JOHN FLAVEL OF DARTMOUTH, 1630-1691

by

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A total of 1,760 nonconformist ministers, according to A. G. Matthews' revision of Calamy's figures, were ejected by the Restoration Act, 1660 (of Episcopal ministers sequestered since the Civil War), and the Act of Uniformity, 1662. The County of Devonshire had the largest number of dissenters, 121. Of that number, John Flavel (1630-1691), puritan preacher of Dartmouth, was one of the most eminent. He devoted his life and work to the people of Dartmouth, going to them in 1656, and staying with them, except for the periods of ejectment, until his death. Though never in the public eye, he was an influential and prolific writer. He published thirty-one separate works.

Because Flavel played no leading role in the secular and ecclesiastical politics of his time (he was fifteen when Laud was executed and nineteen when Charles I was beheaded), no one has troubled to write a full biography of him. Another reason may be the lack of material. He left no letters and no autobiography, though he lived in an age of memoirs. We know he wrote a diary, but there is no trace of it. The only extant biography of any appreciable length is by John Quick, 1636-1706, who has fifty-six pages on Flavel in *Icones Sacrae Anglicae or The Lives and Deaths of Severall Eminent English Divines, Ministers of the Gospell, Pastors of Churches and Professors of Divinity in our owne and foreigne Universitys*, c. 1691, two volumes. This work, comprising twenty English biographies, was not published for lack of subscriptions; the manuscript is now in the Dr. Williams Library, London. Quick claimed "a long acquaintance and friendship" with Flavel, "which commenced in ye yeare 1653 (when we were neighbor Ministers in ye Southliams of Devon) and continued
to ye day of his death." Nearly all published biographical notes of Flavel have been culled from this manuscript. Calamy acknowledges his debt to Quick; the anonymous editor of Flavel's works, who has a sketch of Flavel's life in the introduction, does not, though it is from Quick's manuscript almost verbatim. The second chapter of this study owes much to Quick.

In the preface to Calamy's Nonconformist's Memorial, Samuel Palmer writes:

Perhaps there never was a body of men whose history better deserved to be handed down to posterity, than the ministers ejected from the Church of England, soon after the Restoration of Charles II particularly by the Act of Uniformity. . . . Their integrity, their fortitude, and their faith, ought to be had in everlasting remembrance. 'To let the memory of such men die, (says Mr. Feirce) is injurious to posterity.' Especially as they not only in this instance shewed themselves to be men of principle, but appeared from their general deportment men of singular piety; peculiarly qualified for their office as ministers, and uncommonly successful in it.

This study of Flavel's life and message is an attempt to fill a long-standing lacuna in the annals of these "uncommonly successful" puritan preachers of seventeenth century England.

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CHAPTER I HISTORICAL SETTING: SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ENGLISH PURITANISM

English Puritanism was a movement for reform of religion begun early in the reign of Elizabeth -- although it must be admitted there were Puritans before the name was coined, for the roots of English Puritanism were various and many. Dr. Scott Pearson mentions the Revival of Learning, the consequent interest in the Greek New Testament, the various translations of the scriptures into the vernacular, the lively heritage of Lollardism, particularly in the eastern counties and in such towns as London, Northampton, Leicester, and Norwich, and the direct influence of the Continental Reformation. According to him, during Edward's reign such reformers from abroad as Bucer, Farel, Tremellius, Martyr, Alasco, and Knox from Scotland, by their learning and fervour favored an advanced type of Protestantism. Such bishops as Ridley and Hooper were advocates of a simple Reformed religion. Now the return of Roman Catholicism to England, by driving large contingents of Protestants overseas, helped to create the party, who constituted the immediate precursors of the Elizabethan Puritans.¹

This movement for reform embraced two general groups. First, within the Church of England were those who accepted the existing Episcopalian doctrine and church government, but desired the further reform of a few surviving Roman Catholic ceremonies and dress. The majority of this group were the Presbyterians, who wanted to run the Church accord-

¹ A. F. Scott Pearson, Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism (Cambridge University Press, 1925), p. 6
ing to the Book of Discipline, later published as *A Directory of Church Government*. They reached the zenith of their power at the calling of the Westminster Assembly and the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant in 1643. Secondly, without the Church were those who could not wait for the Church to reform, but set up some completely independent congregation where Christ could reach and be reached, not from organization or rituals, but from the life and fellowship of the members. These included the Independents, the Quakers and the Baptists of various shades.

The usage of the term, Puritanism, to designate such diversity is confusing at times. Even in 1692 an anonymous writer protested against the indiscriminate usage of the term in theological debates. He referred to "the new nick-named Puritan in our times, wherein the Papists calleth it Puritanisme to oppose the Roman hierarchy. The Arminian ... to defend God's free grace against man's free will. The Formalist thinketh it Puritanisme to stand out against Conformity. The Civilian not to serve the time, and the Prophane thinketh it essential to the Puritan, to walk precisely and not be prophane. ..."¹ Haller recognizes the ambiguity of this term but answers: "The disagreements that rendered Puritans into presbyterians, independents, separatists and baptists were in the long run not so significant as the qualities of character, of mind and imagination, which kept them all alike Puritan."² Trevelyan has adopted a good definition, which will be followed in this thesis. To him the term signifies "the religion of all those who wished either to 'purify' the usages of the Established Church from taint of Popery, 

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or to worship separately by forms so 'purified'.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century in England Puritanism hopefully awaited the accession of a king brought up in a presbyterian climate.

The Puritans presented their "Millenary Petition" to James I soon after he crossed the border, asking for the long-delayed reformation of the Church of England. James at first raised their hopes by calling the Hampton Court Conference in 1604 between "all the Bishops and Deanes" of the Church and four Puritans: Reynolds, Sparkes, Knewstubs and Chaderton. But at the conference the Puritans discovered they had hoped in vain. They did not even meet the king on the opening day, when he discussed with the Episcopalians some minor reforms in the Book of Common Prayer. Two days later when the Puritans got access to the audience chamber they were not permitted to speak freely. The bishops and deans had their way, and the conference might be summed up in the king's reproof of Knewstubs at the end:

"wee have here taken painses, and in the end have concluded of an unity and uniformity; and, you forsooth, must preferre the credites of a few private men, before the general peace of the Church; this is just the Scottish argument, for when anything was there concluded, which disliked some humors, the onely reason, why they would not obey, was, it stood not with their credites, to yeeld, having so long beene of the contrary opinion; I will none of that, and therefore, eyther let them conforme themselves, and that shortly, or they shall heare of it."

Under Archbishop Bancroft the Puritans heard of it. The clergy were ordered to accept formally the established order of things, from the

Royal Supremacy down to the latest item in the canons of 1604. Precautions were taken to prevent procrastination or evasion. Meetings even for conference were prohibited. Parker's order of 1566 to the London ministers to say "yes or no" was now repeated on a larger scale, as Bancroft signalled from Canterbury to his episcopal colleagues in every see. By 1605 about three hundred puritan ministers had gone down under the storm of archepiscopal seal. The puritan resurrection of James' accession had come to seem like the last stirrings of a dying man.¹

However, Puritanism was far from death at this point. This challenge only stimulated the Puritans to greater efforts and influence in Parliament and the growing mercantile class. In fact, under Bancroft's policy Puritanism started on a new phase in its development. It had been a movement mainly within the Church since Cartwright's attack on Episcopacy. Elizabeth did not want to drive out of the Church either the moderate Catholics or the moderate Puritans. Even Hooker, who wrote his great book justifying Episcopacy, would have included the Puritans. But Bancroft believed the national Church had no place for them. So the Canon Law of 1604, prepared by Bancroft himself, was the fulfillment of James' threat to harry nonconformists into conformity or out of the land. This policy merely succeeded in driving many of the most influential and conscientious of the servants of the Church into the position of Puritans without.

English Puritanism in the beginning was essentially an anti-papist and anti-superstitious spirit. The Puritans objected particularly to the use of the ring in marriage, to the use of the sign of the Cross in

baptism and to kneeling at the communion table. But with the rise of Arminianism in "the best bishoprics and deaneries in England" at this time, the puritan controversy now became a doctrinal dispute as well. Gradually Calvinism became associated with Puritanism and Arminianism, with the Church of England, though individual differences continued. And to the controversy between Calvinism and Arminianism there was soon added another on the observance of the Sabbath.

Charles I, following his father's dictum, "No bishop, no king," tied the two together, when he chose as his chief adviser in ecclesiastical affairs, Laud, to succeed the moderate Abbot as Archbishop of Canterbury. Laud met the resistance of the Puritans with head-on attacks. These proved somewhat effective, for fifteen hundred Puritans subsequently left England to seek asylum for faith and conscience in the wilds of America. One writer calls the period, 1630-1640, the Laudian decade, and sums up this decade thus:

The outstanding facts which confront us at its close are the practical extinction of the Puritan clergy, the practical sinking under force of circumstances, of the religious in the political cause, and the drawing together, likewise under force of circumstances, of the English and Scottish discontents—which latter meant, or was coming to mean, the acceptance of the Presbyterian alliance and of the conditions under which alone that alliance could be formed.

When the Long Parliament met in 1640 things came to a head. The struggle between King and Parliament developed into open conflict. The cause of political liberty joined forces with the cause of Puritanism against a general tyranny; thus the serious and sober Puritans became

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rebel, and triumphed.

