weapon between conformists and Dissenters, although John Spurr has noted ‘the highly significant but still under-appreciated pamphlet war on soteriology’: ‘Style, wit and religion in Restoration England’, in Stephen Taylor and Grant Tapsell (eds), *The nature of the English Revolution revisited*, Martlesham 2013, 243.

offence. Samuel Rolle argued that the book was a deliberate attempt to scupper moves towards an accommodation between conformists and Nonconformists, protested against ‘your traducing and slandering of a great body of men’, and admitted that ‘It almost astonisheth me that a man reputed so sober and modest as you have formerly been should commit such outrages’.² But worst of all was Simon Patrick’s assault on Nonconformist divinity: ‘your ministers may be antinomians and yet not know it’. He had claimed that Nonconformist insistence on justification by faith alone led them to denigrate good works, and their failure to preach moral obligations was the root of disobedience in Church and State. In Patrick’s dialogue, ‘Nonconformist’ distinguishes the spiritual preaching of dissenting ministers from ‘legal preaching among you’ and ‘moral teaching’ – to which ‘Conformist’ responds,

As much as to say our ministers teach men their duty and yours do not, or else that yours teach them only such duties as may be done in their spirits between God and themselves, but not such as are expressed in life and manners, in our bodily actions, which tend to the good of our neighbours and the happiness of the world.

Dissenting ministers had led people astray: ‘For they taught men first to despise sober and plain doctrine which teaches them their duty toward God and their neighbour, entertaining them with finer speculations of pretended gospel-mysteries and manifestations.’³

A friendly debate caused a furore, in churches, conventicles, coffee-houses and colleges – ‘where they say they may be better without Aristotle than without your book’: it was reprinted four times in 1669, and Patrick had to defend himself against accusations of Socinianism.⁴ The charge that solifidianism might be antinomian and lead to sectarian excess was not

² [Simon Patrick], *A friendly debate betwixt two neighbours, the one a conformist, the other a Nonconformist*, London 1668? (Wing P.798); [Samuel Rolle], *A sober answer to the friendly debate*, London 1669 (Wing R. 1883), sigs A3–4. Although *A friendly debate* was published anonymously, it was soon known that the author was Simon Patrick, rector of St Paul’s Covent Garden, a popular preacher, and hitherto regarded as sympathetic towards Dissenters. Thomas Pittis (*A private conference between a rich alderman and a poor country vicar made public*, London 1670 [Wing P.2316], 160) joked that the author was ‘no less than an Irish saint, although at present an English pilgrim’ (a reference to Patrick’s *The parable of the pilgrim* [London 1665]), and Rolle referred to ‘your Pilgrim’: *A sober answer*, 79.

³ [Patrick], *A friendly debate*, 12–16, 37, 40, 47.

⁴ [Rolle], *A sober answer*, 292; [Simon Patrick], *A continuation of the friendly debate*, London 1669 (Wing P.779); [idem], *A further continuation and defence*, London 1670 (Wing P.805). An insistence on conditionality in justification might be represented as a Socinian denial of Christ’s atonement and an implicit anti-Trinitarianism. For the influence of and reaction to Socinianism in the preceding period see S. Mortimer, *Reason and religion in the English Revolution: the challenge of Socinianism*, Cambridge 2010.

new,⁵ but Patrick had reworked it into a thunderous attack on Nonconformist religion in general. It had to be refuted. The most acute and effective of the responses to Patrick was by Samuel Rolle, who focused on clearing Dissenters from the dangerous allegation of antinomianism, linking them to the extremism of civil war sects: 'The generality of N[on] C[onformist] divines are not antinomians, whatsoever you think of them.' They taught that justifying faith was accompanied by good works, and 'They preach morality as well as you, as namely the necessity of living justly and soberly, only it may be they say more to men about living also godlily.' Rolle contested what he rightly took to be Patrick's polemical strategy:

Do you not thereby insinuate that your religion is quite different from that of the N. C. [*sic*]? ... Now Sir, the religion of the N. C. is that which is briefly summed up in the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments, or, if you please, in the thirty-six doctrinal articles of the Church of England. Now pray Sir, what is your religion which you insinuate is not the same as theirs?⁶

A humble apology for non-conformists similarly denied the charge of antinomianism: 'the Presbyterians and others used to declare against antinomianism and to preach repentance towards God as well as faith in our Lord Jesus Christ'. They teach justification by faith, 'yet are they not antinomians'. Like Rolle, this author too asserted that 'The Presbyterian and Congregational Nonconformists do profess to agree in the main doctrine with the Church of England contained in her articles of religion.'⁷ They were not dangerous radicals, but mainstream English Protestants.

The Congregationalist guru John Owen himself objected to Patrick's sneering tone, but especially to his damaging claim 'that the Nonconformists under pretence of teaching mysteries and grace do neglect the pressing of moral duties'. 'For any man to pretend, to write, plead that this they do not, but indeed do discountenance morality and the duties of it, is to take a liberty of saying what he pleases for his own purpose, when thousands are ready from the highest experience to contradict him.'⁸ Patrick retorted with the standard conformist charges of

⁵ Tim Cooper, *Fear and polemic in seventeenth-century England: Richard Baxter and antinomianism*, Aldershot 2001; Thomas Hotchkis, *An exercitation concerning the nature of forgiveness of sin*, London 1655 (Wing H.2891); William Allen, *A glass of justification*, London 1658 (Wing A.1065); Herbert Thorndike, *An epilogue to the tragedy of the Church of England*, London 1659 (Wing T.1050), bk II; Henry More, *An explanation of the grand mystery of godliness*, London 1660 (Wing M.2658).

⁶ [Rolle], *A sober answer*, 18, 58, 83.

⁷ Anon., *A humble apology for Non-Conformists with modest and serious reflections on the friendly debate and the continuation thereof*, London 1669 (Wing H.3402), 10, 75, 78.

⁸ [John Owen], *Truth and innocence vindicated: in a survey of a discourse concerning ecclesiastical polity*, London 1669 (Wing O.817), 47, 54, 59.

hypocrisy and disloyalty: 'if they were such friends to morality as he would have us believe', he snapped, they would repent of their disloyalty.⁹

Why had Simon Patrick mounted such an intemperate attack on Dissenters? The author of *An humble apology* asked

Whether it was seasonable, when his most excellent majesty and the parliament at the last session had under consideration for union and reconciliation, for a minister of the gospel of peace and of a professed large charity to print and publish such books as might rationally be thought might prove to be obstructions in the way of accommodation?¹⁰

Rolle knew it was deliberate: 'A purpose of union and accommodation betwixt C. [*sic*] and N. C. seemed to be as it were in the publishing, who thought that you of all men would have stepped in to have forbidden the banns and to have showed cause to the contrary.' And in a new preface to the sixth edition of *A friendly debate* in 1684, Patrick admitted that he had written to oppose 'that project of comprehension' and his book 'came in the way of that and lay cross to it'.¹¹ When both politicians and churchmen were discussing possible concessions to Dissenters, as they had been in 1668, Patrick had tried to scotch such proposals. But why had he particularly assailed Nonconformist religion? Why had he argued that their divinity itself was distinctive and dangerous? Several writers had argued against comprehension or toleration for Nonconformists, but they had cited other objections: Dissenters were disobedient and untrustworthy; comprehension would bring division into the Church of England; toleration threatened social cohesion; and Nonconformists had only recently been rebels: 'these men of God are in truth but men of war'.¹²

⁹ [Simon Patrick], 'A letter from the author of the Friendly debate', in [Samuel Parker], *A defence and continuation of the ecclesiastical politie*, London 1671 (Wing P.457), 747.

¹⁰ Anon., *An humble apology for Non-Conformists*, 150.

¹¹ [Rolle], *A sober answer*, sig. A4; [Simon Patrick], *A friendly debate between a conformist and a Non-Conformist: in two parts: the sixth edition corrected and enlarged*, London 1684 (Wing P.803), sig. A4. For the comprehension project in 1667–8 see Roger Thomas, 'Comprehension and indulgence', in G. F. Nuttall and Owen Chadwick (eds), *From uniformity to unity, 1662–1962*, London 1962, 196–206; John Spurr, 'The Church of England, comprehension and the Toleration Act of 1689', *EHR* civ (1989), 933–5; and Jacqueline Rose, *Godly kingship in Restoration England*, Cambridge 2011, 171–83.

¹² [Richard Perrinchief], *Samaritanism, or a treatise of comprehending, compounding and tolerating several religions in the same Church*, London 1664 (Wing P.1604); Anthony Sadler, *Schema sacrum, vel forma uniformitatis formosissima: arguments for order, or conformity confirm'd*, London 1665 (Wing S.269); [Thomas Tomkins], *The inconveniencies of toleration*, London 1667 (Wing T.1835); [R. Perrinchief], *A discourse of toleration*, London 1668 (Wing P.1593B); [idem], *Indulgence not justified*, London 1668 (Wing P.1594); Abraham Wright, *Anarchie reviving, or the Good Old Cause on the anville*, London 1668 (Wing W.3684), 16.

