

PART I

**THOMAS GRANTHAM'S
VIEW OF SALVATION**



And He Himself is the propitiation
for our sins, and not for ours only but
also for the whole world.

1 John 2:2

THOMAS GRANTHAM'S THEOLOGY OF THE ATONEMENT AND JUSTIFICATION



J. Matthew Pinson, Ed.D.

*Dr. Pinson is President of Free Will Baptist Bible College
in Nashville, Tennessee.*

Introduction

Thomas Grantham, the foremost English General Baptist of the latter half of the seventeenth century, is the quintessential representative of Arminian Baptist theology, combining classical Arminian soteriology with a distinctly Baptist view of church and state.¹ To say, however, that Grantham's or his General Baptist contemporaries' soteriology was Arminian requires much qualification. This is not because it differed exceedingly from Arminius's own soteriology, but because of the shape Arminian theology took in the early part of the seventeenth century and in the centuries that followed. A study of Grantham's theology of the atonement and justification serves not only to enable one to understand the nuances of that unique Arminian Baptist stream of theology, but also to help one grasp the diversity of Arminianism (or, as some have quipped, "Arminianisms"²) as a theological phenomenon.

To study Grantham's views in the context of the whole of Arminian theology prior to him would be a daunting task.³ But to examine them in the context of a representative English

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

²See J. I. Packer, "Arminianisms," in *The Collected Shorter Writings of J. I. Packer*, vol. 4, (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1999). In his insightful essay, Packer is right to posit several "Arminianisms," and to see the differences between Remonstrant and Wesleyan Arminianism. However, he posits all Arminianism as having rejected the doctrine of a penal satisfaction view of atonement and justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ alone.

³The purpose of this essay is not to discuss the five points of Calvinism or the five articles of the Remonstrance, but rather to point up the divergencies that can and do occur within Arminianism. It will be assumed, for the purposes of this essay, that all Arminians disagree with at least the last four of the five points of Calvinism: unconditional election, particular atonement, irresistible grace, and the unconditional perseverance of the saints.

Arminian in the half-century that preceded Grantham would serve at least two purposes. It would not only uncover Grantham's unique middle ground between orthodox Calvinism and what has come to be known as Arminianism since the time of Arminius, but it would also serve as a starting point for the discussion of doctrinal Arminianism in the seventeenth and succeeding centuries. Thus this study will comprise an exposition of Grantham's doctrines of atonement and justification with reference to John Goodwin (d. 1665), the Arminian Puritan.⁴

Thomas Grantham

Thomas Grantham was born in 1634 in Halton, near Spilsby, in eastern Lincolnshire, the son of a farmer and tailor.⁵ Grantham made his living, like his father, as a tailor and farmer. Grantham recalled that the "Lord wrought faith and repentance" in his heart when he was around fourteen or fifteen years of age, and at age nineteen (1653), he joined a small General Baptist church in Boston, Lincolnshire, and was baptized by immersion, as had been the practice of the General Baptists since approximately 1640. Three years after his baptism, in 1656, Grantham was chosen as pastor, which involved him in preaching in his own town as well as neighboring villages. This activity brought persecution upon Grantham and others.

In 1660, after the restoration of the monarchy, Grantham and a fellow believer, Joseph Wright, presented a plea for toleration to King Charles II. This plea included a statement of General Baptist loyalty to the crown as well as a confession of faith, which later become known as *The Standard Confession, 1660*. (Grantham subsequently reprinted it with annotations in his *Christianismus Primitivus*.) The crown was not receptive, and many General Baptist leaders soon found themselves imprisoned. Grantham himself was in and out of jail during the 1660s, which occasioned his tract *The Prisoner Against the Prelate* (1662). In 1666 he was elected a messenger "by the consent of many congregations, and ordained . . . by those who were in the same office before [him]," in essence a roving minister who helped plant churches, gave counsel to local churches and associations, and

⁴The best general treatment of Grantham is Clint C. Bass's masterful monograph, *Thomas Grantham (1633-1692) and General Baptist Theology* (Oxford, UK: Centre for Baptist History and Heritage, 2012). The general nature of his book does not permit his delving into Grantham's thought on atonement, which is the chief concern of this essay. However, he correctly understands that Grantham viewed justification as the imputation of the active and passive obedience of Christ to the believer (see pp. 169-71). While I think Bass misinterprets Grantham as having a more optimistic anthropology than he actually does regarding human reason, depravity, and free will (see pp. 151-64), Bass is quick to note significant differences between Grantham and the other Arminians of his day. I believe that, despite Grantham's anti-predestinarianism, his anthropology is quite pessimistic, like Arminius's, and closer to the Reformed thought of his day than to that of most other Arminians. Despite these nuances, Bass's volume is stellar.