The opportunity for church reform as the Puritans saw it was finally theirs. The Presbyterians first tried their hand at it. With the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant and the calling of the Westminster Assembly in 1643 they held the reins. But the Presbyterians did not succeed. Presbyterianism had grown up naturally in Scotland and Holland, but it suited few Englishmen. Charles II spoke for his people when he said it was no religion for a gentleman. And Presbyterianism was not much more tolerant than Episcopalianism. The former also clamored for the suppression of sects and schisms; they would have nothing to do with separatists, Anabaptists, Quakers and sectaries; and they would anathematize what they called the damnable doctrines of toleration and liberty of conscience. But not all Presbyterians were of this mind; we should remember there were also men like Baxter and Calamy. Parliament stood adamant in its refusal to set up a spiritual court independent of itself; that would be another form of prelacy. So a modified Presbyterianism was the result.

The Independents, followers of Robert Browne, and adherents of Reformation without Tarrying for Anie, formed another party, though they had similar ideals of Christian life and discipline, as well as doctrine, as the Presbyterians. Laud's policy had driven some to Holland and America, where they had built congregational or independent churches. Now some of them began returning home, especially those who had gone to Holland. Some of the latter repatriates who took a bold stand for toleration in the Westminster Assembly were Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, Sidrach Simpson, Jeremiah Burroughes, and William Bridge. It is not difficult to see why Cromwell shifted to the Independents' cause after
a session with the Presbyterians. The Independents, however, were no better at running the millennium. They began to quarrel among themselves. Then the army entered the quarrel, and in 1653 crushed the Rump Parliament. From 1653 to 1658 Cromwell had to take the reins himself, striving all the while to create a unified and representative government without success.

At this time there was still another rising party — the Quakers or Friends Society, started by George Fox (1624-1691). Fox was a weaver's son and shoemaker's apprentice. Failing to find spiritual help from the existing groups or "professors," he wandered about the country until he finally felt that the truth had been revealed to him. His great discovery was that a man could enjoy immediate contact with God, that a man's life could be guided by an inner light which came not from without but from within. He then made it his life-work to reform his fellowmen by the light and power of the indwelling spirit of Christ.

The Baptists should also be mentioned at this point. According to C. E. J. Kittilson, the English Baptists may be said to date from 1608, when John Smyth and other puritan refugees fled from England to Holland. The earlier Anabaptists in England, active in the early half of the sixteenth century, were foreigners, and were soon driven out or silenced by persecution. The name Anabaptist was in that century frequently used in a general way to denote any separatist of strangely unorthodox or fanatical opinions, but before 1612 there were no Anabaptist English congregations in the strict sense, i.e. separatists who rebaptized their converts. The name Baptist was not applied to these before 1641. They were sometimes called Catabaptists, because they were opposed to infant
baptism. In time these Baptists developed into two main groups: the
General Baptists, who believed that no man was predestined by a divine
decree to hell, but that all men might repent and believe the Gospel;
and the Particular Baptists, who believed that the atonement was re-
stricted to the elect.

Cromwell would have toleration extended to all -- except Roman
Catholics and Episcopalians, of course, for political reasons. In 1657
he even allowed the return of the Jews, banished from England since the
days of Edward I. Thus, the ecclesiastical history of the commonwealth
justifies his boast: "I meddle not with any man's conscience." But
Cromwell's experience with the Short Parliament taught him that the
children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children
of light. Instead of reformation the Puritans secured only nervous shifts
of power. A strange alliance arose in this turmoil: Royalists and
Presbyterians.

Upon Cromwell's death all was chaos and strife, for Richard had not
the same capacities as his father. This convinced most people that they
had had enough experiment and reform, and that the only hope of decency
and order was the recall of Charles II. So the Restoration of 1660 was
carried through, by an alliance between two parties which had never been
noted for toleration. At the invitation of the Convention Parliament,
Charles came home amid the rejoicings of his people.

Charles II promised at Breda, 11 April 1660, "a liberty to tender
consciences," not because he was concerned for toleration, but to win
Roman Catholicism for England and thus influence France. But Parliament

1. C.E. Whiting, Studies in English Puritanism from The Restoration
2. Quoted by O. Davies, The Early Stuarts (Oxford: The Clarendon
was not of the same mind, and had no stomach for toleration, Romanism or even a comprehension acceptable to the Presbyterians.

The history of Puritanism for the next thirty years may be summed up in the events of the Savoy Conference and the Clarendon Code.

The Savoy Conference was a meeting of a committee of Episcopalians and Presbyterians in 1661 for the revision of the Book of Common Prayer. The Presbyterians included Calamy, Reynolds, Ash, Spurstow, Wallis, Bates, Manton, Case and Baxter. They made four preliminary requests regarding church government, viz.

That serious Godliness might be Countenanced; a Learned and Pious Minister in each Parish encouraged; that a Personal Public owning the Baptismal Covenant might precede an admission to the Lord's Table; and that the Lord's Day might be strictly sanctified.

The Presbyterians also proposed

that Bishop-Uxter's Reduction of Episcopacy unto the Form of Synodical Government received in the Ancient Church, should be the Ground-work of an Accommodation; and that Suffragans should be chosen by the respective Synods; the Associations be of a moderate Extent, the Ministers be under no Oaths, or Promises of Obedience to their Bishops, as being Responsible for any Transgressions of the Law; and that the Bishops Govern not by Will and Pleasure, but according to Rules, Canons and Constitutions that should be Rati
fy'd and Established by Act of Parliament.

As to Liturgy, the Presbyterians

owed the Lawfulness of a prescribed Form of Publick Worship; but desir'd, that some Learned and Pious, and Moderate Divines of both sorts, might be employ'd either to compile a New Liturgy, or to Reform the Old, adding some other Varying Forms in Scripture Phrase, to be us'd at the Ministers Choice -- As to the Ceremonies they Humbly Represented, that the Worship of God was perfect without them... they begg'd, that Kneeling at the Sacrament might not be imposed, and that the Surplice, and the Cross in Baptism, and the Bowing at the Name of Jesus rather than Christ or Emanuel might be abolished.

As far as the Presbyterians were concerned they might as well have

2. ibid., p. 141
3. ibid., p. 141
4. ibid., p. 139
stayed at home. They secured nothing from the conference. And after this, Presbyterianism never revived to be a political power in the country again. Charles' first regular parliament, the Cavalier Parliament, met in May, 1661. It soon passed the Corporation Act, which required all municipal officials, from the mayor downwards, to take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy and to swear "that it is not lawful on any pretence whatever to take arms against the King, and that I do abhor that traitorous position of taking arms by his authority against his person"; to repudiate the Solemn League and Covenant; and to have taken the Lord's Supper according to Church of England rites within not more than a year before entering office.

The Corporation Act inaugurated the Clarendon Code, although Clarendon was out of office before the last act was passed. Then followed the Act of Uniformity of 1662, demanding these leading requirements: reordination by a Diocesan Bishop; unfeigned assent and consent to everything in the Book of Common Prayer by August 24th; absolute oath of allegiance; repudiation of the Covenant; conduct of worship according to the newly ordered prayer book. Close to eighteen hundred puritan ministers gave up their stipends and places rather than comply. There were many reasons why the Puritans found themselves unable to conform, as Horton Davies points out in a recent book. Reordination implied a renunciation of the validity of their existing orders, and a disowning of the fruits of their ministries. They were convinced the prayer book did not conform to the Word of God in several important particulars. The request for their repudiation of the Covenant constituted a demand for pledge-breaking. 1 Baxter in his Reliquiae gives a full account of

"The Act of Uniformity, and reflections upon it; and the ejecting and silencing of many worthy Persons by it"; also, "The Grounds of the Nonconformity of the Ministers who were Ejected, Their Vindication of themselves and such as adher'd to them." This act rejected decisively any thought of comprehension of Presbyterians by the Church of England. Presbyterianism was thus driven into union with Puritanism without the Church, alongside of the Independents, Quakers and Baptists.

Next came the First Conventicle Act, passed in 1661, which declared that Elizabeth's similar act was still in force, and stipulated that persons of sixteen years and older must not attend religious services other than those of the Established Church, that penalties for infractions were five pounds for the first offence and ten for the second (or three and six months' imprisonment respectively), and a fine of one hundred pounds (or a transportation of seven years) for a third offence. The following year Parliament passed the Oxford Act or Five Mile Act, which stipulated that unless a clergyman or schoolmaster declared he would not "at any time endeavour any alteration of government either in Church or State" he was prohibited from coming within five miles of cities and parliamentary or corporate towns, or of any town in which he had held clerical office, or in which he had lectured, or in which he had conducted religious service after the nonconformist manner.