Patrick's claim that Nonconformists had a different theology was surely a calculated response to their assertion of a shared Protestant identity with the Church of England. A key argument in the Dissenting campaign for comprehension and toleration was that they believed the same doctrines as conformists, so they should not be penalised because of scruples over inessentials. Owen protested against any refusal of toleration: 'What though they are every way sound in the faith and cordially embrace all the doctrine taught formerly in the Church of England?' Was the Church of God still to be shattered over minor matters? 'We have no new faith to declare, no new doctrine to teach, no private opinions to divulge, no point or truth do we profess, no not one, which hath not been delivered, taught, divulged and esteemed as the common doctrine of the Church of England ever since the Reformation.'¹³ John Corbet insisted that 'The doctrine of faith and sacraments by law established is heartily received by the Nonconformists.'¹⁴ *A few sober queries* asserted that some conformist clergy were Arminians, Pelagians, Socinians and Erastians, but 'the Nonconformists differ in nothing from the 39 Articles of the Church of England but in ceremonies and discipline'.¹⁵

The Presbyterian John Humfrey wanted 'a bridge, not for any to depart enemies from us but for those who are brethren (of the same religion, differing only in some circumstances) to come over to you into union and concord with you'.¹⁶ But conformists (or rather some conformists) countered this seductive proposition by denying that Dissenters were 'of the same religion', claiming that their divinity led to disobedience, as had been proved in the 1640s and 1650s. Prominent among them was Samuel Parker, one of Archbishop Sheldon's chaplains, and his vitriolic *Discourse of ecclesiastical politie* caused even more fuss than Patrick's *Friendly debate*. 'insolence and impudence', 'envy and fury', 'malice and madness', 'intemperate railings and profane satires' cried Nonconformists in disgust.¹⁷

After nearly four hundred pages of argument, Parker's conclusion is succinct: 'I have proved the absolute necessity of governing men's consciences and persuasions in matters of religion and the unavoidable dangers of

¹³ [John Owen], *Indulgence and toleration considered*, London 1667 (Wing O.763), 7; [idem], *A peace-offering in an apology and humble plea for indulgence and liberty of conscience*, London 1667 (Wing O.791), 13.

¹⁴ [John Corbet], *A discourse of the religion of England*, London 1667 (Wing C.6252), 43; [idem], *A second discourse of the religion of England*, London 1668 (Wing C.6263), 9, 33-4, 36.

¹⁵ Anon., *A few sober queries upon the late proclamation*, London 1668 (Wing F.838), 11.

¹⁶ [John Humfrey], *A proposition for the safety & happiness of the king and kingdom*, London 1667 (Wing J.601), 8, 84.

¹⁷ Anon., *Insolence and impudence triumphant; envy and fury enthron'd: the mirror of malice and madness in a late treatise entituled A discourse of ecclesiastical polity &c*, London 1669 (Wing I.226).

tolerating or keeping up religious differences.’¹⁸ Much of his reasoning is general, but it is buttressed in chapter ii by an account of the particular danger arising from the religion of ‘our dissenting zealots’. He claimed that true religion was the practice of moral virtue, which was identical with divine grace, but that Dissenters emphasised grace above (or even against) virtue, and so undermined morality and threatened social order. ‘So destructive of all true and real goodness is the very religion of those men that are wont to set grace at odds with virtue, and are so far from making them the same that they make them inconsistent.’ This was, in essence, a more sophisticated version of Patrick’s case, that conformists taught Christians their duty but Nonconformists confused them with spiritual speculation: ‘we express the precepts and duties of the gospel in plain and intelligible terms, whilst they trifle them away by childish metaphors and allegories’. In short, ‘all religion must of necessity be resolved into enthusiasm or morality’: Dissent was for enthusiasm, the Church for morality.¹⁹

One Nonconformist writer saw exactly what Parker and others were up to: to forestall concessions to Dissenters, they ‘bestir themselves, preach, print invectives against their Christian brethren, heap slanders, calumnies and reproaches upon them, and not content to brand them as very fools, sots and madmen they represent them all in general enemies to government, anti-monarchists and whatnot’.²⁰ Owen too protested against this sort of attack, and against Parker’s reduction of religion to the promotion of moral virtue – ‘there is nothing in it that is constitutive of Christian religion as such at all’. The original doctrine of the Church of England, ‘the glory of the English Reformation’, had been abandoned by men like Parker, and ‘I cannot but grieve continually to see the acknowledged doctrine of it deserted, its ancient principles and practices derided, its pristine zeal despised by some who make advantage of its outward constitution.’ Owen repeated the charge later, contrasting the apostasy of churchmen with the Protestant orthodoxy of Dissenters: ‘we cannot conform to Arminianism, Socinianism on the one hand or popery on the other, with what new or specious pretences soever they may be blended.’²¹

Owen had published anonymously, but his authorship was immediately spotted (as that of Patrick and of Parker had been), and George Vernon,

¹⁸ [Samuel Parker], *A discourse of ecclesiastical politie: wherein the authority of the civil magistrate over the consciences of subjects in matters of religion is asserted*, London 1670, *vere* 1669 (Wing P.459), 324–5. For Parker’s ideas see J. Rose, ‘The ecclesiastical polity of Samuel Parker’, *Seventeenth Century* xxv (2010), 350–75.

¹⁹ [Parker], *A discourse of ecclesiastical politie*, pp. iii, 71, 73–4, 75, 76.

²⁰ Anon., *Insolence and impudence triumphant*, 4. The author knew (see p. 9) that the *Discourse* was written by Parker.

²¹ [Owen], *Truth and innocence vindicated*, 34, 198–9, 395; [idem], *A discourse concerning evangelical love, church-peace and unity*, London 1672 (Wing O.735), 17–18, 56, 165–6.

a Gloucestershire rector, mounted a vituperative personal strike against 'this Cromwellian doctor' and his record in politics and religion. Owen remained a danger, he claimed, citing his theology of justification, imputed righteousness and the perseverance of justified saints: 'Now pray Sir, tell me whether at the bottom of this doctrine does not lie all the confusion and blood, persecution and wars which we have seen and might again have seen in this nation had not authority secured itself and us against the spreading of it?' The 'enthusiastic Owenistical spirit' was a threat to the nation, and 'the Owenists' had to be bridled by law. Owen was defended in *An expostulatory letter*, to which Owen himself added an explanation of his doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to sinners: 'This principle I own, and despise his impotent, ignorant and ridiculous defamation of it.'²² Parker responded to Owen's assault on his *Discourse* with further slights on Owen's career as 'the great bell-whether of disturbance and sedition' and condemnation of 'this naughty godliness' that made 'moral goodness the greatest let to conversion', 'Than which, I affirm, there is no blasphemy more grossly false and wicked.'²³ His refutation of Owen's accusation of Socinianism and popery was firm: 'Do we but press to an imitation of the life of Christ, that is enough to brand us for Socinians. Do we urge the absolute necessity of good works or an holy life (for that is the same thing) as an indispensable condition of our acceptance with God, what can we be but a papist?'²⁴

The charges to which Parker had objected were given some substance by Owen's ally Robert Ferguson, in an even-tempered and scholarly consideration of grace and virtue. He compared assertions by Parker with the words of Socinian writers, to show 'from whom such notions are derived that are with so much confidence obtruded of late upon us'. He did not specifically accuse Parker of Socinianism, but the point was clear enough. 'I shall irritate no man, only recommend those who desire further confirmation in this matter to such who have debated the Socinian controversies.' As Owen before him, Ferguson contended that 'Morality doth not comprehend the whole of practical religion' and 'to swallow up the whole of religion in morality seems a plain renouncing of the gospel'.²⁵

Meanwhile, one of the most substantial critiques of Dissenting divinity came not from a conformist but a (reluctant) Nonconformist. Richard

²² [George Vernon], *A letter to a friend concerning some of Dr Owen's principles and practices*, London 1670 (Wing V.247), 10–30, 43, 47, 60, 62; Anon., *An expostulatory letter to the author of the late slanderous libel against Dr. O.*, London 1671 (Wing E.3890), 25–6.

²³ [Parker], *Defence and continuation*, 11, 60–70, 347; [idem], *Bishop Bramhall's vindication of himself and the episcopal clergy*, London 1672 (Wing B.4237), preface, sig. A2; [idem], *A reproof to the rehearsal transposed*, London 1673 (Wing P.473), 423.

²⁴ [Parker], *Defence and continuation*, 82.

²⁵ R[obert] F[erguson], *A sober enquiry into the nature, measure and principle of moral virtue*, London 1673 (Wing F.760), 5, 132, 167, 262.