⁵The biographical information in the next three paragraphs is based on Samuel Edward Hester, "Advancing Christianity to Its Primitive Excellency: The Quest of Thomas Grantham, Early English General Baptist (1634-1692)" (Th.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1977), 9-32.

assisted in the ordination of ministers. Grantham then began to establish himself as an author, debater, and pamphleteer. He debated Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Quakers, Presbyterians, and Particular Baptists, and gained a reputation as an able and articulate spokesman for the General Baptists. His most monumental work was *Christianismus Primitivus, or, the Ancient Christian Religion*, published in 1678, of which the eminent General Baptist historian Adam Taylor said: “From the universal approbation it received, [it] may be considered almost a public document.”⁶ In this massive work, Grantham aimed to restore primitive Christianity, which he said had been abused and neglected for centuries. Like Grantham’s other works, *Christianismus Primitivus* is the product of a well read theologian who cited numerous contemporary authors but relied primarily on the Bible and the church fathers.

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

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

Grantham’s theology can accurately be described as Arminian because it was strikingly similar to the soteriology of Jacobus Arminius. But Grantham was not fond of the label “Arminian,” just as he did not like the title “Anabaptist,” not because he was unsympathetic with either of these doctrinal positions, but because of the negative connotations attached to these names. While “Anabaptist” conjured up images of raving revolutionaries at Munster, “Arminian” invoked notions of semi-pelagianism (if not outright Pelagianism),⁷ works-righteousness, synergism, Romanism, rationalism, and even Socinianism. Grantham lamented that he was accused of

⁶Cited in David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America and Other Parts of the World* (New York: Lewis Colby and Company, 1850), 334.

⁷For a discussion of the Pelagian tendencies John Smyth took from the Dutch Waterlander Mennonites, and which Thomas Helwys rejected, see J. Matthew Pinson, “Sin and Redemption in the Theology of John Smyth and Thomas Helwys,” (paper presented at the Theological Symposium of the Commission for Theological Integrity, National Association of Free Will Baptists, 2004), 13-29. Cf. Alvin J. Beachy, *The Concept of Grace in the Radical Reformation* (Nieuwkoop: B. De Graaf, 1977).

preaching “Arminianism, the life and Soul of Popery.” Yet in another place, in a polemic against the “dangerous and impious Doctrines of those of Calvin’s Way,” he asserted the “purity of the Doctrine of those called Arminians, concerning the sinful Acts of Men.”⁸

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

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

John Goodwin

The distinctiveness of Grantham’s soteriology becomes most evident when contrasted with that of the better known English Arminian, John Goodwin.⁹ While Grantham and Goodwin were both known as Arminians, they were far apart on many issues. Grantham was more radical than Goodwin on matters of ecclesiology, yet Goodwin moved much further from Calvinist orthodoxy than Grantham did. Goodwin was the chief advocate of what has been referred to as the “New Arminianism” or “Radical Arminianism” which took root during the Cromwellian era. Though some scholars have assumed that Goodwin’s soteriology exerted great influence over other Arminian sectaries, such as the General Baptists, a comparison of the thought of Grantham and Goodwin demonstrates the inaccuracy of this assumption.¹⁰

⁸Thomas Grantham, *A Dialogue Between the Baptist and the Presbyterian* (London, 1691), 27; *The Infants Advocate* (London, 1688), 2.

⁹The best treatment of Goodwin is John Coffey, *John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution: Religion and Intellectual Change in Seventeenth-Century England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell and Brewer, 2006).

¹⁰Cf. Ellen More, “John Goodwin and the Origins of the New Arminianism,” *The Journal of British Studies* 22 (Fall 1982), 52.