These four acts constituted the Clarendon Code, to harry all into conformity or out of the land. But this persecution did not spring wholly from religious motives, as Trevelyan has noted. According to

2. ibid., Vol. I, chapter 10
him, the Clarendon Code was not the work of Clarendon, still less of Charles, but of Parliament and the squires. It was the Cavaliers' revenge for their long sufferings and lost lands. Baulked by the Act of Indemnity, they found this other outlet for their feelings. They were prompted less by religious bigotry than by political passion and the memory of personal wrongs and losses, many of them still unredressed. The roots of this persecution could be traced to the Parliamentary fines on "malignants" and to the execution of Laud and Charles.¹

At any rate, things drifted from bad to worse for the Puritans. Ostracism, exile, imprisonment, fines, loss of income and home meant suffering and often death to both ministers and laymen. Yet, though persecution continued year by year, puritan meetings went on, from one hiding-place to another, in woods, orchards, barns, caves and shops, at all hours of the day and night. Naturally the degree of privation and persecution on individuals varied in different places and times. Some ejected ministers attached themselves to private families as chaplains; others, like Bunyan, were kept in prison for years. When plague broke out in London and grew worse day by day, many of the conformist ministers left their charges. The puritan preachers readily stepped into their places, took up the pastoral work, ministered to the sick, buried the dead, and preached wherever the authorities permitted. This made their flocks the more steadfast, and turned the tide against persecution somewhat. The effort to harry nonconformists into conformity was turning to failure. But soon persecution became severe to the extreme. Every effort was made to destroy Puritanism. The jails became full to over-

¹ Trevelyan, op. cit., p. 150
flowing. Fines grew heavier. But the Puritans reacted with clever imagination and sometimes with force. Extra doors were fixed in meeting places, and a watch kept during services. Informers were often beaten. Moreover, many justices and bishops were opposed to persecution, and either refused to act or freed the convicted.

On 15 March 1672 Charles issued his declaration of indulgence. How much he meant it to be a relief for Roman Catholics is not known, but this was the suspicion some held, particularly the Presbyterians. In time, all groups except the Friends secured licenses. This relief, however, was only a breather, for Parliament cancelled the indulgence a year later, and persecution was renewed.

Attention may be made at this point of the rise of two groups of Episcopalians that were not actively embroiled in the struggle among High Churchmen, the Crown, Parliament and Puritans, yet were to make a decisive impact on the final solution to the burning issue of toleration. First, the Cambridge Platonists, of whom Benjamin Whichcote, Ralph Cudworth, Henry More and John Smith were foremost, sought a middle course between the Puritans and Episcopalians. Against Laud's descendents they held that conduct and morality were more important than church polity; against the Puritans who were ruled by a rigid Calvinism they maintained that reason must not be fettered; against both they

the seat of authority in religion was the individual conscience, governed by reason and illuminated by a revelation which could not be inconsistent with reason itself.\(^1\) The second group, followers of the Cambridge

\(^1\) C. R. Cragg, From Puritanism to the Age of Reason (Cambridge: The University Press, 1950), p. 41
Platonists, included John Tillotson, Edward Stillingfleet, Thomas Tenison and John Glanvill. They were derisively called Latitudinarians. They differed much from one another, but they all upheld toleration. "The Calvinism of the Puritans was defeated and discredited, but many Englishmen had no great relish for the high churchmanship of Laud. They did not wish to choose between the bigotry of the one and the rigidity of the other."¹

To go from the sublime to the ridiculous, mention may be made also of the multitudinous sects that had appeared by this time. Cominges, the French Ambassador, calculated that there were sixty different religious bodies in England in 1666, while Roger L'Estrange, in 1631, seemed to think there were 170 of them.² Whiting, in his research, has dug up the following: the Fifth-Monarchy Men; the Huggeletonians; Unitarians; Antinomians; Libertines; Seekers; Ranters (divided into Familists of Love, Shelomethites, Clements, Athians, Nicolaitanes, Marcionites and Seleucian Donatists); Salomonists; Coppinists; the Family of Love or Familists; the Etheringtonians or Hetheringtonians; the Grindletonians; the Sweet Singers of Israel; the Cortinians; the Vanists; the Behemists; the Philadelphians; the Rosicrucians; the Tryonites; the Traskites; the Considerers; the Soul Sleepers; Lumarists; Church of the First Born; the Children of the New Birth; "Heavenly Father Men"; Anti-Eucharists; Sabbatarians; Anti-Sabbatarians; the Good Christians; the Semi-Separatists; the Anti-Scripturists or Anti-Scripturians; the Apostolicks; the Revealers; the Virgin Life People; the Enthusiasts; and Manifestarians or Mooreans.³

¹ Cragg, ibid., p. 62
² Cited by Whiting, op. cit., p. 233
³ Ibid., pp. 234-321
According to Haller, the rise of individualism in the sects was fostered by the puritan clergy themselves. They told people that they must obey conscience, thinking that they could hold the conscience of the saints in their own keeping. But when they said one thing to the saints and conscience said another, the reformers were destined to find their authority as fragile as that of pope and prelate had been.¹

James' accession in 1635 did not bring any relief to the Puritans. In fact, when he came to the throne, there were 5,000 Quakers in prison. The other sects were more wary, but they also went to prison, suffered in fines or fled abroad.² Not only was James an avowed Roman Catholic; he was determined to lead the country back to Rome's fold. So in 1637 he followed his brother and issued another Declaration of Indulgence, whereby the Test Act, the Act for excluding Romanists from Parliament, and all laws under which nonconformity (including both Puritanism and Romanism) was punished, were erased. The Puritans, realizing his motives and the temporal duration of such an act, accepted the liberty and relief offered, but were not publicly thankful. Leaders like Baxter, Bunyan and Howe refused to ally themselves with King and Jesuits against the Episcopalians.

Moreover, James' appointment of Roman Catholics to high civil and military positions irked and alarmed all. The old quarrels between Puritans and Episcopalians were forgotten in face of the common danger: the establishment of Romanism. So when James reissued the Declaration of Indulgence in 1688 and ordered the clergy to read it in the pulpits,

¹, Haller, op. cit., p. 172
², H. G. Plum, Restoration Puritanism (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1913), p. 52
Puritans and Episcopalians stood together to overthrow him.

Consequently, with William and Mary came also the Act of Toleration in 1689. For William, a Calvinist and Latitudinarian, would reign only on the condition that freedom of worship be granted the Puritans. The pledge of legal and parliamentary toleration given the latter by the bishops themselves in the crisis under James had to be fulfilled. And the threatened Roman Catholic invasion from France furnished all English Protestants some sense of common interest. Thus, Puritanism, after one century of struggle and persecution, secured the right to be.

The act, however, offered toleration on conditions: the taking of the oaths of allegiance and supremacy; certification of nonconformist places of worship; subscription by nonconformist ministers to the Articles, excepting three referring to church traditions, homilies, consecration of bishops and ministers, and infant baptism. Roman Catholics and Unitarians were denied any relief in the act. So the principle of religious freedom was still not admitted. Nevertheless, the Act began a new age in the history of the English Church. It closed a hundred years of struggle for the legal existence of Puritanism; and with the failure of the comprehension bill to pass Parliament, the act meant that Puritanism was to remain outside of the Established Church.

It was in this century of strife and revolution that John Flavel lived. It was under persecution that he did most of his work as a puritan preacher. What could one do in such circumstances? What could

1. Trevelyan, op. cit., p. 149
one say in such times? For one answer we turn to the life and work of John Flavel of Dartmouth, 1630-1691.
CHAPTER II  FLAVEL'S LIFE AND WORK

John Flavel, the eldest son of Richard Flavel, was born in Bromsgrove, Worcestershire in 1630. Charles I had been on the throne for five years. Charles II was born in that year. Two of the triumvirate of Puritanism, Baxter and Owen, were already in their teens and attending preparatory schools; the third, John Howe, was born in the same year as Flavel. Two of the greatest Episcopalian preachers of the age were also born in that year: Tillotson and Barrow. Bunyan was Flavel's senior by two years and George Fox by six.

John's father, Richard, was a vicar, first at Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, then at Hasler, Warwickshire, and finally at Willersley, Gloucestershire. He was ejected out of the last at the Restoration of 1660, when the sequestered rector, whose place Richard Flavel had filled, returned. For some time after that he lived with his son, John, at Dartmouth. Richard next worked in London, but was arrested in 1665 for conducting nonconformist worship. With his wife he was sent to Newgate, where both caught the plague and died. The biographer of John has this to say of the father:

Mr. Richard Flavel was low as to this world, although a very Godly and painfull Minister of ye Gospell, who was more laborious in his Lord's Vineyard, than Sollicitous for riches, and took more paines to gaine Heaven, than to atchieve an estate here on earth. He was rich in grace, but meane as to Sublunary wealth, yet an Heir of ye heavenly kingdom. . . . Consider him as a Christian. He was exceedingly Serious, endowed with a double portion of holy­ness. The Grace of God, whch predominated in his heart, shined forth with most radiant, re­splendent beams in his life. One who knew him intimately, and in no wise related to him, but as a Fellow­workman in ye same Vineyard, hath assured me, that in those many frequent Conferences He had with Him, He never observed one vaine
word to drop from his mouth. 1

John himself, in one of his sermons, speaks of his father in glowing terms.

For my own part, I must profess before the world, that I have a high value for this mercy, and do, from the bottom of my heart, bless the Lord, who gave me a religious and tender father, who often poured out his soul to God for me: he was one that was inwardly acquainted with God; and being full of bowels to his children, often carried them before the Lord, prayed and pleaded with God for them, wept and made supplications for them. This stock of prayers and blessings left by him before the Lord, I cannot but esteem above the fairest inheritance on earth.2

The Quick manuscript mentions Richard Flavel having left two sons: John, Phineas. Richard Flavel's will, however, as of St. Sepulchre's, London, 12 July 1665, mentions another son by the name of Abiather; and three daughters: Anne (wife of Edward Jefferie), Elizabeth (wife of Joseph Coope) and Deborah (wife of Ferdinando Hastings of London).3

Phineas matriculated at Magdalen College, Oxford, 21 March 1658/9, but did not graduate. He was chaplain to Edward Lord Russell; preached occasionally about London, and died in Westminster a few years prior to 1729. He published one work: The Deceitful Heart try'd and cast, 1676. Nothing is known about Abiather.