Baxter had first strayed from Reformed orthodoxy in his *Aphorismes of justification* in 1649, and he had defended his views through the 1650s. After a decade of silence on the issue, Baxter stepped into the new dispute in 1670 with his substantial exposition of *The life of faith*. Embedded in this practical account of the Christian's life of faith was an assault on the version of justification, imputation and free grace taught by Owen and the high Calvinists, characterised by Baxter as antinomianism. He listed fifty-eight 'pernicious or dangerous errors': 'Take heed of all the antinomian doctrines before recited which, to extol the empty name and image of free grace, do destroy the true principles and motives of holiness and obedience.' Baxter had, in effect, provided theological detail for the case that Simon Patrick had outlined, that preaching solifidianism undervalued good works and undermined Christ's law – 'This antinomian fancy destroyeth religion.'²⁶

Further theological argument came in a Latin treatise by the young George Bull, which itself became a *cause célèbre* as the most explicit rejection so far of justification by faith alone by a conformist. His 'timely antidote against this solifidianism or rather libertinism' argued that from the version of justification taught by Luther 'and most of our own divines after his time' came 'by strict and regular deduction the execrable tenets of the antinomians, libertines, Familists and others of the same class, which those good men perhaps never dreamed of'. Bull conceded that most Protestant divines held a version of justification by faith alone, but he claimed that his view was compatible with Reformed confessions and the Thirty-Nine Articles as interpreted through the Homilies: 'that henceforth no man of the refuse of the antinomians may seek patronage for his dreadful heresy in the most holy teaching of our Church'.²⁷ For Calvinists, conformist or Nonconformist, this was an outrageous perversion of the truths of the English Reformation: it was met by angry denunciations in print, in sermons and in university lectures, and Bishop Morley of Winchester issued a pastoral charge forbidding his clergy to read or preach on Bull's *Harmonia*.²⁸

For our consideration of the polemical war, the most interesting immediate responses to Bull came from Charles Gataker, rector of Hoggeston in Buckinghamshire and son of the great Thomas Gataker. Charles Gataker circulated a manuscript to the bishops decrying Bull's book as 'pernicious,

²⁶ Richard Baxter, *The life of faith: in three parts*, London 1670 (Wing B.1301), 297, 321, 369. For Baxter's earlier attacks on antinomianism see Cooper, *Fear and polemic*.

²⁷ George Bull, *Harmonia apostolica* [1670], Oxford 1844, pp. ix, 21, 199–200, 210, 216; Hampton, *Anti-Arminians*, 49–60.

²⁸ Robert Nelson, 'The life of Dr George Bull' [1713], in *The works of George Bull*, Oxford 1846, vii. 89–91; Joseph Truman, *An endeavour to rectify some prevailing opinions, contrary to the doctrine of the Church of England*, London 1671 (Wing T.3140). Thomas Barlow's Oxford lectures against Bull are discussed in Hampton, *Anti-Arminians*, 78–99.

heretical and contrary to the decrees of the Church of England and of all other reformed Churches', and sent a critical commentary to Bishop Nicholson, accusing Bull of Socinianism. He then published his late father's *Antidote against error*, with his own additional material. As a Calvinist conformist, Gataker was concerned not only to uphold solifidian theology as a central tenet of the reformed Church of England, but also to free the doctrine from any alleged association with antinomian and sectarian radicalism. It was unreasonable, he declared, that 'the defence of an important point of Christianity, common to men of different persuasions' should be suspected, 'as if he that defends the justification of a sinner by faith only must needs be confederate with rebels and schismatics in denying obedience and submission to the sacred power in Church and state, which are God's immediate ordinances'.²⁹

Gataker's intervention had revealed the complexity of the 'theological wars'. Patrick, Parker, Vernon and Bull had between them elided solifidianism, antinomianism and nonconformity, suggesting that the doctrine was dangerous and held only by schismatics. Gataker and, behind the scenes, Calvinist bishops and academics contested this. It had seemed that the attack on justification by faith alone had official backing. Rolle had complained of difficulty in getting his *Sober answer* published, whereas Patrick had 'so formidable a second as public authority to back and countenance you in what you write'.³⁰ *A friendly debate* was licensed by Thomas Tomkins, one of Archbishop Sheldon's chaplains, Parker himself was a chaplain, and Bull's *Harmonia* was also licensed by Tomkins—having been refused a licence by the vice-chancellor of Oxford. Gataker's book, however, was licensed by Robert Grove, chaplain to Bishop Henchman of London. But Gataker had not named Bull, and thereafter attacks on Bull from within the Church of England were confined to the decent obscurity of a learned language. Rather, the public assertion of justification by faith alone continued to come from Nonconformists—Obadiah Grew, William Bridge and Peter Sterry.³¹

The next significant assault on Dissenting divinity came from Edward Fowler, at this point a Bedfordshire curate. In *The principles and practices of certain moderate divines*, Fowler declared the doctrine of imputed righteousness 'antinomian', defended those conformists 'accused of preaching up only a moral righteousness', and advanced a version of justification that

²⁹ Nelson, 'Life of Dr George Bull', 91, 127; Thomas Gataker, *An antidote against error concerning justification*, London 1670 (Wing G.311), sig. A2.

³⁰ [Rolle], *A sober answer*, sig. C2, 2.

³¹ Obadiah Grew, *The sinner's justification, or the Lord Jesus Christ the lord our righteousness*, London 1670 (Wing G.1996); William Bridge, *The freeness of the grace and love of God to believers discovered*, London 1671 (Wing B.4454); [Peter Sterry], *Free grace exalted and thence deduced*, London 1670 (Wing S.5480).

combined faith and works.³² More focused on the issues that concern us here was Fowler's follow-up in 1671, *The design of Christianity* – that 'the making of us holy, as it was the business of our saviour's whole life, so was it also the great end and design of his death'. Christ came to make men good and obedience to him was a condition of justification, but solifidian teaching deluded men that they could be saved through Christ's merit without effort of their own – hence 'the dangerous error of antinomianism'. Until this was recognised, 'we may never hope to outlive or to see the least abatement of that gross superstition, fanaticism, and enthusiasm, or those mad enormities and most impious practices which have now for a very long time sullied ... the glory of the Church of Christ'. Fowler's aim, he explained later, had been 'to endeavour the undermining and subversion of those principles which have so fatal an influence and that tend to make those who embrace them extremely troublesome to the Church, ill subjects and ill neighbours, but most of all injurious to their own souls'.³³

Again, Baxter leapt into someone else's fight – responding to complaints that Fowler and others 'greatly obscure or drown the whole doctrine of our justification and adoption and of Christ's satisfaction and imputed righteousness'. His endorsement of Fowler's position was incomplete, but he turned it against the solifidians: '[I]t is not to be denied or hid that more than downright antinomians have so ill expounded the points of Christ's suretyship ... as hath proved the great occasion of some men running into the contrary error.'³⁴ One among these 'antinomians' was John Bunyan, who now published a furious attack on Fowler and his 'cursed, blasphemous book'. 'You Sir, a pretended minister of the word, so vilely expose to public view the rottenness of your heart in principles diametrically opposite to the simplicity of the gospel of Christ.' Fowler's 'Socinian compliances' and 'papistical Quakerism' were contrary to the Thirty-Nine Articles and 'fundamental truths of the Christian religion'. Fowler's reply, in *Dirt wipt off*, was abusive and dismissive of Bunyan: 'he is as rank an antinomian as ever fouled paper'.³⁵

³² [Edward Fowler], *The principles and practices of certain moderate divines of the Church of England*, London 1670 (Wing F.1711), 18, 114, 117, 139, 141.

³³ Edward Fowler, *The design of Christianity*, London 1671 (Wing F.1698), sig. A4, 78, 224, and *The design of Christianity*, London 1676 (Wing F.1699), epistle dedicatory to Archbishop Sheldon, sig. a4.

³⁴ Richard Baxter, *How far holiness is the design of Christianity*, London 1671 (Wing B.1282), 3, 14.

³⁵ John Bunyan, *A defence of the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ*, London 1672 (Wing B.5507), 1, 92, 109, 113; [Edward Fowler], *Dirt wipt off: or a manifest discovery of the gross ignorance, erroneousness and most unchristian and wicked spirit of one John Bunyan*, London 1672 (Wing F.1701), 17; Nicholas Seager, 'John Bunyan and Socinianism', this JOURNAL LXV (2014), 588–91.