Goodwin was educated at Queens' College, Cambridge, and had by 1633 become vicar of St. Stephen's, Coleman Street, London. By this time, Goodwin had become an Independent, under the influence of John Cotton, and from his pulpit at St. Stephen's, Goodwin proclaimed his gospel of nonconformity combined with Arminianism. Precisely when Goodwin embraced anti-Calvinism is a matter of debate, but his magisterial *Imputatio Fidei* (1642) betrayed an understanding of atonement and justification that had moved a great distance from Reformed orthodoxy and even beyond Arminius himself and was much like that of Hugo Grotius. If Goodwin was not a full-blown Arminian when he wrote *Imputatio Fidei*, he was certainly thought to be one by the more strident Calvinists of the period. Indeed, Thomas Edwards, in his *Gangraena* (1646), described Goodwin as "a monstrous sectary, a compound of Socinianism, Arminianism, antinomianism, independency, popery, yea and of scepticism."¹¹ At any rate, Goodwin outlined a fully-developed anti-Calvinism in his 1651 work, *Redemption Redeemed*.¹²

Goodwin is best known as a controversialist, in matters not only theological and ecclesial, but also political. As the historian Edmund Calamy said, Goodwin "was a man by himself, was against every man, and had every man against him."¹³ Goodwin's ecclesiological stance was radical enough to result in his ejection from his living in May 1645 for refusing to administer infant baptism indiscriminately. (Though he continued to serve a gathered congregation at Coleman Street). His political views were perhaps even more radical. These opinions were reflected in such works as *Anti-Cavalierisme* (1642) and *Ossorianum* (1643), which attacked the divine right of kings. He was a stringent supporter of Cromwell, and he applauded Pride's Purge in a 1648 work, *Right and Might Well Met*. Because of his political affiliations, Goodwin was arrested in June of 1660 but was soon exonerated. He continued his activity as a vibrant preacher and prolific writer until his death in 1665.

Goodwin's legacy to later Arminian theology was mediated through John Wesley. Wesley, who made positive numerous references to Goodwin in his works, republished Goodwin's *Imputatio Fidei* in 1765. Goodwin probably had more influence on Wesley's doctrine of justification in the last thirty years of Wesley's life than any other single thinker, as is evidenced by his preface to Goodwin's treatise.¹⁴

¹¹*Dictionary of National Biography*, 22.145.

¹²A new edition of this work was recently published: John Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed: A Puritan Defense of Unlimited Atonement*, ed. John Wagner (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2001).

¹³*Dictionary of National Biography*, 22.146.

¹⁴Goodwin's influence on Wesley, though profound, seems to be later in his life. His earlier influences seem to be more from Anglican Arminianism, including authors such as Jeremy Taylor and William Cave, as well as Hugo Grotius. For more on Wesley's doctrine of atonement and justification, see J. Matthew Pinson, "Atonement, Justification, and Apostasy in the Thought of John Wesley." *Integrity: A Journal of Christian Thought* 4 (2008): 73-92.

Grantham on Atonement and Justification

It goes without saying that Grantham and Goodwin, as Arminians, held fervently to a general atonement; this theme resounds throughout both men's works. Grantham, for example, argues:

When we are bid to behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the Sins of the World, John I. 29. Are we to except any Person in the World, or the greatest part of the World? God forbid. Are they all become guilty *per force* (except *Adam*) and have none to justify them? Where is then the *Lamb*? Behold here is Fire, the Wood, and the Knife, but where is the Sacrifice, may many say, if indeed the Lamb of God died not for them? But the Holy Ghost resolves the Query to the full, I John 2. 2. *He is the Propitiation for our Sins, and not for ours only, but also the for Sins of the whole World.*¹⁵

The crucial differences between Grantham and other English Arminians of his day arose, not with regard to the extent of the atonement, but rather with respect to the nature of the atonement, and, consequently, the character of justification. Grantham aligned himself with the Reformers and with Arminius.¹⁶

As a Reformed theologian, Arminius had taught that God must punish sin with eternal death unless one meets the requirement of total righteousness. God is portrayed as a judge who must sentence individuals to eternal death if they do not meet his righteous requirements. In typical Reformed fashion, Arminius employed the analogy of “a judge making an estimate in his own mind of the deed and of the author of it, and according to that estimate forming a judgment and pronouncing sentence.”¹⁷ The sentence pronounced on the sinner who cannot meet the requirements of God's justice is eternal death. Yet, since no one has this righteousness, it must originate from someone else. It can come only from Christ, who undergoes the penalty for sin on the cross, paying “the price of redemption for sins by suffering the punishment due to them.”¹⁸ For Arminius, this emphasis on justice does not militate against God's mercy, as some later Arminians held. God never had to offer Christ for the redemption of humanity in the first place. If God had not made a way of satisfaction for his justice (through mercy), *then*, Arminius says, humanity would have truly been judged according to God's “severe and rigid estimation.”¹⁹ This view has been called the penal satisfaction theory of atonement, and these were Grantham's sentiments exactly.