Of the early years of John Flavel's life, little has been recorded, except that he was "religiously educated by his Father and trained up in good learning at ye Grammar schools, and sent early unto Oxford."4 How far he was indebted to this home training both in scholarship and in the

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1. John Quick MS, Icones Sacrae Anglicane... (Located in the Dr. Williams Library, London), 1691, Vol. II, pp. 919-920
faith we can only infer from certain allusions of his, e.g.

Oh, it is no common mercy to descend from pious parents! . . . . What a mercy was it to us to have parents that prayed for us before they had us, as well as in our infancy when we could not pray for ourselves? . . . . What a special mercy was it to us to have the excrencies of corruption nipt in the bud by their pious and careful discipline? . . . And was it not a special favor to us, to have parents that went before us as a pattern of holiness, and beat the path to heaven for us by their examples?

Flavel entered University College, Oxford, but there is no record of either his matriculation or graduation in the Register. At Oxford Mr. Nathan Jacob was his "chamberfellow," and William Woodward (Fellow of University College, Oxford, 1643-50) his tutor. There, "our young Academic pleyd his Studies hard, profitting in knowledge and University-learning above many of his equals and Contemporaries," Quick reports.

Flavel, however, confesses:

I studied to know many other things but I know not myself. It was with me as with a servant to whom the master committed two things; the child, and the child's clothes; the servant is very careful of the clothes, brushes and washes, starches and irons them, and keeps them safe and clean, but the child is forgotten and lost. My body, which is but the garment of my soul, I kept and nourished with excessive care; but my soul was long forgotten, and had been lost forever, as others daily are, had not God roused it, by the convictions of his Spirit, out of that deep oblivion and deadly slumber.

After about two years at Oxford Flavel received a call to Ditford in Devon as assistant to the minister, Mr. William Walplate. The order from the Standing Committee of Devon, 27 April 1650, states the reasons for the call and its conditions:

1. Flavel, op. cit., Vol. IV, pp. 371-372
Whereas Mr. William Wallplate was heretofore admitted into ye Sequestered Rectory of Dipford, and by reason of his age and weakness of body is unable to officiate ye cure, and ye Parishioners have this day petitioned to have an able man to supply ye cure. It is now ordered yt Mr. Wallplate shall enjoy ye Parsonage house and Glebe Lands, the taking care the same be well-repaird, and shall also receive ye sume of thirty pounds p annum in money towards his maintenance, And it is ordered that Mr. Arthur Hale, Mr. Richard Beare and Mr. Michael Parnell of Dipford shall henceforth receive and take all ye Sheafe and Tithes belonging to ye said Rectory, and out of ye profits hereof Mr. Wallplate is to be payed, and this Committee both hereby permit and authorise Mr. John Flavel to preach there as Probationer, and to receive ye Over-plus for his paines from ye hands of ye Proctors till further Order, and ye Proctors are to pay all ye rates and dues, payable out of the said Rectory.

John Beare, William Fry, Arthur Upton, John Barton

Flavel accepted the call, though he confessed "that He came away raw enough from ye College." Because of Mr. Wallplate's age and infirmity the major share of work fell on Flavel's shoulders, but he thrived on it, as noted by Quick:

The sense of which burden, and ye Greatness of this Sacred Calling, of its excellency, and necessity for ye Salvation of precious Souls, and what choice guifits and graces, what singular and rare endowments were requisite for its beneficial and comforatable discharge, obliged him to double his diligence in ye Lord's Service, and to become a most industrious and indefatigable Student, to give himself up unto reading, meditation, and prayer, insomuch that He increased in knowledge daily, and attained to an high degree of eminency and reputation for his ministerial Labours in ye Churches of our Lord Jesus.

Anthony Wood acknowledge Flavel's influence in Diptford thus: "There he obtained the character among factious people of a precious young man."

Six months after Flavel had been at Dipford, he heard that there

1. Quick Mr, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 922-923
2. ibid., Vol. II, p. 922
3. ibid., Vol. II, p. 923
were several candidates for the ministry to be ordained at Salisbury.

He rode up and presented himself with his testimonials to the presbytery. After due examination, which consisted mainly of an extemporaneous sermon on an appointed text, the examiners found him fit, and ordained him according to Presbyterian practice, as the following letter shows:

Forasmuch as John Flavell Batchelour of Arts hath addressed Himself to ye Classickall Presbytery of Sarum within the Province of ye County of Wits according to ye Ordinance of both Houses of Parliament of August ye 28. 1646. for ye Ordination of Ministers by ye Classickall Presbyters, desiring to be ordained a Preaching Presbyter, for that He is called to ye work of ye ministry in ye Parish Church of Diptford in ye County of Devon, and hath exhibited to ye Presbytery Sufficient Testimonials (now remaining in their Custody) of his competent age, of his unblameable life and conversation, of his diligence and proficiency in his Studeys, and of his faire and direct Calling unto ye forementioned Charge in ye County aforesaid upon ye desire and request of ye people of ye said place, Wee the Ministers of the said Presbytery have by appointment thereof examined Him according to ye Tenor of ye said Ordinance, and finding Him to be duly qualified and gifted for that holy Office and Employment, no just exception being made against his Ordination or Admission, We have approved Him, and accordingly in ye Church of Thomas in Sarum upon ye day and yeare hereafter expressed, We have proceeded solemnly to set him apart to ye Office of a Preaching Presbyter and work of ye Ministry, with fasting prayer and Imposition of hands, and doe hereby (so far as concerneth us) actually admit him unto ye said charge there to performe all ye Offices and duties of a faithful Minister of Jesus Christ. In witness whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names this 17 of October 1650.

Faithfull Teate, John Conant, John Strickland, Nathan Noyes, John Graille, Nath. Giles, J. Watts.1

On Mr. Walplate's death Flavel succeeded him in the rectory. To relieve himself of the care and necessity of keeping accounts of the tithes, he chose "a person of worth and reputation" and let him handle the business at a loss to himself.

While at Diptford, "upon ye motion of some Friends, He inclined

1. Quick MS, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 924
to alter his condition," and married Mrs. Jane Randal, a "gracious Gentlewoman of a reputable family." Unfortunately, she died two years later while giving birth; the baby did not survive. Of this loss, Flavel, in his treatise, A Token for Mourners, wrote:

You cannot forget that in the years lately past, the Almighty visited my tabernacle with the rod, and in one year cut off from it the root, and the branch, the tender mother, and the only son. What the effects of those strokes, or rather of my own unmortified passions were, I have felt, and you and others have heard. Surely I was as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Yea, I may say with them, Lam. 3:19, 20 'Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance and is humbled in me.'

Quick has recorded this short note about Flavel's relations with her:

"This his first wife was a meet help indeed unto Him, a Love-token sent him from Heaven. He lived very comfortably with her about two years time; when ye Lord who gave her to Him, took her away from Him. Death at God's command dissolving that goulden knot of union, which had been betwixt them."²

After some time his friends again persuaded him to look for a second wife. He found "a vertuous daughter of Abraham. Such an One as was a Crown unto her Husband," by the name of Elizabeth Morris.

Shortly after his second marriage, Flavel received a call to replace Anthony Hartford, vicar of Townstal and St. Saviour's, Dartmouth, who had died 23 January 1655/56. Hartford had been vicar there for nearly twenty years, having commenced to keep the Registers of Townstal 11 January 1636.³ The people of Dartmouth advanced these reasons for calling

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1. Flavel, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 604
2. Quick MS, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 927
3. Devonshire Association Reports and Transactions (Plymouth: W. Brendon and Son, Ltd., 1911), Vol. XLIII, p. 172. These reports and transactions were not published for the public, but only for members of the Association. However, copies may be found in the British Museum.
Flavel: because there were exceptions made against all the candidates, but none against him; because, being acceptable to the whole town, he was more likely to heal the breaches among the people; and because Dartmouth needed his services more than Diptford.¹

It seems that before the death of Hartford, Flavel, though a young man, was moderator at a provincial synod, and by the manner in which he conducted the meeting had attracted Hartford's attention and friendship. Subsequently, Hartford is said to have recommended Flavel highly to the people of Dartmouth as likely to be a great light in the church. Actually, Flavel was not the first choice for the vacancy at St. Saviour's. Before Flavel's name was mentioned, St. Saviour's had been anxious to secure John Howe. However, when Howe was in London, Cromwell heard him preach at Whitehall, and subsequently persuaded Howe to become his private chaplain.² The man whom St. Saviour's thought worthy as a substitute for Howe was Flavel.

Flavel accepted the call to Dartmouth, though the benefice was smaller than the one at Diptford. He and his family moved to Dartmouth in 1656. The order from Whitehall for his settlement reads as follows:

Whitehall, 19 of December 1656

There was exhibited to ye Commissioners for approbation of publick Preachers a Nomination of Sr. John F. to be Lecturer in Townstall, and Chappell of St. Saviour's in Dartmouth in ye County of Devon, made to them by divers of ye Inhabitants of ye said Town, who by writing under their hands and Seales have Signified their election of him, together with a Testimony in behalf of ye Said John F. of his holy and good conversation. Upon perusal and due consideration of ye premises, and finding Him to be a person qualified as in and by ye Ordinance for such Approbation is required. The Commissioners above-mentioned have adjudged and approved of Said

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¹. Quick MS, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 929
². R. Horton, John Howe (London: Methuen & Co., 1895), pp. 31-32
John F. to be a fit person to preach ye Gospell, and have granted
him admission, and doe admit ye Said John F. to ye Lecture in Town-
stall, and Chapell of St. Saviours in Dartmouth aforesaid. And
doe hereby Signify and declare to all persons concerned, that he is
hereby enabled to receive, profess and enjoy all or any Stipend,
or Stipends, Rents, duties, and proffits whatsoever, wch is or shall
be to him according to ye establishment of ye said Lecture belong-
ing. In witness whereof they have caused ye Common Seal to be
hereunto affixed, and ye Same to be attended by ye hand of ye
deister of his Highness in that behalf appointed.