Some writers were afraid that these disputes between fellow-Protestants were getting out of hand. The Presbyterian Thomas Jacombe warned 'my reverend brethren in the ministry' against the influence of Socinianism, but sought to reconcile justification by faith and by works: '[I]f you consider them materially and fundamentally they are one and the same.'³⁶ Humfrey tried for *The middle way* between free grace and conditional justification, though he cautioned that the doctrine of imputed righteousness could lead to 'the evil and danger of libertinism and antinomianism'. But he soon wondered whether 'it were better to let pious men alone to such apprehensions as they have imbibed'.³⁷ Baxter listed 'evidences of our real concord', lest any think 'that our differences in the point of justification by faith or works are greater than indeed they are'.³⁸ On the conformist side the Calvinist Francis Fullwood warned conformists against giving any impression of Socinianism and Nonconformists against using alleged Socinianism as an excuse for separation.³⁹ John Sharp argued that 'those controversies' between Protestants 'concerning faith and justification and the necessity of good works to salvation, and imputed righteousness and the difference between virtue and grace, with some other' were not as serious as some thought.⁴⁰ But 'those controversies' were about to get a whole lot worse.

William Sherlock's *Discourse concerning the knowledge of Jesus Christ* (1674) had its origin in a meeting of several conformist London clergy, where it was decided that each should write a short, popular tract on subjects in dispute, 'as about the knowledge of Christ, faith, justification, repentance, mysteries, temptations, desertions, etc'.⁴¹ In the event, the only work to appear was Sherlock's *Discourse*, with an *imprimatur* from Samuel Parker, and it was neither short nor, in two senses, popular. It was a frontal, no holds barred assault on Dissenting divinity and devotion. Nonconformist divines had, Sherlock claimed, invented a religion of union with Christ's person which 'undermines the fundamental design of the gospel'. For by this union Christ's righteousness was imputed to sinners in their

³⁶ Thomas Jacomb, *Several sermons preach'd on the whole eighth chapter of the epistle to the Romans*, London 1672 (Wing J.119), sig. A2, 610–11. In the printed version Jacomb had expanded his treatment of the contested issues.

³⁷ J[ohn] H[umfrey], *The middle way: in one paper of justification*, London 1672 (Wing H.3691), 41; [idem], *The middle way in one paper of the covenants, law and gospel*, London 1674 (Wing H.3689A), 4.

³⁸ [William Allen], *A discourse of the nature, ends and difference of the two covenants*, London 1673 (Wing A.1061), preface by Baxter, sig. A4.

³⁹ [Francis Fullwood], *Humble advice to the conforming and non-conforming ministers and people*, London 1673 (Wing F.2508), 11, 21, 27.

⁴⁰ John Sharp, *The things that make for peace, delivered in a sermon*, London 1674 (Wing S.3003), 28–9.

⁴¹ Simon Patrick, 'A brief account of my life', in *The works of Symon Patrick*, Oxford 1858, ix. 454, 457.

justification, a doctrine which ‘destroys the necessary obligations to holiness and obedience for the future, and so thrusts holiness quite out of the Christian religion’. The key text was Owen’s 1657 *Of communion with God the Father, Sonne and Holy Ghost*, which Sherlock dissected (or misrepresented) and ridiculed, accusing Owen of ‘as downright antinomianism as ever Dr Crisp or Saltmarsh vented’.⁴²

Owen was furious that a book of ‘popular edification’, written almost twenty years earlier, had been dragged into contention, ‘to cavil at my writings and to load my person with reproaches’. He was equally outraged by Sherlock’s ‘doctrinal principles’ – ‘wild, uncouth, extravagant and contrary to the common faith of Christians, being all of them traduced and some of them transcribed from the writings of the Socinians’. The divinity that Sherlock scorns is ‘the avowed doctrine in general of the Church wherein he lives and which hath in the parts of it been asserted and defended by the greatest and most learned prelates thereof’, citing bishops from Jewel to Prideaux. Sherlock and others were ‘reproaching the doctrine of Nonconformists, ... when they are all of them the avowed doctrines of all the reformed Churches and of this of England in particular’.⁴³ Henry Hickman made the same charges of Socinianism and deviation from the doctrines of the Church of England, as did Edward Polhill, Vincent Alsop, Rolle and Ferguson – ‘Though to do him right’, Ferguson complained, ‘he is so far from being singular in it that he hath not only the Pelagians, Socinians and the writer of the *Defence and continuation of the ecclesiastical polity*, but the doughty Mr Hobbes for his associates.’⁴⁴

Alsop recognised that Patrick, Parker, Sherlock and others had raised the stakes between conformists and Nonconformists:

For the dispute is not now about decency and order, about fringes and philacteries, about the tithing of mint, anise or cumin, not about a pin or peg in the superstructure of the Church’s polity, nor about the three innocent ceremonies, but about the influence of the righteousness of Christ’s life and the sacrifice of his death upon our acceptance with God.

⁴² William Sherlock, *A discourse concerning the knowledge of Jesus Christ and our union and communion with him*, London 1674 (Wing S.3288), 136, 351, 403.

⁴³ John Owen, *A vindication of some passages in a discourse concerning communion with God*, London 1674 (Wing O.821), 3–5, 8, 74–5, 335–6.

⁴⁴ [H. Hickman], *Speculum Sherlockianum, or a looking-glass in which the admirers of Mr Sherlock may behold the man*, London 1674 (Wing H.1916), 6, 68–9; E. Polhill, *An answer to the discourse of Mr William Sherlock*, London 1675 (Wing P.2749), sig. A4, 482–6; [V. Alsop], *Anti-Sozzo, sive Sherlockismus enervatus; in vindication of some great truths opposed, and opposition to some great errors maintained, by Mr William Sherlock*, London 1675 (Wing A.2905), 24, 133, 206, 387, 469, 621; S[amuel] R[olle], *Prodromus, or the character of Mr Sherlock’s book*, London 1674 (Wing R.1881), 25, 27–32, 58–9, 86; Robert Ferguson, *The interest of reason in religion*, London 1675 (Wing F.740), sig. A4, 2–4, 401, 428, 433, 537. Alsop’s title refers to Fausto Sozzini, from whom Socinianism took its name.

Their objective was, he thought, to widen the differences between Protestants: 'Some I perceive are hugely afraid lest differences should be accommodated, ... and therefore fearing these smaller bones of contention would not set the world together by the ears long they have thrown more considerable ones before us to entail contentions upon posterity and propagate divisions to eternity.'⁴⁵ Ferguson too noted that 'whilst these new doctrines stand propagated under the countenance and security of an *imprimatur*, there is little likelihood that the heats and raptures between them and the Dissenting brethren should be extinguished or made up'.⁴⁶ Rolle, however, tried to play down differences, and to isolate Sherlock and 'a new sort of Protestants, to be called (if there were any besides yourself) Socinian-Popish-Protestants'. Sherlock had 'greatly displeased both friends and foes, orthodox conformists as well as Nonconformists'. And in *Justification justified*, Rolle set out a moderate position, stressing both 'free grace' and 'sincere obedience': 'By taking care of the latter we shall arm ourselves against antinomians and libertines, of the former against papists and Socinians, etc.'⁴⁷

Sherlock's *Defence and continuation* was a pugnacious response to these criticisms: he argued that his views were in line with Article XI of the Thirty-Nine, dismissed accusations of Socinianism, and accused his critics of antinomianism. 'What a blessed change has my book wrought in the Doctor [Owen]! He is now mightily concerned for the honour and reputation of the bishops and Church ... Who could ever have hoped for this, who had known the Doctor in the blessed times of Reformation?' He rejected the charge of 'Socinianizing': 'I do heartily declare that I am no Socinian, and that I do not know any divine of the Church of England who can reasonably be suspected of that heresy.' But the antinomianism of his enemies could not be doubted. Their doctrine of imputation 'is the foundation of antinomianism'; their use of the person of Christ 'is the great mystery of antinomianism'; those who promise justification without repentance 'are downright antinomians'; and such errors are held by 'Dr Owen and Dr Crisp and the rest of the antinomians'.⁴⁸ And the merchant William Allen's defence of Sherlock averred that it was from this doctrine of imputation 'that antinomianism took its first rise among us in this nation, and Ranterism also out of that'.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ [Alsop], *Anti-Sozzo*, sig. A4, 380.

⁴⁶ Ferguson, *Interest of reason*, 423.

⁴⁷ R[olle], *Prodromus*, 2, 58; Samuel Rolls [sic], *Justification justified, or the great doctrine of justification stated*, London 1674 (Wing R.1878), 111.

⁴⁸ William Sherlock, *A defence and continuation of the discourse concerning the knowledge of Jesus Christ*, London 1675 (Wing S.3281), 200, 295, 303, 307, 312, 343, 507, 510, 512.

⁴⁹ William Allen, *Animadversions on that part of Mr Robert Ferguson's book entituled The interest of reason in religion which treats of justification*, London 1676 (Wing A.1054), 57.