¹⁵Thomas Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus* (London, 1678), Book II, 63.

¹⁶For more on Arminius's theology of atonement and justification, see J. Matthew Pinson, “The Nature of Atonement in the Theology of Jacobus Arminius,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 53 (2010): 173-85; and J. Matthew Pinson, “Will The Real Arminius Please Stand Up? A Study of the Theology of Jacobus Arminius in Light of His Interpreters,” *Integrity: A Journal of Christian Thought* 2 (2003): 121–39.

¹⁷Jacobus Arminius, *The Works of James Arminius* (Nashville: Randall House, 2007), 2:256.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 1:419.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

Grantham's doctrine of atonement is rooted in his perspective on the justice and righteousness of God. Grantham believed that God's righteousness is not merely something to be posited of him but is in his essence as God. Justice is "essential to him . . . without which he would cease to be God."²⁰ While justice and righteousness in human beings is "mutable," not being a part of their being or essence, in God, "to be righteous, is the same as to be God, and therefore he is called Righteousness itself, *the Lord our Righteousness*. Like as it is said, *God dwelleth in the Light*, so it is as truly said, *That God is Light, and in him is no Darkness at all*, I John I. 5."²¹

God's essential justice evidences itself in the righteous "Judgment which he executeth" against people for their sin.²² According to Grantham, an accurate understanding of God's justice and righteousness enables one to see the serious nature of sin, the intensity of divine wrath against it, and the necessity that it be punished. When one comprehends the chasm between God's justice and righteousness and humanity's sinfulness, and the latter's "dreadful Nature and Effects," only then can one understand the need for atonement and for the gospel.²³ "To see Sin to be exceeding sinful," Grantham avers, "is an excellent Introduction to Christianity, and so necessary, that the internal part thereof is not rightly founded without it."²⁴

Grantham understands the need for atonement in the context of the "condemning Power and Curse of the Law" over sinners.²⁵ "The whole World stands Guilty" before the law, which makes it "subject to the judgment of God."²⁶ Grantham distinguishes between two sorts of righteousness: human beings' own futile attempts to obey the law and the "Righteousness of God." In this vein he cites Philippians 3.9 and Romans 3.21: "*And be found in him, not having on my own Righteousness which is of the Law, but that which is through the Faith of Christ, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith*. Again, *The Righteousness of God without the Law, is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets*."²⁷ Since people were unable to fulfill the

²⁰*Christianismus Primitivus*, Book II, 46.

²¹*Ibid.*, 46-47.

²²*Ibid.*, 46.

²³*Ibid.*, 80.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵*Ibid.*, 62. Grantham states that Christ's death was "the Punishment due for our Sin, with the condemning Power and Curse of the Law" (62).

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷*Ibid.*, 67. "So then, we see there is a Law, by which the whole World stands Guilty; and upon that account subject to the judgment of God" (*Ibid.*, 62).

law, Christ fulfilled it for them. He “cancelled the Law, which stood as an hand-writing against us, and was contrary to us, nailing it to the Cross of Christ. And hath manifested, or shewed forth a way to be made Righteous, without the Law; yea, by which we may be justified from all things, from which we could not be justified by the Law.”²⁸ According to Grantham, the only way to keep the handwriting of the law from being held against believers was for Christ to fulfill the law in their place: “Nor can I see to what end Christ did so exactly fulfil the Law, if he did it not for us, or in our stead: and so is the end of the Law for Righteousness to every one that believeth, Rom. 10. For though it is true, he was born under the Law, and so stood bound to keep the Law, yet for our sakes he was so born; and so consequently all that he did in that capacity, was on our account also, as well as his Sufferings.”²⁹

In *St. Paul's Catechism*, Grantham, in a discussion of justification, explains the nature of atonement to clarify why the righteousness of Christ must be imputed to individuals for them to be justified. His reasoning is almost identical to that of Arminius: “God having made a Righteous Law, it must be fulfilled; and none was able to do this but Christ, and he did fulfil it in our behalf. *Heb. 10.5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Psal. 4.5, 6, 7.* and thus the Righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in the Children of God, because Christ's righteousness is made theirs through believing. *Rom. 10.3, 4. Phil 3.9.*”³⁰ Grantham taught that, since no one could satisfy God the judge's requirement of absolute righteousness, the only way for individuals to be freed from the penalty of sin and justified before God was for God to provide a righteousness by which people could be saved and to suffer the penalty for their sins. “The justice of God cried against us for Sin committed; and Sin must be purged by the Blood of Christ; He bare our sins, that is, the punishment of our Sins, in his own Body on the Tree, I Pet. 2.24.”³¹