In Dartmouth Flavel spent the rest of his life, except for the
periods of ejection.

The origin of the town of Dartmouth is involved in obscurity. But
there is no doubt of the extreme antiquity, of not of the town, at
least of its river being a safe and good harbor. The town lies on the
west side of the river, from which its name is derived, and used to
include three villages: Clifton, Dartmouth, and Hardness. It seems to
have been a place which high powers delighted to bully. The mayor of
Totness, a neighboring and older town, oppressed it by exacting heavy
tolls; the third Edward mulcted it for the benefit of his son; and the
Duchy officers collected all the dues they could from it.

In Edward III's reign Dartmouth was strong in ships. In 1347,
during the siege of Calais, it furnished thirty-one ships and 757 mariners,
the third largest contribution from the towns of that period. In 1377
the town was burnt and destroyed by a powerful army from France. Thirty
years later, it was again assaulted by a French admiral and a M. du
Chastel. However, the French were surprised when "the townsmen and in-
habitants behaved themselves so gallantly, and received the enemy with
such intrepidity, that they were glad to regain their ships, with the

1. Quick MS, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 929-930
loss of 400 killed and 200 taken prisoners, among whom were several persons of distinction, especially the Lord du Chastel, their commander.¹

The Corporation of Dartmouth must have been quite wealthy in the early part of the seventeenth century. In 1642 in the Long Parliament their representatives authorized the advance of £2,668.7s.6d to help subdue the Irish rebels. In the Civil War Dartmouth sided with Parliament. Though badly situated for defence it held out against Prince Maurice for one month and four days before it was taken. The town was subsequently garrisoned for the king, and remained a Cavalier stronghold until the end of the war.²

The mother-church of Dartmouth was at Tunstal or Townstal. The earliest authentic information of a church at Tunstal is contained in the Cartulary of Thorre Abbey, according to Hugh R. Watkin.³ He reports that on folio 57b of the Cartulary of Thorre Abbey, in Dublin, is a license under the Statute of Mortmain given by Edward I at Dartmouth 16 February 1285-6. This charter states that

owing to the great distance from the parish Church of 'Townstalle' many parishioners, on account of infirmity and fatigue, are unable to attend their Church. On their petition and that of the donor, one of the parishioners, 'dilectus nobis Willelmuus Bacon,' the latter is granted permission to give to the Abbot and Convent of Torre one acre of land in Clifton Dartemowe for the purpose of building a Chapel. . . thanks to the record preserved by the Canons of Torre Abbey in their Cartulary, we know that it was the first King Edward of England who by his royal sanction laid the Foundation of the Church of St. Saviours, Dartmouth.⁴

¹. Devonshire Association Reports and Transactions, 1869, p. 132
³. Devonshire Association Reports and Transactions, 1911, p. 149
⁴. Ibid., pp. 152 ff.
In Dartmouth Flavel was associated with the Rev. Allan Geare, minister of St. Saviour's, "a very worthy, but sickly man," with whom Flavel divided the duties of the parish. Flavel, as the order from Whitehall states, was to be "Lecturer." Lectures and lectureships were puritan developments under the primacies of Bancroft, Abbot and Laud, to enable ministers to preach without conforming. A lecturer was chosen and paid privately by a congregation, by one or more members, or by some wealthy patron. His duty was to lecture or preach on weekdays and Sundays at hours not in conflict with the regular services. He could preach at more than one town or market place, as the pastoral work and the ordinary, prescribed services of his parish were conducted by a regularly invested minister. In this way a number of officially unrecognized preaching stations, naturally kept in puritan hands, came to be established in many parts of the country. Henry Smith, Walter Travers, Richard Rogers and Richard Greenham were all lecturers at some period in their careers.¹

As we note in Flavel's case, the system was continued even after the Puritans gained power and were free from persecution. Flavel thus lectured or preached every Sunday at Townstal and every fortnight at the Wednesday-lecture in Dartmouth.²

Flavel worked with great success here. Quick reports:

In this new Station God crowned his labours with his good blessing. He made it his business to honour Christ in his ministry, and ye Lord his Master reflected back again upon Him rays and beams of honour. For he was ye happy Instrument of bringing in many Souls to God. So that He had many Spirituall

¹ cf. Haller, op. cit., pp. 52-53; Clark, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 253
children, who went to Heaven before Him, and are blessing God for him, as doe many also who as yet Survive Him.¹

One of these "Spiritual children" had this to say of Flavel's ministry:

I could say much, though not enough, of the excellency of his preaching; of his seasonable, suitable, and spiritual matter; of his plain expositions of scripture; his taking method, his genuine and natural deductions, his convincing arguments, his clear and powerful demonstrations, his heart-searching applications, and his comfortable supports to those that were afflicted in conscience. In short, that person must have a very soft head, or a very hard heart, or both, that could sit under his ministry unaffected.²

However, Flavel's success was not without effort on his part, as Quick reports:

By his unwearied application to study, he had acquired a great stock both of divine and human learning. He was master of the controversies betwixt the Jews and Christians, Papists and Protestants, Lutherans and Calvinists, and betwixt the Orthodox, and the Arminians and Socinians: he was likewise well read in the Controversies about Church-discipline, Infant-Baptism, and Antinomianism. He was well acquainted with the School-divinity, and drew up a judicious and ingenious scheme of the whole body of that Theology in good Latin. . . . He had also with much labour and painstaking attained to a singular skill and exactness in ye Orientall languages.³

After the ejection of Flavel and Geare from the pulpits of Townstal and St. Saviour's the authorities had some difficulty to find replacements, as seen from the entries in the Accounts of the Receiver of the Dartmouth Corporation for 1662:⁴

¹ Quick MS, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 931
² E. Middleton, Biographia Evangelica (London: Printed for W. Justin, 1786), Vol. IV, pp. 50-51
³ Quick MS, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 932
⁴ Devonshire Association Reports and Transactions, 1911, p. 177
Pd. Mr. John Crocker of Stocklemming to preach in Dartmouth the 21st August, 1662 12/6
To Mr. Jesse of Littlehemston (Littlehemston, near Totnes) for preaching 30th August nothing (a barrill of Anchovies and a barrill of olives) 8/-
To Mr. Ellis of Allington for preaching the 7th Sept. 14/-
To Mr. Lewis Sharpe 1st Sept. 13/-
Pd. Mr. Clifford Newton Ferrers 28 Sept. nothing (sent a barrel of anchovies and a barrel of olives) 9/-
Pd. Mr. Gruberry of Torr for preaching Oct. 5th 13/-
Pd. Mr. Nicholas Downey for preaching Oct. 12th 16/-
Pd. John Penny for going to several places to procure Preachers to come here 6/6

Flavel and Geare continued to work privately among their people after their ejection in August, 1662. Geare died in December of that year; Flavel then worked in conjunction with James Burdwood, who had been ejected from St. Petrock's Church, Dartmouth, and who consequently set up a Latin School in Dartmouth.

The Bishop of Exeter, Dr. Seth Ward, in 1665, made a report of nonconformists in his diocese. This return, preserved at Lambeth, reads: "Dartmouth: Schoolmasters. Edwd Manning, William Ball, teach English Scholars. But neither licensed nor well affected. Nonconformist ejected Ministers. Dartmouth Mr. Kempster, Mr. James Burdwood, Mr. John Flavell, Conventiclers." Another part of the return has: "In Dartmouth there are also Mr. James Burdwood and Mr. John Flavell; who are reported to have private Meetings."

The passing of the Oxford or Five-Mile Act forced Flavel to leave Dartmouth; at his departure his people followed him to the Townstal Churchyard where they bade sad farewell to one another. Flavel moved to Slapton, about five miles from Dartmouth, where he was put up by the family of the Rolles, in a house called Hudscott Hall. There he

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1. Devonshire Association Reports and Transactions, 1911, p. 177
preached at midnight, for the sake of secrecy, when the Great hall was thronged with an attentive and deeply-affected auditory." Afterwards when both preacher and auditory had gained more courage, Flavel is reported to have preached "twice every Lord's day; making frequent visits to his friends in Dartmouth, and preaching to them as the watchful diligence of his enemies would admit."1

At Slapton he also started writing. Amidst the plantations, gardens, and other rural scenes he gathered his material for Husbandry Spiritualized, one of his early works. A Saint Indeed is addressed "From my study at Ley in Slapton, October 7th 1667."