The controversy over Sherlock's views was reanimated by Thomas Danson's mischievous *Friendly debate between Satan and Sherlock*, in which 'Sherlock' uses arguments from his book to convince the gloomily Calvinist 'Satan' that he is not damned. 'Sherlock' assures Satan 'Do not trouble your head about reconciling my positions with the Church of England's, as long as I have an *imprimatur*.' But Danson comments that 'The only thing that may seem wanting to brand the Sherlockians with the name of Socinians, and so of more refined Mahometans, is an explicit denial of the godhead of Christ.'⁵⁰ Sherlock's *Answer* protested that 'I have been assaulted all along with no other weapons but lies and slanders and malicious insinuations, but then it was done with a demure pretence of religion and zeal for God, but Mr Danson has dealt honestly and drawn aside the curtain and showed the world that Satan stood behind to prompt them.'⁵¹ An anonymous *Vindication of Mr Sherlock and his principles* (with an *imprimatur* from Sheldon's chaplain) also complained of 'malicious calumnies and reproaches', with digs against 'J. O. (two terrifying letters, the like are not to be found in all the ABC)'.⁵² *Poor Robin's answer* adopted a high moral tone, advising Danson 'Not to suffer blind furious zeal to consume all his charity, nor think every man that dissents from him an atheist, a Mahometan, or subverter of the gospel.'⁵³

Meanwhile, in 1674, Owen had picked up other issues touched on by Patrick, Parker, Fowler and Sherlock: the Holy Spirit, grace and moral virtue, and the errors 'revived among us by a crew of Socinianized Arminians'. Owen derided the clamour for moral preaching as a tactic to discredit Dissenting divinity: 'I wish it be more out of love to virtue itself and a conviction of its usefulness than out of a design to cast contempt on the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel, as it is declared by the faithful dispensers of it.'⁵⁴ William Clagett's response to Owen 'was written principally for their sake who have been made to believe that the ministers of the Church of England have departed from the scriptures in their doctrine concerning the operations and grace of the holy spirit'.⁵⁵ Humfrey, though not one of 'the Owenists', defended Owen 'both as a

⁵⁰ [Thomas Danson], *A friendly debate between Satan and Sherlock*, London 1676 (Wing D.213), 28, 49, postscript sig. E2.

⁵¹ William Sherlock, *An answer to a late scandalous pamphlet*, London 1677 (Wing S.3262), 9.

⁵² Anon., *A vindication of Mr Sherlock and his principles*, London 1677 (Wing V.483), 7, 10.

⁵³ [William Winstanley], *Poor Robin's answer to Mr Thomas Danson*, London 1677 *vere* 1678 (Wing P.2875), 6.

⁵⁴ John Owen, *Pneumatologia, or a discourse concerning the Holy Spirit*, London 1674 (Wing O.793), 206, 506.

⁵⁵ [William Clagett], *A discourse concerning the operations of the Holy Spirit, together with a confutation of some part of Dr Owen's book upon that subject*, London 1677 (Wing C.4379), sig. A2.

scholar and civil gentleman' who deserved respect from his critics.⁵⁶ Clagett replied tartly that 'I think it implies more want of respect and modesty in Dr Owen to treat the bishops and clergy of this Church so unmannerly as he has done, than in a younger man to dispute a point of divinity with him alone and to tax his rudeness by the way.' For Clagett, as for other conformists, the key issue was grace and morality, for if it was irresistible grace that led to sanctification 'it leads to the neglect of those means by which good men grow better'.⁵⁷

In 1674 the strange reticence of conformist Calvinists was broken by the Oxford theologian Thomas Tully with *Justificatio Paulina sine operibus, ex mente Ecclesiae Anglicanae*—'contra nuperos novatores', specifically Bull's *Harmonia*, and dedicated to Bishop Morley. Tully argued that the application of Christ's merit by faith alone was the doctrine of the reformed Churches, the Fathers and the Church of England, and defended it against papists, Socinians and 'those among us who, treacherously serving the interests of one or other, shamelessly take the name of sons of the Church of England'.⁵⁸ Bull's *Apologia pro Harmoniae* accused Tully of concealing the interpretation of justification given in the Homily, and alleged the age-old doctrine of the Catholic Church against Calvin, the Synod of Dort and Tully. Bull defended himself against Tully's allegation of Socinianism, and charged him in turn with antinomianism: 'Forsooth, in this controversy all are papists in his eyes who are not antinomians.'⁵⁹ In *Examen censurae*, printed with the *Apologia*, Bull responded to Charles Gataker's criticisms, especially on the issue of imputed righteousness: 'Truly you here lay the very foundation of the most pestilent heresy of antinomianism.' He denied that Gataker's solifidianism was supported by Article xi and the Homily of Justification, and asserted that learned divines would 'be indignant withal that so gross antinomianism should be thrust on the sons of the Church as her doctrine'.⁶⁰

Patrick and others had sought to turn what had been differences over justification within the conformist and Nonconformist communities into a controversy between conformists and Nonconformists—and, in print at least, they had largely succeeded. With the exception of Gataker, solifidianism had been defended only by Dissenters—until Tully stepped in. But Tully had difficulty in getting *Justificatio Paulina* published: friends (and Bull) had tried to dissuade him for the sake of the Church's peace, his

⁵⁶ John Humfrey, *Peaceable disquisitions*, London 1678 (Wing H.3702), 2–3.

⁵⁷ William Clagett, *A discourse concerning the operations of the Holy Spirit ... the second part*, London 1680 (Wing C.4380), 13, 278.

⁵⁸ Thomas Tully, *Justificatio Paulina sine operibus*, Oxford 1674 (Wing T.3244), 76; Hampton, *Anti-Arminians*, 99–114.

⁵⁹ George Bull, *An apology for the Harmony and its author* [1675], Oxford 1844, 275.

⁶⁰ Idem, *Examen censurae* [1675], Oxford 1844, 74, 221.

text was (according to Bull) rejected three times, and it was finally published in Oxford simply ‘permissu superiorum’.⁶¹ But Bull’s *Apologia* and *Examen* had the appropriate *imprimatur* from one of Archbishop Sheldon’s chaplains, as the original *Harmonia* had had. It looks as if there was an effort to keep Calvinists quiet, rather than just keep the issue quiet—though Tully would not be silenced, and was shocked that anyone had tried.⁶² But, except for Gataker’s contribution, the dispute among conformists had been confined to Latin.

It was Baxter who gave Tully cover to make his case in English. Baxter’s *Of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness* was offered for pacification in these ‘theological wars’, published to defuse the quarrel between ‘Socinians’ and ‘libertines’. Nevertheless, Baxter argued that strict imputation ‘introduceth all antinomianism or libertinism and ungodliness, and subverteth the Gospel and all true religion and morality’, and devoted three cantankerous chapters to attacking Tully, ‘whose *Justificatio Paulina* occasioneth the publication of this’.⁶³ It was a somewhat contorted case, that he and Tully only disagreed over words, but Tully’s position was next to antinomian. Baxter’s dubiously eirenic mission was furthered in *Richard Baxter’s Catholick theologie*, against ‘taking verbal differences for real and ... arbitrary notions for necessary sacred truths’. He took as his example the row between Sherlock and Alsop, ‘in my judgement both running into extremes’. But his moderation and restraint turned out to be selective, with Owen’s views put into the mouth of ‘Libertine’ and including Tully in a cast that included the antinomian Crisp, Saltmarsh, Paul Hobson and *The marrow of modern divinity*.⁶⁴

Tully, unsurprisingly, struck back, freeing himself from such company: ‘[L]et it be no longer “Dr Tully, Saltmarsh, etc.” But the Church of England with all the rest of the reformed.’ ‘His libertines, antinomians, etc are whomsoever asserts against him the justification of a sinner by faith without works, such as the Church of England with the rest of the reformed Churches.’ However, Tully pointed out, Baxter also wanted his readers to believe that the differences between them were ‘merely verbal, nothing but a strife about words and forms of expression, and that in the main we are agreed’: ‘What, perfect contradictions no more than a difference in words? Faith alone and not faith alone; faith with and without works, one and the same thing?’ Like it or not, said Tully,

⁶¹ Idem, *An apology*, 248; Nelson, ‘Life of Dr George Bull’, 184–5, 187.

⁶² Tully, *Justificatio Paulina*, sig. a2.

⁶³ Baxter, *Of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to believers*, title page, sig. A2, 91. Tully had first criticised Baxter and his *Aphorismes* in *Justificatio Paulina*.

⁶⁴ Richard Baxter, *Richard Baxter’s Catholick theologie, plain, pure and peaceable, for the pacification of the dogmatical word-warriors*, London 1675 (Wing B.1209), title page, sig. *c, pt III, 220, 223–4, 255.