Grantham summarized his theology of atonement in the title of Section V in book two, chapter three of *Christianismus Primitivus*, which reads, “According to the Will of God, and his Eternal Wisdom, Christ did, in the place and stead of Mankind, fulfil that Law, by which the whole World stood guilty before God.”³² In this section Grantham explained “how deeply Mankind stood indebted to the Righteous God of Heaven and Earth, and how unable he was to pay that score; and how consequently he must inevitably undergo the eternal displeasure of God, with the malediction of his

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid. In typical Reformed fashion, Grantham comments that Christ's fulfillment of the Law does not take away the responsibility of his people to submit to it and conform to it (Ibid.).

³⁰Thomas Grantham, *St. Paul's Catechism: Or, A Brief Explication of the Six Principles of the Christian Religion, as recorded Heb. 6.1,2* (London, 1687), 28.

³¹Ibid.

³²Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, Book II, 62.

Righteous Law.”³³ Humanity is subject to the harsh judgment and wrath of God, says Grantham, on account of “fall[ing] short” of the Law of God. Yet God in his wisdom has “designed to magnifie his Mercy in Christ, as the only Physician to Cure the Malady of Mankind,” providing a

Plaister commensurable with the Sore, that none may cry out and say, I am undone, I am wounded with the unavoidable wound of Mankind: And there is no Balm for me, the Physician hath made the Plaister so narrow, that Thousands, and ten Thousands, cannot possibly have Healing by it; nay, he hath determined to see us perish without Remedy. Alas! there is none to save us, neither could we come whole and sound into the World; we are born to be destroyed, and destroyed we must be. To quell which hideous (and indeed most just) complaint . . . we are bid to behold the Lamb of God.³⁴

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

Because, for Grantham, the essence of the atonement is Christ’s fulfilling the law and taking on himself “the Punishment due for our Sin,”³⁵ he goes into great depth eschewing a moral influence view of atonement, which was popular among the Socinians of his day. “How it cometh to pass, that any should take the Righteousness of Christ’s Performances, or actual Obedience, to be designed by God only as an excellent Pattern, or Examble to Men, is not easie to conceive.”³⁶ One can see between the lines of Grantham’s discussion an interaction with the merit-theology of the Council of Trent. Christ alone can be called our righteousness, Grantham argues, not the saints. Yet if the righteousness of Christ consists merely in his being our example or pattern, then the saints’ pattern or example could suffice. “Now if Christ should be called our Righteousness only because he is our Pattern,” Grantham argued, “he alone could not be called our Pattern; and consequently, he alone would not be called our Righteousness. But seeing Christ, and Christ alone, may truly be said to be our Righteousness, Jer. 23. 6. We must therefore look upon his Righteousness to be of far greater Concernment to us, than the Righteousness of the most holy Saint that ever yet lived.”³⁷ Grantham believed that it is “easie to demonstrate the Transcendent Advantages that accrue to us from his Righteousness, and from his only: For where are we bid to look to the Saints for Righteousness? Or where are they said to be made of God unto us Righteousness? But unto Christ we are thus directed. . . .”³⁸

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., 63.

³⁵Ibid., 62.

³⁶Ibid., 66.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid. “Thus then the whole World being found guilty before God, could not, by any Righteousness which they have done, lift themselves out of that state of Sin and Misery; wherefore God, in the greatness of his love to Mankind, hath laid help upon One that is mighty to save; who brings near his Righteousness, to

Grantham held that there are two aspects of atonement, passive and active obedience. Passive obedience refers to Christ's submission to the wrath of God for the sins of humanity—the satisfaction of the penalty for sin—while active obedience refers to Christ's satisfaction of the justice of God in meeting the standards of God's righteous law. Christ obeys God the Father passively through his death on the cross to satisfy the penalty for the violation of God's law. Christ obeys God the Father actively by fulfilling the righteous law in a sinless life. Grantham noted that “it is true, he was born under the Law, and so stood bound to keep the Law, yet for our sakes he was so born; and consequently all that he did in that capacity [active obedience], was on our account also, as well as his Sufferings [passive obedience]: For the Transgressions committed against the Law, was he crucified in our place and stead.”³⁹