When the law officers and informers became more diligent and efficient, Flavel had to resort to outdoor meetings, like many of his puritan brethren. Windeatt relates the following tradition:

There is a tradition that in the persecution days the Non-conformists took advantage of the fact of the rock 'Salt Stone' being a sort of 'No-man's-land' in the Kingsbridge Estuary, in the middle of 'wide gates,' about 100 feet in length and 50 feet in width, equidistant from Charleton, South Pool, and Marlborough and extra-parochial, and resorted thither at low water in order to hold their meetings, seeing that the Justices could not legally interfere with them there. Flavell was connected with these meetings, and took part in them there.2

Calamy reports a preaching service in a wood near Exeter, "where their enemies disturbed them; but Mr. Flavel, through the care of his hearers, escaped." Not discouraged, Flavel and those who escaped took to another wood, "where he preached without molestation."3

Two other incidents show the difficulties under which Flavel labored at this time. Once he had to go to Totness, disguised as a woman, riding on horseback behind a man, to baptize the child of a nonconformist family

2. Devonshire Association Reports and Transactions, 1911, p. 180
in the town. On another occasion he is said to have been pursued, when on horseback, and to have ridden down to a cove near Dartmouth; plunging his horse into the sea he swam it around to the next cove and escaped.¹

So it was more than popularity or social custom that made Flavel and his brethren continue preaching and their listeners continue meeting in the face of these difficulties. Just as Peter, Paul and the other disciples continued to preach in spite of prohibitions and persecution in the early days of the Church, so did these men now. Difficulties merely spurred Flavel and his people on to greater efforts and zeal, as Quick notes:

Yet ye many hazards and dangers to which He was exposed in the exercise of his Ministry did not deter Him from it, but by an holy antepostosis they did exercise his courage and influence zeal with ye greater eagerness to discharge and fulfill it.

For ye Word of ye Lord was precious in those days. And ye Stollen waters of ye Sanctuary were more sweet, and ye bread of Life gotten with those perils, and eaten thus in secret, was unspeakably pleasant. This made ye Professors of Religion ingenious to contrive ye most convenient places, and out of ye reach of ye Law for hearing of their ejected Pastors, and ye Solemnizing of divine religious worship.²

About this time (c. 1672) his second wife died. "She had bin a helper of his Joyses, and partner with him in his troubles and afflictions." It seems that Flavel had need of such a wife, as he had a weak constitution, and laboured "dayly under many infirmities and distempers."

Subsequently "his heavenly Father provided for him in convenient Season a third wife, a vertuous Gentlewoman." She was Agnes, youngest daughter of the Rev. Thomas Down, ejected from St. Edmund's, Exeter. She lived happily with Flavel for eleven years (d. 1684), and left him two sons.

¹ Devonshire Association Reports and Transactions, 1911, p. 131
² Quick MS, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 938
When Charles II issued his Declaration of Indulgence in 1672, Flavel returned to Dartmouth. There he was licensed 2 April 1672 as "a Teacher of ye Congregational way, in a Congregation in his owne house at Dartmouth." An address of thanks for the Indulgence, signed by Flavel and 163 of his congregation was presented to the king.¹ On 18 April 1672 Flavel secured another license as "a Congr. Teacher in any licensed place."² Flavel’s registering as a Congregationalist may seem surprising, after having been reared and ordained as a Presbyterian. But according to Whiting’s studies, the distinction between the Independents and Presbyterians after 1662 ceased to be very sharp. Common misfortune tended to bring these two bodies into friendlier relations. The ordinary man failed to see much difference between them, and so the names were used very loosely and constantly interchanged. In the Indulgence licenses of 1672 it sometimes happens that the same minister is described as a Presbyterian in one place and a Congregationalist in another, or a Presbyterian is stated to have been licensed for a Congregational meeting-house.³

Flavel continued to preach privately after the Indulgence was cancelled by Parliament the following year. Finally, upon renewed persecution of nonconformists, he was forced to flee from Dartmouth, and went to London in 1682. In a letter from London, 15 August 1684, he wrote to a J. Thornton: "I am hurried hither out of Devonshire by the fury of the storme yt lyes hard upon me, my estate is pursued as a prey by an Outlawry, my liberty by a Capias."⁴ He went to London by

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¹. Matthews, op. cit., p. 200
³. Whiting, op. cit., pp. 62-63
⁴. Matthews, op. cit., p. 200
sea, and on the way narrowly escaped shipwreck in a storm, which was supposed to have abated after his prayers.

In London Flavel found much work and much encouragement. But difficulties dogged his steps, as this episode reveals:

Mr. Flavel, while he was in London, narrowly escaped being taken, with the reverend Mr. Jenkyn, at Mr. Fox's in Moorfields, where they were keeping a day of fasting and prayer. He was so near, that he heard the insolence of the officers and soldiers to Mr. Jenkyn when they had taken him; and observed it in his diary that Mr. Jenkyn might have escaped as well as himself, had it not been for a piece of vanity in a lady, whose long train hindered his going downstairs, Mr. Jenkyn, out of his too great civility having let her passe before him.

During his stay in London Flavel married his fourth wife, "a widowed Gentlewoman of ye City ofoucester," and daughter of George Jefferies, formerly minister of Kingsbridge. This wife survived him.

Flavel received two calls to London churches: one to succeed Mr. Jenkyn upon his death, and the other to John Reeves' congregation in the parish of St. Mary, Magdalen. In spite of greater congregations, maintenance, honor, and opportunities offered by these London churches, Flavel chose to return to his people in Dartmouth.

Back in Dartmouth, Flavel encountered difficulties that must have caused him to regret his choice at times, but we find no complaints. On one occasion some "brutes and monsters of Ingratitude" in Dartmouth made an effigy of him, dressing it up with a black and white cap and a little band; pinning a copy of the Covenant and Bill of Exclusion on it they carried it through the streets, set it on a bonfire and burnt it. Flavel, however, took it very well, for on being told about it afterwards, "he lift up this Ejaculation unto God for them, Father! forgive

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1. Quick Ms, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 944
them; for they know not what they doe.”

Upon James II's Declaration of Indulgence in 1687 Flavel's people provided him "a large place," where he preached twice every Sunday and delivered a lecture every Wednesday. He rejoiced with all the nonconformists in the Act of Toleration, 1689, and preached a special sermon for the day. He also commemorated the event by added zeal in his work, having "made a vow to the Lord under his confinement, that if he should be once more entrusted with public liberty, he would improve it to the advantage of the Gospel." ²

Flavel was active in promoting the Happy Union, an association of Presbyterian and Congregational ministers in Devon, of which body he was elected moderator just before his death 26 June 1691. His sermon, The Character of a Complete Evangelical Pastor Drawn by Christ, which was to have been preached at Taunton, on 2 September 1691, to the "United Brethren of Gloucester, Dorset, Somerset, and Devonshire," was published posthumously. ³ Flavel was buried at St. Saviour's, Dartmouth. George Trosse, minister at Exeter, preached his funeral sermon, from Elisha's lamentation upon the translation of Elijah, II Kings 2:12, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!

Flavel's will, settled 15 October 1691, mentions property at Landkey and elsewhere in Devon, also at Gloucester. Surviving him were his fourth wife, Dorothy; his sons, Thomas and Benjamin (by his third wife); a son-in-law, William Ball, of Dartmouth; his brother, Phineas. He left £10 to the poor of Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, at the discretion of the Rev. John Soilsbury there, and to the poor of Hasler, Warwickshire;

1. ibid., Vol. II, p. 972
I. £100, given by a Mr. Child for a meeting-house if liberty were granted within two years of Flavel's death. ¹

Shortly after his interment, a monument was erected in the church of St. Saviour's, but it was removed in 1709 by order of the magistracy on the ground that it was "fitter for a Bishop." It was subsequently placed in the dissenting meeting-house (at present the Congregational Church), at the expense of Flavel's surviving relatives. The inscription on the monument reads as follows:

Memoriae Sacrum

Johannis Flavell

Qui in studiis foelix, in disputationibus acutus,
In Rostris Seraphicus, in Scriptus disertus,
In omnibus vero eruditus, et illustris,
Doctrina & moribus Ornatissimus,
Fidei, pietatis, & amicitiae assiduus cultor,
Infensissimus erroris et vitii hostis,
Ecclesiae decus et civitatis
Qui post quam pro piorum fructu et orando et vigilando exhausisset vires, in Domino placide obdormivit, Junij 26 Anno Salutis 1691
Virtutes Sunt illi monumento
dum hic conduntur beatissimi uneres.
Could Grace, or Learning from ye Grave set free,
Flavell, Thou hadst not seen mortality.
The here thy dusty part Death's captive lyes,
Thou by thy works Thyself dost eternize;
Which death, nor rust of time shall overthrow,
Whilst thou dost reigne above these live below.

A portrait of Flavel by an anonymous painter hangs in the Dr. Williams Library in London. According to Quick, Flavel "was of a low stature, but full fire, life, and activity." He had a "very working

¹ Matthews, op. cit., p. 201
braine" and would learn from any man. He was charitable to poor students studying for the ministry. At one time or another he "bred up in University learning Mr. W. H. ye son of a Tradesman in that Town, and fitted him for ye ministry." Then there was another young man, "whose name was L." Flavel got him quarters and "defrayed his expenses for lodging, washing and diet. He cloathed him also, read Logick, Philosophy, and Divinity to him, and prepared him for ye Ministry." And there were two other young men "to whom he gave the same Academical Education."¹

"He was not only a zealous Preacher inye Pulpit, but a most sincere Christian in his closet." Herein was the source of his power and energy, for he was known to have had poor health during most of his ministry.

There is an addition from Anthony Wood's LS insertion on Flavel in Bishop Tanner's copy of the Athenae in the Bodleian Library (Good: Ath. Oxon. IV, 323), which reads: "He obtained not only more disciples than even John Owen the Independent, or Richard Baxter the Presbyterian did, but more wives than both (four at least in number according to the custom of the saints) by which he obtained a very considerable estate."² In view of Wood's antipathy towards nonconformists, the first part of the statement is high praise indeed. As to his domestic relations, we have little means of arriving at any just opinion of his excellencies or defects. If he grew rich from his wives, as Wood callously asserts, he certainly did not live on or for his riches.