Baxter agrees with the papists rather than the Protestants.⁶⁵ Baxter, in a fine example of pot and kettle, objected to such 'frightening men out of their charity, peace and communion by bugbear names of this or that heresy or dangerous opinion'. He again set out his views, and noted the irony of an anti-solifidian Dissenter in dispute with a Calvinist conformist: 'I do friendly desire the author of the *Friendly Debate*, Mr Sherlock, and all others that would fashion such doctrine on the Nonconformists as a character of the party to observe that this doctor sufficiently confuteth their partiality.'⁶⁶

By now, it was open house on justification and everyone joined in: between 1675 and 1680 fifty-three works relating to the justification controversy were published, by thirty-four different authors, including our old friends Baxter (six books), Owen (three), Patrick (two), Alsop (two) and Fowler. The solifidians were in a minority, with fourteen authors (fifteen if the maverick Humfrey is included) and twenty (or twenty-one) books, and only three of them were conformists—Tully and Polhill, whom we have seen, and John Standish. The debate was at its hottest in 1675 and 1676, with eighteen and eleven books respectively, and then things cooled down, with six in 1677, eight in 1678, two in 1679, and a late burst of eight in 1680.⁶⁷ Many of these works contested the question of orthodoxy, and continued the name-calling of 'Socinians' versus 'antinomians': were the solifidians antinomians? were the anti-solifidians Socinians? and how did they all relate to the doctrinal articles of the Church of England? Who are the heretics now?

This question was given an uncompromising reply in two sermons preached in London in September 1675. The first was by the Presbyterian William Jenkyn, at the funeral of his friend Lazarus Seaman, when he contrasted the orthodox Seaman with 'a company of uncatechized upstarts' who published 'their heretical notions in opposition to our famous English divines, as if Jewel, Whitaker, Davenant, Downham, Reynolds, Abbot, Ussher, etc were by them to be degraded to school-boys'.⁶⁸ More significantly, in a sermon before the king two weeks later,

⁶⁵ Thomas Tully, *A letter to Mr Richard Baxter*, Oxford 1675 (Wing, T.3245), 9–10, 15; [idem], *Animadversions upon a sheet of Mr Baxter's*, Oxford 1675 (Wing A.3202), sig. G2 (this text was to have been part of Tully's *Letter* but was omitted in error).

⁶⁶ Richard Baxter, *An answer to Dr Tullies angry letter*, London 1675 (printed with *Of the imputation of Christ's righteousness* in Wing B.1332), 1, 93. The exchange ended here, as Tully died in January 1676.

⁶⁷ These totals include some books already mentioned above. The burst of publications in 1675–6 may have related to another round of discussions over comprehension (see Thomas, 'Comprehension and indulgence', 216–21), but was more probably provoked by Sherlock and Bull.

⁶⁸ William Jenkyn, *Exodus, or The decease of holy men and ministers*, London 1675 (Wing J.638), 55.

John Standish attacked ‘false apostles and deceitful workers’ and their ‘great blasphemies and lesser criticisms’. Standish was a royal chaplain; his sermon was ‘published by his majesty’s command’ and reprinted – but, interestingly, his preface or dedication seems to have been suppressed. He preached a personal union with Christ, and condemned those

that would supplant Christian religion with natural theology, and turn the grace of God into a wanton notion of morality, that impiously deny both the Lord that bought them and his holy spirit that should seal them to the day of redemption, making reason, reason, reason their only Trinity ... that preach up natural and moral religion without the grace of God and faith in Christ.

He pleaded that authority would check their growing influence, and hoped to God ‘That we may never live to see our youth trained up in the [Socinian] Cracovian catechism.’⁶⁹

The two published sermons were answered by Robert Grove – who, interestingly, had earlier licensed Charles Gataker’s reply to Bull. Grove dealt mainly with the easier target, the Nonconformist Jenkyn, and blamed Dissenters for the accusation that conforming clergy ‘were deeply tainted with the Cracovian divinity’. It was just a polemical trick: ‘had he no other device to make the conformable clergy odious, no other expedient to fright the people from the Church and make them flock to his meeting house, but only by insinuating such unreasonable jealousies into their heads?’ Grove mocked the Nonconformists’ claim to orthodoxy: ‘They will not submit to the discipline, but they tell us they like the doctrine very well, and therefore would persuade us that they are the true sons of the Church.’ Standish was harder to deal with, and Grove could only deny his implied accusation of Socinianism and accuse him of disloyalty: Dissenters criticise, of course, ‘But when those that would be thought its greatest friends shall second these men in their unjust imputations, it is difficult to conceive what honest design they can have.’⁷⁰

The accusations of heresy brought Patrick back into the dispute, demanding that Standish should withdraw the charge or name names, ‘for the sake of your brethren of the clergy, who shall never be able to say anything against the enemies of our religion but presently the names of Socinians and Pelagians shall be cast in their teeth and a sermon of Mr J. Standish before the king shall be their voucher’. And if he could not identify the heretics, then he should be dismissed from his royal chaplaincy, ‘which he hath so notoriously abused’. Standish had simply

⁶⁹ John Standish, *A sermon preached before the king at White-Hall, Septemb. the 26th 1675*, London 1676 (Wing S.5215–6), 23–4, 25. In both editions the text begins at sig. A3, p. 5.

⁷⁰ Robert Grove, *A vindication of the conforming clergy from the unjust aspersions of heresie &c.*, London 1676 (Wing G.2161), 6, 28, 29, 60, 64.

betrayed the Church to the sectarians.⁷¹ Patrick also answered *Truth unveil'd*, which had indeed named names – Henry Hammond, Jeremy Taylor (‘Do you really intend to charge those great men with the crime of Socinianism?’), Parker, Bull, Sherlock and others. Against such heretics, the anonymous author had set ‘true, genuine Calvinism’ – ‘an Episcopal Calvinist is the rightest son or father of the Church of England, the best Protestant’ – but Patrick insisted ‘that the doctrine of this Church cannot be Calvinian’ (citing Samuel Harsnet, Richard Montagu, and Bull’s version of justifying faith). ‘Let us have no more discourses of “innovations” in our doctrine, no more “Truths Unveiled”, though you think yourself never so well acquainted with them, no more “Vindications”, nor mention of Mr Standish.’⁷² As it turned out, however, it was the conformists rather than the Nonconformists who fell silent.

From the Dissenters there was much more to come, first from the redoubtable John Owen in 1676 – an exposure of *The nature of apostasie*. He bewailed the sinister influence of Socinianism in the Church of England, under the disguise of rational religion, and the abandonment of key doctrines of reformed religion: ‘all those deviations from the truth which we have amongst us are emanations from that corrupt fountain’.⁷³ In *The doctrine of justification by faith through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ* (1677), Owen contested the slander that ‘those who assert it must be solifidians, antinomians, and I know not what’ and defended it as the authentic theology of the Church of England against objections that were actually or implicitly Socinian, Pelagian and popish.⁷⁴ John Troughton’s *Luther redivivus* pursued much the same argument, aiming ‘to lay open the true meaning of the opinion opposed, and to show it doth necessarily infer all the Arminian and many popish and Socinian points’. In a second volume he showed ‘the artifice wherewith the new doctrine of conditional justification is covered and made plausible, whereas it is indeed the old popish and Arminian doctrine of justification by works’.⁷⁵

⁷¹ [Simon Patrick], *An earnest request to Mr John Standish &c.*, London 1676 (Wing E.98A), 8, 11, 17; idem, ‘Brief account’, 466–7.

⁷² [Simon Patrick], *Falshood unmask’t, in answer to a book called Truth unveil’d*, London 1676 (Wing P.796), 4, 7, 8, 15, 21.

⁷³ John Owen, *The nature of apostasie from the profession of the gospel*, London 1676 (Wing O.773), 7–9, 166–7, 295.

⁷⁴ Idem, *The doctrine of justification by faith through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ explained, confirmed and vindicated*, London 1677 (Wing O.739), 95–6, 201, 229, 304, 366, 539–40.

⁷⁵ John Troughton, *Lutherus redivivus, or the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith only vindicated*, pt 1, London 1677 (Wing T.2314), sig. A4, and *Lutherus redivivus, or the Protestant doctrine of justification by Christ’s righteousness imputed to believers explained and vindicated*, pt 1, London 1678 (Wing T.2314A), 1–2.