Grantham's penal satisfaction theology of atonement resulted in a penal satisfaction doctrine of justification like that of Reformed thought common in seventeenth-century England. This view of justification held that believing sinners are justified by the merit of Christ alone imputed to them through faith alone. This was also Arminius's doctrine of justification, namely that the righteousness of Christ is “made ours by gracious imputation.”⁴⁰

Grantham explained in *St. Paul's Catechism* that there are two kinds of righteousness, the one “imputative,” the other “practical.” The first, he said, “is called the *Righteousness of God*, Mat. 6.33. or *God's Righteousness*, Rom. 10.3.” This is “a Righteousness to us *without the Law*. . . . It is the Righteousness of Christ, who is the Lord our Righteousness, *Isa. 45.24, 25. Christ made of God unto us Righteousness*, I Cor.1.30.”⁴¹ This imputative righteousness is to be sharply distinguished from practical righteousness. Grantham describes practical righteousness as “a comely, yea, and a necessary Ornament.” Yet he goes on to say that practical righteousness “is not so immediately signified” as imputative righteousness, because the latter is “said to be *granted to the Saints*,” whereas practical righteousness “is acquired by Industry.”⁴² Practical righteousness, for Grantham, is associated with sanctification, and hence is progressive in nature, while imputative righteousness is the righteousness that justifies believers. Since people cannot by their own works of righteousness justify themselves, they can be justified only by the righteousness of God in Christ:

those that were far from Righteousness, that in him they might have Righteousness through Faith; though in themselves there is too much demerit, to bear the Appellation of Righteousness” (Ibid., 67).

³⁹Ibid., 68.

⁴⁰Arminius, 2:256-57, 406.

⁴¹Grantham, *St. Paul's Catechism*, 28.

⁴²Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, Book II, 68.

That God imputes Righteousness to Men without Works, is so plain, that it can never be denied. What is thus imputed, is not acted by us, but expressly reckoned as a matter of free Gift, or Grace; and this can be the Righteousness of none but Christ . . . because no other way can the Righteousness of God be made ours. . . . There is none righteous, no not one. Except therefore the Righteousness of Christ be laid hold on, there is no Righteousness to be imputed to Sinners.⁴³

Grantham's theory of active and passive obedience as essential aspects of the atonement is brought directly to bear on his doctrine of justification: "Now whether the Passive Righteousness of Christ only, or his Active Righteousness also, be that which is imputed to Sinners, is doubtful to some; but for my part I take it to be both. . . . The whole Righteousness of Christ, Active and Passive, is reckoned as ours through believing."⁴⁴ Grantham referred to the active and passive obedience of Christ imputed to believers as "that fine Linnen, white and clean, which arrayeth the Church of God, *Rev.* 19. 7. And the best Robe which God puts upon returning Sinners, *Luke* 15."⁴⁵

Grantham strove to distance himself from an emphasis on good works as a contributor to salvation, approaches that the Reformed were quick to decry, not only in Roman Catholic authors, but also in Arminian, Anabaptist, Quaker, and Socinian writers. Believers' justification rests wholly in their in-Christ status, without regard to their own works or merit: "We must therefore in no wise place our Justification in our Repentance," he wrote, "For that were to place our Justification from the guilt and condemning Power of Sin, in our Duty, and not in Christ Jesus."⁴⁶

A key element in Grantham's doctrine of justification is identification with Christ. Grantham argued that Christ identified with the believer in the atonement, and that through faith the believer identifies with Christ.⁴⁷ Grantham preached that the individual who exercises saving faith is brought into union with Christ, and is hence identified with Christ. In this identification, the active obedience of Christ becomes the active obedience of the believer, and the death of Christ, the payment of the penalty for sin, becomes the death of the believer. In turn, the believer's sin becomes Christ's. As Grantham explains, "Christ was made Sin for us only by imputation, for he had no Sin; and as he was made Sin, so are

⁴³Ibid., 67.

⁴⁴Ibid., 67.

⁴⁵Ibid., 67-68

⁴⁶Grantham, *St. Paul's Catechism*, 22.