¹. Quick LS, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 974-975
². Cited in Devonshire Association Reports and Transactions, 1911, p. 184
Flavel has written in his diary: "To make sure of eternal life is the great business which the sons of death have to do in this world."

This was for himself as well as for others, as Quick has observed:

He was exceeding jealous of his own heart, frequent in Self-tryall, and would press his Auditors to turne within themselves, to dwell at home, and to commune with their own heart, pressing upon them earnestly David's practice. Nor did he in this as ye scribes and Pharisees bind heavy burdens upon ye necks and Conscience of others, and not touch them with their Little finger. No, but he himself kept his heart with all diligence, and was most strict and accurate in that scrutiny wch he made of his Conscience, in that Inquiry wch he made into ye truth of his Estate towards God. For as he bade others not to be high minded but feare, and advised them that stood to take heed lest they shall fall, and all to work out their Salvation with feare and trembling; so did he transcribe theisse very rules and divine Apostolicall Canons into his ordinary practise, for he was afraid lest whilst he preached unto others, he should be cast away himself.

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1. Quick MS, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 949
CHAPTER III  FLAVEL'S PREACHING

Going to church in the seventeenth century, according to Caroline Richardson, was a pleasantly automatic performance, which might or might not be connected with conviction of sin and desire for spiritual development. She also suggests that nonconformist congregations were stimulated after 1662 by a human and secular enjoyment of doing that which was forbidden.\(^1\) History tells a different story, at least as concerns the Puritans. Persecution of nonconformists, especially after the passing of the second Conventicle Act in 1670, was much too severe to court. H. W. Clark cites these three cases, though many more could be given:

1. They distrained from Richard White as many brass kettles, with a still, which was worth £ 10:13s, though his fine was but £ 3:15s.

2. From one farmer they took six cows, which, at a moderate computation, were worth more than double the fines charged on him; and when the sufferer expressed his surprise that persons acquainted with the value of cattle should make such unreasonable distress, the informer replied, 'We take one for your sauciness and another for our trouble.'

3. The Nottingham Independent Church was forced to abandon its meetings in the town, and to link itself with the fellowship at the neighboring village of Sutton, even so only a partial safety being gained. 'Our meetings were disturbed, and we forced to meet as we could in the night or at two or three o'clock in the morning.'

As to church going being "a pleasantly automatic performance," one would surely think twice before going to one of the services ordinarily

\(^{1}\) C. Richardson, English Preachers and Preaching, 1660-1670 (New York: 1928), p. 22

2. Clark, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 72-73
held on the public fast-days conducted by John Howe in Torrington when
nonconformist worship was still permitted. As Howe tells his biographer,
Calamy:

It was upon those occasions his common way, to begin about
nine in the morning, with a prayer for about a quarter of an hour,
in which he begged a blessing on the work of the day; and after-
wards read and expounded a chapter or psalm, in which he spent
about three quarters of an hour; then prayed for about an hour,
preached for another hour, and prayed for about half an hour.
After this, he retired and took some little refreshment for about
a quarter of an hour more, (the people singing all the while) and
then came again into the pulpit and prayed for another hour, and
gave them another sermon of about an hour's length; and so con-
cluded the service of the day, at about four of the clock in the
evening, with about half an hour or more in prayer. 1

The seventeenth century Puritan attended church not as a pleasantly
automatic performance, because for each performance he was subject to
excessive strain on his attention or excessive punishment if caught; he
went to hear the Word of God preached. When the preaching met his need
and requirement he went not only on Sundays but on week days as well.

From the point of view of the puritan preacher, church going
was also a matter of supreme importance: it afforded him the chief
means of presenting the gospel for the reconciling of the world to God,
as the "opening" of the scriptures occupied the central position in
puritan worship. 2 The preaching of the word, Flavel affirms, "is the
power of God to salvation, and salvation is ordinarily denied to whom
the preaching of the word is denied, and deserves to be valued by every
one of us as our life." 3 Thus, the preacher always goes into the
pulpit with this reflection: "I am going to preach that word which is

1. Cited by H. Rogers, Life and Character of John Howe (London:
The Religious Tract Society, 1836), p. 21
to be a savour of life or death unto these souls; upon how many may the
curse of perpetual barrenness be executed this day."¹ However, with the
Puritans, Flavel always remembers also that the power of preaching is
"neither from itself nor him that preaches it, but from the Spirit of
God whose instrument it is, by whose blessing and concurrence with it,
it produceth its blessed effects upon the hearts of men."²

To Flavel the application of Christ to the souls of men is the
great project and design of God in this world. Towards this end God
has appointed a "Gospel-ministry," whose work is described thus:

The Lord Jesus thought it not sufficient to print the law of
grace and the blessed terms of our union with him in the scriptures,
where men may read his willingness to receive them, and see the
just and gracious terms and conditions upon which he offers to
become theirs; but hath also set up and established a standing
office in the church, to expound that law, inculcate the precepts,³
and urge the promises thereof; to woo and espouse souls to Christ.

Flavel stands with the Puritans in general, as opposed to the
Episcopalians, in placing matter over manner in preaching. One of the
main complaints the Puritans of Flavel's time had against the Episco-
palian preachers was that the latter's sermons were not evangelical,
that they did not preach the gospel. A typical complaint was that
voiced by Increase Mather, puritan minister of Boston and president of
Harvard College, in a preface to one of Flavel's books: "Though morality
is good and necessary to be taught and practised, yet it is much to be
lamented, that many preachers in these days have hardly any other dis-
courses in their pulpit than what we find in Seneca, Epictetus, Flu-

¹ ibid., Vol. V, p. 60
² ibid., Vol. II, p. 57
³ ibid., Vol. II, p. 50
tarch, or some such heathen moralist. Christ, the Holy Spirit, and (in a word) the Gospel is not in their sermons.¹

Robert South, Isaac Barrow and John Tillotson were three of the greatest conformist preachers of the age, known for their wit, brilliance, quaintness and eloquence. Yet, a modern Anglican confesses that "as recast by Tillotson, the sermon lost its heroic note, and became a moral essay, the vehicle of a sober, utilitarian, prudential ethic, rather than a proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God."²

Some typical examples of Tillotson's sermons cited are:

- The distinguishing Character of a Good and a Bad Man
- Doing Good, a Security against Injuries from Men
- The Reputation of Good Men after Death
- The best Men Liable to the worst Treatment, from mistaken Zealots
- The Wisdom of Religion justified, in the different ends of good and bad Men
- The Duty and Reason of Praying for Governors
- The Reasonableness of fearing God more than Man
- Honesty the best Preservative against dangerous Mistakes in Religion
- The Prejudices against Jesus and his Religion considered
- Instituted Religion not intended to undermine Natural
- The Efficacy, Usefulness, and Reasonableness of Divine Faith
- The Unprofitableness of Sin in this Life, an Argument for Repentance
- Of Diligence in our general and particular Calling
- The true Remedy against the Troubles of Life
- The Resurrection of our Saviour consider'd as an Argument for seeking Things above
- The Uncertainty of the Day of Judgment, consider'd and improv'd
- The Usefulness of considering our latter End
- The folly of hazarding eternal Life, for temporal Enjoyments
- A Discourse against Transubstantiation³

The basic difference between the preaching of the Puritans and Anglicans, between spiritual and "metaphysical" preaching, was not merely one of style, but of conviction. The Puritans were convinced

¹. ibid., Vol. IV, p. 16
³. ibid., pp. 161-162
that it was through preaching that the gap between God and man was bridged, while the Anglicans from the time of Hooker saw other means. Flavel was so convinced the Puritans were right that he argued thus: "That its efficacy [i.e. of preaching] is great in convincing, humbling, and changing the hearts of men, is past all debate and question." This power, however, is made effective only when the Word is preached. William Perkins, whose influence over puritan preachers extended long after his time, started his preaching manual, The Arte of Prophecying, with the statement: "Preaching of the word is Prophecying in the name and room of Christ, whereby men are called to the state of Grace, and conserved in it." He ended with "the summe": "Preaching Christ by Christ to the praise of Christ." Flavel, in speaking of preachers as "ambassadors," affirms, "Yea, necessity is not only laid upon them to preach, but to keep close to their commission in preaching the gospel." His two volumes of sermons, The Fountain of Life and The Method of Grace, illustrate this point clearly. The first volume consists of forty-two sermons, setting forth "a methodical understanding" of the doctrines of Christ, covering the incarnation, offices, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension; the second volume comprises thirty-five sermons on "The application of the redemption that is with Christ unto sinners." Contrast these sermon topics with those of Tillotson given above:

From The Fountain of Life

Sets forth Christ in his essential and primeval glory
Opens the Covenant of Redemption betwixt the Father and the Redeemer

1. Flavel, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 56
3. Flavel, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 52
Of Christ's wonderful Person
Of the Authority by which Christ, as Mediator, acted
Of the Nature of Christ's Mediation
Of the Nature and Quality of Christ's Death
Of the Instructiveness of the Death of Christ, in his seven last Words