Vincent Alsop repeated the assertion that Nonconformists held to the doctrine of the Church of England on major issues, and objected energetically that conformists got their *imprimatur* while Dissenters were silenced.⁷⁶ William Jenkyn's weightier Latin *Celeusma* (1679) replied to Grove's *Vindication*, meeting the conformist demand that the charge of heresy should be substantiated, and, despite Alsop's complaint, it appeared with an *imprimatur* from the bishop of London's chaplain. Jenkyn commended the conformists Standish and Tully for standing up for orthodoxy, but indicted many others for 'Pelagianism, Socinianism and Popery' – our usual suspects Bull, Patrick, Parker and Sherlock, as well as Herbert Thorndike, Jeremy Taylor and others. On a range of controversial matters, he paralleled 'dogmata orthodoxa Ecclesiae Anglicanae' with 'Heterodoxa novitorum posita', listing the guilty conformists who held each heresy.⁷⁷ Lewis du Moulin made the same case against much the same defendants, but in plain (if clumsy) English, protesting 'that the prevailing and most numerous party of that Church have been these twenty years endeavouring to make their advances towards Rome and have run themselves into Pelagianism and Socinianism, scoffing at and deriding those who get as far from Rome as they can in their doctrine and practice'.⁷⁸

If conformists faced the accusation of Socinianism, Dissenters had to counter that of antinomianism. John Owen had tried, though usually by angry dismissal rather than argument. But it was attempted with some care in 1680 by the Independent minister Stephen Lobb, who was anxious to assert the theological necessity of repentance. He argued, citing Crisp, that antinomians held that in justification the elect become holy by Christ's holiness so they retained no sin to be repented. Lobb agreed that Christ's righteousness removed the guilt of sin, but not the filth of it, so there remained a need for repentance. It was an abuse of the doctrine of free grace to say otherwise. But when his book was published, it was suggested 'that the truths therein contained are not such as have been embraced by Dr Owen and the generality of the Congregational, these worthy persons, as is said, differing very little from Dr Crisp'. So Lobb got Owen to write a preface for a second edition endorsing its assertions, and, though Owen was rather cautious in doing so, Lobb represented this edition as clearing 'the Congregational' from suspicion.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ [Vincent Alsop], *Melius inquirendum, or a sober inquiry into the reasoning of the serious inquiry* (1678), London 1679 (Wing A.2915), sig. A4.

⁷⁷ William Jenkyn, *Celeusma, seu clamor ad theologos hierarchiae Anglicanae*, London 1679 (Wing J.634), 31–2 and passim.

⁷⁸ Lewis Du Moulin, *A short and true account of the several advances the Church of England hath made towards Rome*, London 1680 (Wing D.3553), 31.

⁷⁹ [Stephen Lobb], *The glory of free grace display'd*, London 1680 (Wing L.2724B), 33–6, 48–52; idem, *The glory of free grace display'd ... wherein 1. The followers of Dr Crisp are prov'd to be abusers of the true gospel-action of free grace; and 2. The Congregational*

But *Paulus redivivus*, another defence of free grace, may have damaged the cause, since it defended the theology of ‘that most worthy and reverend divine Tobias Crisp’ and to suspicious conformists it surely reeked of antinomianism.⁸⁰

The biggest conformist guns were quiet until 1680, when Jenkyn and Du Moulin could not be ignored. In the meantime, lesser figures maintained the case against solifidianism and strict imputation. Thomas Hotchkis, who for forty years had been rector of Stanton Fitzwarren in Wiltshire, published three books against ‘the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to us and our sins to him’, declaring that the doctrine was inherently antinomian. In 1675 he had denounced Owen’s view as ‘tending towards antinomianism’ or ‘a branch of antinomianism’, and in 1678 he affirmed that Troughton’s *Luther redivivus* should have been entitled ‘Crispus Redivivus’, and denied that his own position was Socinian.⁸¹ When Owen haughtily dismissed Hotchkis as ‘of an inferior condition’ and his views as hardly worth disputing, Hotchkis was stung to write another fifty-odd pages in reply – ‘What, though this Hotchkis be a person of an inferior condition, *e vulgo cleri*, an obscure country minister? Is he therefore in account no person at all?’ – and to recruit Baxter and Sir Charles Wolseley, baronet, to his cause.⁸² William Allen also wrote against strict imputation as leading to libertinism. He had seen enough of antinomians in the 1650s, having been one himself. Now he knew that both individual effort and God’s grace were necessary to justification: ‘This, I doubt not, is the truth which lies in the middle way between the two contrary extremes of Pelagianism and the opinion of irresistible grace on the other’.⁸³

Henry Hesketh, vicar of St Helen’s Bishopsgate, published a more wide-ranging response to Nonconformist critics in 1680. He attacked *Anti-Sozzo*, *Melius inquirendum*, the *Friendly debate between Satan and Sherlock*, *Celeusma*, and Du Moulin: ‘Could that perfidious, doting, exiled Frenchman have

cleared from the reproach of being asserters of such errors as are found in Dr Crisp’s writings, as appears by the prefix’d epistle of Dr Owen, London 1680 (Wing L.2724A), postscript, sig. a2.

⁸⁰ John Humphrys, *Paulus redivivus, or speculum speculativum euaggeliou, or the two covenants of works and grace and the three administrations of the covenant of grace*, London 1680 (Wing H.369g), sig. A2. This was not the Presbyterian John Humfrey.

⁸¹ Thomas Hotchkis, *A discourse concerning the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to us and our sins to him*, London 1675 (Wing H.2890), sig. A3, 18, 144, 169, 215, and *The second part of a discourse concerning imputed righteousness*, London 1678 (Wing H.2893), sig. e4. Hotchkis associated strict imputation with ‘my Dissenting brethren’.

⁸² Owen, *Doctrine of justification by faith*, 50–2; Thomas Hotchkis, *A postscript, containing the author’s vindication of himself and doctrine*, London 1678 (Wing H.2891A), 49, 51; Charles Wolseley, *Justification evangelical, or a plain, impartial, scripture account of God’s method in justifying a sinner*, London 1677 (Wing W.3308).

⁸³ William Allen, *The Christian’s justification stated*, London 1678 (Wing A.1057), sig. A4, and *A discourse of divine assistance and the method thereof*, London 1679 (Wing A.1059), sigs *-*2.

ever espied and reported such advances of the Church of England to popery had not himself made greater advances towards frenzy or knavery?’ Such authors twisted the words and meaning of conformists by ‘partiality and prejudice’: ‘Could any honest-hearted man that sincerely read over an excellent book called *The Design of Christianity* ever have traduced it as a plain undermining the purpose of the gospel?’ Doctrine should be judged, he argued, by its ‘conduciveness to holiness or vice’: ‘And by this may all the antinomian errors, which I take to be but the tenets of the old Gnostics newly revived, and all such wild opinions about faith and justification by it, etc, to be clearly discerned and judged too.’⁸⁴

The formal (and rather elegant) Latin answer to Jenkyn’s *Celeusma* came from Robert Grove in 1680. The allegation of deviationism was nonsense, Grove declared. Why did Jenkyn accuse the conformists of Pelagianism, when none of them taught anything on divine grace and original sin contrary to the Articles? Why did he accuse them of Socinianism, when none denied the Trinity or Christ’s sacrifice? And why did he accuse them of papistry when all reject papal supremacy, infallibility, transubstantiation and the rest of Rome’s errors?⁸⁵ In the same year, Fowler returned to the fray. His *Libertas evangelica* was only obliquely related to justification, but it sat within that polemical context. Fowler said that it was primarily directed against the errors of the papists (‘and not, at this time, without good reason’), but three-quarters of the book dealt with ways in which the idea of Christian liberty was misused by Nonconformists. As in his *Design*, he was concerned to show that Christianity was about moral living, and Christ’s death had not freed men from the obligations of the moral law (‘the doctrine of the antinomians’) or laws regulating religion (the ‘fanatical’ version).⁸⁶ Against the Nonconformist barrage on justification, however, these were pretty low-key responses.

The campaign to brand justification by faith as antinomian and fix it on Nonconformists had run out of steam. This may have owed something to divisions within conformist ranks, shown by Tully’s attack on Bull, Standish’s implied defence of Owen against Sherlock and, perhaps more significantly, the *imprimatur* for *Celeusma* issued in January 1678. Later that year, Bishop Barlow of Lincoln was threatening to discipline any of his clergy who taught justification by works, and asserting strict imputation

⁸⁴ Henry Hesketh, *Piety the best rule of orthodoxy*, London 1680 (Wing H.1613), 98–100, 115.

⁸⁵ Robert Grove, *Responsio ad nuperum libellum qui inscribitur Celeusma*, London 1680 (Wing G.2157), 3, 4–5, 57. The exchange continued with William Jenkyn, *Refutatio cujusdam scripti hoc insignati lammate Roberti Grovii responsio*, London 1681 (Wing J.650A), and Robert Grove, *Defensio suae responsionis*, London 1681 (Wing G.2150).

⁸⁶ Edward Fowler, *Libertas evangelica, or a discourse of Christian liberty: being a farther pursuance of the argument of The design of Christianity*, London 1680 (Wing F.1709), sig. A4, 144–5, 147, 164–5, 176.