⁴⁷In Anselmian fashion, Grantham emphasized that God had to identify with humanity to atone for sin. Even angels could not atone for humanity's sin. Atonement required someone who was both divine and human, a being with a "Divine Nature" who could "sympathize with the Human Nature in his Sufferings for us" (*Christianismus Primitivus*, 62).

we made the Righteousness of God in him, which must needs be by the free Imputation of his Righteousness to us.”⁴⁸

Thus, for Grantham, justification is completely *by* the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, apprehended *through* faith; Christ’s righteousness is the *ground* of justification, and faith is the *condition*. Against the Roman Catholics on one hand and many Arminians on the other, Grantham’s hallmark was *sola fide*: not by our works, but by God’s gracious imputation of the righteousness of Christ which is ours through faith.⁴⁹

Goodwin on Atonement and Justification

Because most Arminian theology has taught a less robust view of the nature of atonement and justification than Grantham’s penal satisfaction, it is instructive to contrast Grantham’s views with those of the more influential Arminian John Goodwin. As intimated earlier, Goodwin’s views on atonement and justification may be said to be more influential on the subsequent Arminian movement because Wesley re-published *Imputatio Fidei* and was heavily influenced by Goodwin’s thought. Grantham’s more reformed Arminian approach, by contrast, survived only in the smaller General-Free Will Baptist tradition.

Goodwin’s doctrines of atonement and justification differ extensively from Grantham’s. Goodwin bears the influence of Hugo Grotius’s governmental theory of atonement, which held that God could freely pardon sinners without any satisfaction for the violation of divine law, because such a pardon was within God’s discretion as governor or sovereign.⁵⁰ Thus the sacrifice of Christ is accepted by God as governor or ruler rather than as judge. The death of Christ, in this view, is a symbol of the punishment sin may induce. God uses this symbol as a deterrent. The penalty for sin is thereby set aside rather than paid. Therefore, upon faith, the believer is pardoned as a governor would pardon a guilty criminal, and all past sins are forgotten.

Goodwin articulated such a view of atonement and justification in *Imputatio Fidei*, a book of over four hundred pages the sole purpose of which was to disprove the doctrine that Christ’s righteousness is imputed to believers for their eternal acceptance with God. Goodwin’s disavowal

⁴⁸Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, Book II, 68.

⁴⁹Although scholars have historically held this understanding of atonement and justification to be the domain of strict, orthodox Calvinism, Grantham and the General Baptists held to such a view. Even Richard Baxter, who has been described as a “mild Calvinist,” rejected the penal satisfaction theory of atonement and the doctrine of justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ through faith. Revisionists such as R. T. Kendall and Alan C. Clifford argue that Calvin and Luther, contrary to received opinion, did not subscribe to the penal satisfaction theory of atonement and its attending doctrine of justification. Ironically, this was also the view of John Goodwin. R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979); Alan C. Clifford, *Atonement and Justification: English Evangelical Theology 1640-1790: An Evaluation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

⁵⁰Grotius also influenced Richard Baxter and John Tillotson with his governmental view of atonement.

of the penal satisfaction theory of atonement is unabashed. He argues, “The sentence or curse of the *Law*, was not properly executed upon *Christ* in his death, but this death of *Christ* was a ground or consideration unto *God*, whereupon to dispence with his *Law*, and to let fall or suspend the execution of the penalty or curse therein threatened.”⁵¹ Whereas Grantham’s whole explanation for *cur Deus homo* is to meet the demands of the “Righteous Law of God,” Goodwin’s reason for Christ’s coming was so that God could dispense with his law. Not until God dispensed with his law, said Goodwin, could he pardon men and women and forgive their sins: “But God in spareing and forbearing the transgressors (who according to the tenor of the *Law* should have bin punished) manifestly dispenceth with the *Law*, and doth not execute it.”⁵² It was not absolutely necessary, according to Goodwin, for Christ to die on the cross to pardon sinners, but it was the method that God in his government chose. Goodwin explains:

Neither did *God* require the death and sufferings of Christ as a valuable consideration whereon to dispence with his *Law* towards those that beleeve, more (if so much) in a way of satisfaction to his justice, than to his wisdom. For (doubtlesse) *God* might with as much justice, as wisdom (if not much more) have passed by the transgression of his *Law* without consideration or satisfaction. For him that hath the lawfull authority and power, either to impose a *Law*, or not, in case he shall impose it, it rather concerns in point of wisdom and discretion, not to see his *Law* despised and trampled upon without satisfaction, then in point of justice.⁵³

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

Goodwin roots his doctrine of justification in his perspective on atonement. Inasmuch as God can, in his government, set aside the penalty for sin since it does not of necessity have to be suffered, God can freely forgive the believer, and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness is not necessary. Nor is it desirable, for to impute Christ’s righteousness to the believer would be to admit that God did not set aside the demands of the law after all. Thus Goodwin concluded that justification consists primarily in the forgiveness or remission of sins (the nonimputation of sins).⁵⁴ Goodwin maintained that “the Scriptures constantly speake of this act of God justifying a sinner, not as of such an act whereby he will either make him or pronounce him legally just, or declare him not to have offended the Law, and hereupon justifie him; but of such an act, whereby he freely forgives him all that he hath done against the Law, and acquits him from all blame and punishment due by the Law.”⁵⁵

⁵¹Goodwin, *Imputatio Fidei*, part 2, 33.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid., 34-35.

⁵⁴Ibid., 177.

⁵⁵Ibid., part 1, 3.

As a consequence of his doctrine of atonement, Goodwin asserted that it would be erroneous to posit that Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer, for this would be admitting that God's free acquittal or pardon of the sinner is not enough. Thus Goodwin spends the entire first part of his book arguing against the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer. It is not his righteousness that is credited or imputed to the believer, but faith is counted as righteousness.⁵⁶

Incidentally, Arminius had argued that the Pauline phrase "faith counted for righteousness" is fully compatible with the notion of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to believers. Arminius's enemies had charged him with teaching that "the righteousness of Christ is not imputed to us for righteousness, but to believe (or the act of believing) justifies us."⁵⁷ Arminius replied that he never said that the act of faith justifies a person. He held that Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer and that our faith is imputed for righteousness. He believed both views were held by St. Paul: "I say that I acknowledge, 'The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us,' because I think the same thing is contained in the following words of the Apostle, 'God hath made Christ to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' . . . It is said in the third verse [of Romans 4], 'Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.' . . . Our brethren therefore do not reprehend ME, but the APOSTLE."⁵⁸

Goodwin's emphasis, in the last analysis, was on God's freedom to dispense with the law and freely pardon or forgive the sinner. The doctrines of atonement and justification are the most apparent disparity between Grantham's and Goodwin's types of Arminianism. The most practical difference is that, for Grantham, salvation consists totally in Christ's righteousness, whereas for Goodwin, it hinges on the individual's faith.⁵⁹

Conclusion

The essence of the disparity between Grantham and Goodwin lay in their respective understandings of the gravity of sin and the nature of divine justice. Grantham viewed sin as such an egregious violation of divine holiness that God, out of justice, must punish it. Goodwin, on the contrary, believed that the law of God (divine justice) "may be relaxed without contradiction to the

⁵⁶Ibid., 14.

⁵⁷Arminius, 2:42.

⁵⁸Ibid., 2:43-45.

⁵⁹This distinction has dramatic consequences for the doctrines of sanctification and the perseverance of the saints.

divine nature.”⁶⁰ Goodwin would have heartily agreed with Grotius’s statement that “the law is not something internal with God or the will of God itself, but only an effect of that will. It is perfectly certain that the effects of the divine will are mutable,”⁶¹ or that divine law is promulgated by God as “a positive law which at some time he may wish to relax.”⁶² This is why, as Goodwin stated, God could “dispense with his Law” in pardoning sinners.

Grantham would hear nothing of this. For him, the law of God is a necessary outcome of the divine nature, not simply an effect of the divine will. For Grantham, God’s holiness demands intolerance of sin. God’s holy nature necessarily repels sin. Consequently, divine wrath is not a capricious anger at sin. It is rather the necessary outcome of God’s nature. Because of this, divine justice must be satisfied. God’s requirement of absolute righteousness cannot be met by humanity, so people must undergo, as Grantham put it, “the malediction of his Righteous Law.” This, Grantham held, is why Christ’s death and righteousness must be imputed to believers. Christ’s sinless life and sacrificial death are the only thing that will satisfy the justice or holy nature of God.

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

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

⁶⁰Henry C. Sheldon, *History of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1897), 2:142. This statement is made with reference to Grotius’s theory of atonement.

⁶¹Hugo Grotius, *A Defence of the Catholic Faith Concerning the Satisfaction of Christ, against Faustus Socinus*, trans. Frank Hugh Foster (Andover, Mass.: Warren F. Draper, 1889), 75

⁶²*Ibid.*