'against the contrary doctrine of Racovia and Rome, papists and Socinians'.⁸⁷ The accusation of apostasy and heresy mounted by Owen, Jenkyn and Standish had certainly shifted the terms of debate, and Patrick, Hesketh and Grove were on the defensive. But it was surely the political rather than the polemical context that made the difference: the Popish Plot furore, which exploded in the autumn of 1678, and fears of the succession of a Catholic monarch. Now the conformist emphasis shifted from widening the breach with Dissenters to persuading them back into the Church of England. Edward Fowler noted 'what excellent treatises have of late been published ... to persuade our brethren of the separation to ease us in a great measure of our fears of popery or confusion by returning to the communion of that Church wherein most of them were baptised'.⁸⁸

Alongside the new claim that Dissenters had a different (and dangerous) divinity (so should not be readmitted to the Church by a comprehension), other (usually more Calvinist) conformists had accepted that there was a shared Protestant identity—but that meant that separation was schism from an orthodox Church. This assertion had particular potency after 1672, when the Declaration of Indulgence had allowed Nonconformists their own meetings. Shared doctrine was not enough: 'I answer, the question is concerning their schism, and this, none doubt, may be found where true doctrine in other points is maintained. Schism is an error in practice, not in doctrine.'⁸⁹ Thus Francis Fullwood in 1672, and John Sharp, Robert Conold and William Jane agreed: separation was 'a schism in its own nature and sinful in itself'.⁹⁰ The accusation of breach of unity was another stick to beat the Nonconformists, but as the perceived threat from popery mounted in the late 1670s it became the basis of a plea for Protestant union. Allen directed his 1679 *Friendly call* 'to those who ... through over-nice scruples cause a schism and rent in its seamless garment': 'See I beseech you now if it be not your interest to close with those of the

⁸⁷ *Two letters written by the Right Reverend Dr Thomas Barlow, late lord bishop of Lincoln, concerning justification by faith only* [ed. R. Mayo], London 1701, 1, 22–3, 132–3. For some evidence of divisions within the hierarchy of the Church of England see Nicholas Tyacke, *Aspects of English Protestantism c.1530–1700*, Manchester 2001, 296–9, 323–7.

⁸⁸ Fowler, *Libertas evangelica*, 191. For the political context see H. Horwitz, 'Protestant reconciliation in the Exclusion Crisis', this JOURNAL xv (1964), 201–17.

⁸⁹ [Francis Fullwood], *Toleration not to be abused*, London 1672 (Wing F.2518), 12.

⁹⁰ [Idem], *The doctrine of schism fully opened and applied to gathered churches*, London 1672 (Wing F.2501A), 44; Sharp, *The things that make for peace*, Robert Conold, *The notion of schism stated*, London 1676 (Wing C.5891); [William Jane], *The present separation self-condemned and proved to be schism*, London 1678 (Wing J.454). See John Spurr, 'Schism and the Restoration Church', this JOURNAL xli (1990), 408–24.

Church of England against your common enemy of Rome, and if it be not now most seasonable to effect it.⁹¹

The need for Protestant union was the occasion and theme of Edward Stillingfleet's notorious 1680 sermon *The mischief of separation*: 'a matter of so great moment to the peace and preservation of this Church, and consequently of the Protestant religion among us, which I never expect to survive the destruction of the Church of England'.⁹² *A word in season* made the same point:

The papists are our greatest and most dreaded adversaries. Now if we may take our measures from the enemies' own maxim, divide and reign, union is the most likely way to our preservation. And since unity and conformity to the established Church is the proper means and required of all by law, why should we hazard all and resolve to see the utmost of the game rather than yield obedience to that law?⁹³

Why risk separation when there is safety in union? William Hughes and Francis Brokesby both advanced agreement on doctrine as the basis for reunion, and Hughes even advocated concessions to Dissenters to get it.⁹⁴ So erstwhile antinomians and libertines were now 'dissenting brethren', 'my brethren of the separation' and 'friends'.⁹⁵

When Nonconformists in the late 1660s had claimed unity in doctrine with the Church of England as a reason for comprehension and/or toleration, Patrick and Parker and Fowler and Bull had soon denied any such thing – and so had others later. The tactic was to drive Nonconformists away rather than invite them in. But when a group of London clergy got together in 1683 to write a series of short texts directed at Dissenters, there was an emphasis on unity against popery. Grove, Sharp, Clagett, Thomas Tension and others pleaded for 'the firm union of the whole Protestant profession'.⁹⁶ Fowler argued for the authentic Protestantism of the Church of England, and warned against 'the advantage that our common enemy is too like to make of our sad divisions'. When a dissenting

⁹¹ [William Allen], *A friendly call or a seasonable perswasive to unity*, London 1679 (Wing A.1064), 2, 60.

⁹² Edward Stillingfleet, *The mischief of separation: a sermon preached at Guild-Hall Chappel*, London 1680 (Wing S.5604), 23, and *The unreasonableness of separation*, London 1681 (2nd edn corrected, Wing S.5676), pp. xi–xxxv, xxxix. For Stillingfleet's sermon and the response to it see R.A. Beddard, 'Vincent Alsop and the emancipation of Restoration dissent', this JOURNAL xxiv (1973), 163–8.

⁹³ Anon., *A word in season for Christian union*, London 1680 (Wing W.3546), 3, 4, 6, 8.

⁹⁴ [William Hughes], *An endeavour for peace among Protestants*, London 1680 (Wing H.3341), 16–17, 19; [Francis Brokesby], *A perswasive to reformation and union*, London 1680 (Wing B.4844), 20.

⁹⁵ Anon., *A word in season*, 4, 6, 8; [Brokesby], *A perswasive*, 18.

⁹⁶ *A collection of cases and other discourses lately written to recover Dissenters to the communion of the Church of England: by some divines of the city of London*, London 1685 (Wing C.5114–15), i (1), 1–2; i (8, pt II), 96; ii (1), 44; ii (11), 19, 40; ii (12), 32.

critic claimed that some clergy were not as Protestant as the Thirty-Nine Articles, he played down differences on justification: ‘Sir, to deal freely with you, I cannot but wonder at your adventuring into the world this other *Celeusma*.’⁹⁷ Patrick and Sherlock now directed their fire against papists rather than fellow-Protestants, and Clagett now wrote against both.⁹⁸

Nonconformists beat the drum for unity too, though not for unity by uniformity. Owen once more declared that Dissenters shared the essential doctrines of the Church of England:

And whereas the Nonconformists do agree in religion with all the sober Protestant people of the nation, which is the Church of England, they do suppose that ordinary prudence would advise unto a forbearance of them in those few things wherein they dissent ... Who knows not that the present danger of this nation is from popery and the endeavours that are used to introduce it and enthrone it, or give it power and authority among us.⁹⁹

But Owen and others distinguished between agreeing with the historic doctrine of the Church of England and agreeing with some of its clergy: ‘The Dissenters generally agree with that book which is commonly called the 39 Articles, ... but then they are far from agreement with the leading clergymen of this generation.’ They noted differences in doctrine within the Church of England, and argued that this justified their separation: ‘I do not judge that any man is or can be obliged unto constant total communion with any Church, ... wherein there are incurable dissensions about important doctrines of the gospel.’¹⁰⁰ But times and tones had changed: Nonconformists too were stressing ideological alliance, and the ministers of the Church of England were no longer denounced for popery, Pelagianism and Socinianism. ‘This is a time wherein the agreement of all Protestants, so far as they have attained, is made more than ordinarily

⁹⁷ *Collection of cases*, ii (3), 53; ii (4), 10–11; Anon., *A modest examination of this case of conscience*, London 1683 (Wing M.2364), 5–9. Of twenty-three contributions to the *Collection of cases*, only one suggested that ‘the notion or explication’ of doctrine by conformists and Nonconformists might be different: ii (9), 16.

⁹⁸ Simon Patrick, *A discourse about tradition*, London 1683 (Wing P.787); [William Sherlock], *The Protestant resolution of faith*, London 1683 (Wing S.3233A); [William Clagett], *The difference of the case between the separation of Protestants from the Church of Rome and the separation of Dissenters from the Church of England*, London 1683 (Wing C.4377).

⁹⁹ John Owen, *A brief vindication of the non-conformists from the charge of schism as it was managed against them in a sermon preached before the lord mayor by Dr Stillingfleet, dean of St Paul’s*, London 1680 (Wing O.723), 1.

¹⁰⁰ [Vincent Alsop], *The mischief of impositions, or an antidote against a late discourse*, London 1680 (Wing A.2917), sig. C2; John Owen, *An enquiry into the original, nature, institution, power, order and communion of evangelical Churches*, London 1681 (Wing O.764), pt II, 186–7, 195–6, 215–18; Anon., *A modest examination*, 7–8.

necessary', said Dissenters.¹⁰¹ The timing and even the content of Richard Baxter's 'theological wars' had been determined by the politics of religion, and for the time being the wars were over.

¹⁰¹ Owen, *A brief vindication of the non-conformists*, 1.