Christ's Funeral illustrated, in its Manner, Reasons, and excellent Ends
Wherein four weighty Ends of Christ's Humiliation are opened, and particularly applied
Wherein the Resurrection of Christ, with its influence upon the Saints Resurrection, is clearly opened, and comfortably applied
The Ascension of Christ illustrated, and variously improved

From The Method of Grace
Wherein the union of the Believer with Christ, as a principal Part of effectual Application, is stated and practically improved
Of the Nature and Use of the Gospel-ministry, as an external Means of applying Christ
Of that Act on our Part, by which we do actually and effectually apply Christ to our own Souls
Alluring the Hearts of Men to come to Christ
The Liberty of Believers opened and stated
The Teachings of God opened, in their Nature and Necessity
Of the Manner and Importance of the Spirit's Indwelling
Of the Nature and Necessity of the New Creature

In addition to these two volumes, Flavel published another volume of eleven sermons, entitled England's Duty, all on the text, Revelation 3:20. In the appendix to this volume he states, "In all the foregoing sermons I have been pleading and wooing for Christ."¹ A few of his occasional sermons were also published, either singly or included with his whole works: A Sermon on Gospel Unity; Mount Pisgah, "a sermon preached at the Public Thanksgiving, Feb. 14th, 1686-9, for England's Deliverance from Popery, etc."; A Coronation Sermon; A Token for Mourners and The Balm of the Covenant, two funeral sermons; finally, The Character of a Complete Evangelical Pastor, Drawn by Christ. The

¹. ibid., Vol. IV, p. 268
last was intended for a meeting of the local union of Presbyterian and Independent ministers in Devon just before Flavel's death. We should also mention that many of Flavel's treatises are expanded series of sermons he had preached.

Flavel's sermons long outlived him, because the matter he preached was of a timeless quality. So it is not surprising to find that over 160 years after it was written, The Fountain of Life was still being published both in Britain and in America. The Method of Grace was also in print 163 years after it first appeared. England's Duty was published by the New York American Tract Society 200 years after its first edition. And A Token for Mourners, published in 1674, was still in print in America in 1813.

In spite of the fact that he preached mostly doctrinal sermons, Flavel always spoke on themes vital to his listeners. He had this advice for his fellow ministers, which he learned from his own experience:

A prudent minister will study the souls of his people, more than the best human books in his library; and not choose what is easiest for him, but what is most necessary for them. Ministers that are acquainted with the state of their flocks, as they ought to be, will be seldom at a loss in the choice of the next subject: Their people's wants will choose their text, from time to time, for them.

The greatest part of our congregations are poor, ignorant, and unregenerated people that know neither their misery nor their remedy. This will direct us to the great doctrines of conviction, regeneration, and faith; and make us to sit with solicitous minds in our studies, pondering thus in our hearts: 'Lord, what course shall we take, and what words shall we choose, that may best convey the sense of this sin and danger, with the fulness and necessity of Christ, into their hearts.'

Flavel would probably have displeased Pepys, that insatiable sermon

1. ibid., Vol. VI, p. 571
taster of the age. But he fed his sheep.

Flavel often published his sermons as he preached them. In the epistle to the reader of England's Duty he wrote: "The following discourse comes to thy hand in that native plainness wherein it was preached. I was conscientiously unwilling to alter it, because I found by experience, the Lord had blessed and prospered it in that dress, far beyond any other compositions on which I had bestowed more pains." At other times he revised them for the press. "I confess the sermons were preached in a more relaxed stile, and most of these things were enlarged in the pulpit, which are designedly contracted in the press, that the volume might not swell above the ability of common readers."*

The manner of Flavel's preaching was in the tradition of Calvinist preachers of the puritan mold. Therefore, Flavel clung to a "plain and practical stile" as against the "metaphysical" manner of the Anglicans. One of his repeated arguments for the former was that "a crucified stile best suits the preachers of a crucified Christ," a reason voiced earlier by his spiritual forefathers. In fact, by the time Flavel started preaching, the distinction between these two forms had become so sharply drawn, the types so exactly stereotyped that ordinary laymen as well as Cambridge scholars were able to recognize a minister's party merely by the form and technique of his preaching. And in 1656 Abraham Wright, an opponent of Dell and Webster, issued

1. ibid., Vol. IV, p. 3
2. ibid., Vol. I, p. 24
a book of *Five Sermons, In Five Several Styles: or Manner of Preaching,* according to "Ep. Andrews his Way... Ep. Hall's Way... Dr. Maine's and Mr. Cartwright's Way... the Presbyterian Way... the Independent Way." The first two were actual sermons, but the last three were only parodies.

Perkins, in his *Arte of Prophecying,* had condemned any display of "harmful wisdome," and prescribed plain preaching of the Word because it was the testimony of God. "Thou must preach God's word as God's word and deliver it as thou received it, for angels, ambassadors, and messengers carry not their own message, but the message of the Lord of hosts," he had said. This advice had been partly in reaction to the "metaphysical" preaching of the Anglicans. In the next century, Richard Baxter supplemented this argument from another point of view in his *Reformed Pastor:

> It is commonly empty, ignorant men that want the matter and substance of true learning, that are over curious and solicitous about words and ornaments, when the ancient, experienced, most learned men, abound in substantial verities, usually delivered in the plainest dress. All our teaching must be as plain and evident as we can make it; for this doth most suit a teacher's ends. He that would be understood, must speak to the capacity of his hearers, and make it his business to make himself understood... and therefore painted, obscure sermons (like the painted glass in the windows that keep out the light) are too often the mark of painted hypocrites. If you would not teach men, what do you in the pulpit? If you would, why do you not speak so as to be understood?"

Flavel continued in this tradition, but it was a conscious and deliberate step. "I know that a holy dialect well becometh Christ's ministers, they should not be rude and careless in language or method;

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but surely the excellency of a sermon lies not in that, but in the
plainest discoveries and liveliest applications of Jesus Christ.\(^1\) His general feeling was that words spoken in the pulpit should be used
purposefully, chosen so that the "meanest and weakest" in the congre-
gation could understand and profit. Learned obscurity and deliberate
elocution were to be avoided. "In all my observation," he says, "I have
not found, that ever God hath made much use of laboured periods, rhetor-
cical flowers, and elegancies, to improve the power of religion in the
world."\(^2\) "Therefore," he tells his congregation in another sermon, "such
pedantic toys, and airy notions as injudicious ears affect, would rather
obstruct than promote my grand design among you; wholly waving that way,
I apply myself to a plain, popular, unaffected dialect, fitted rather
to pierce the heart, and convince the conscience, than to tickle the
fancy."\(^3\) Naturally he needed scriptural authority for this course; this he
found in I Corinthians 2:1, And I, brethren, when I came to you, came
not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the
testimony of God. This verse, Flavel explained, "contains an apology
for the plain and familiar manner of the apostle's preaching, which was
not (as he there tells them) with excellency of speech, or wisdom: i.e.
he studied not to gratify their curiosity with rhetorical strains or
philosophical niceties."\(^4\)

Flavel went so far as to prescribe a "plaine stile" for the
Christian's prayer life also:

Poor Christian, thou art troubled that thou canst not speak

\(^{1}\) Flavel, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. I, p. 39
\(^{2}\) \textit{ibid.}, Vol. IV, p. 342
\(^{3}\) \textit{ibid.}, Vol. I, p. 33
\(^{4}\) \textit{ibid.}, Vol. I, p. 32
and pray so neatly, so handsomely, as some others can? but cannot thou go into a corner, and there pour out thy soul affectionately, though not rhetorically, to thy Father? trouble not thyself. It is better for thee to feel one divine impression from God upon thy heart, than to have ten thousand fine notions floating in thy head. 1

We should be reminded, however, that with Flavel, as with the other puritans of his day, the crux of the matter was not so much disdaining rhetoric as putting first things first. As he said, "We are not to study the niceties of rhetoric so much as plainness and perspicuity; nor are we to speak in a high florid strain, as orators; but with the earnestness and zeal, and sincerity of the apostles: we are not to talk fine things, but what may convince the understanding and touch the heart." 2 A plain style for the puritans did not mean an unimaginative or unliterary style. The puritan prescription actually was enough rhetoric to pass through the imagination to the heart, but not so much that the understanding of the simple should be dazzled. Flavel's repeated advice was: "These two things, similitude and example do especially move us. Notions are more easily conveyed to the understanding, by being first clothed in some apt similitude, and so represented to the sense. . . . Those that can retain little of a sermon, yet ordinarily retain an apt similitude." 3 He also warned his fellow preachers with these words: "Be sure to back your exhortation with drawing examples; else you may preach out your last breath before you gain one soul to God." 4 Haller, however, points out a more earthly reason back of such advice. According to him, the motive the Puritans

1. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 295
2. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 40
3. Ibid., Vol. V, p. 4
4. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 65
acknowledged was zeal for the saving of souls, but they had also to fill their bellies. They were mendicants and had, like the wits and playwrights, to coin their gifts and learning in order to live. Their evangelical zeal, from this point of view, was but the convention of their art, the condition under which on their stage, in their theatre, they could hope to win the imagination and also the support of the crowd.¹

A close study of Flavel's similitudes and examples bears out Professor G. R. Owst's thesis that in view of the profound gulf which is supposed to divide the religion of Protestantism from that of the pre-Reformation era, no one seems to have realized that the style and even the matter of pulpit exposition had changed but little even in Bunyan's own day.² Professor Owst has discovered four distinctive types of medieval sermon-illustrations or exempla: brief illustrations drawn from men and things in the current everyday scene; allegoric figures of speech, scriptural or non-scriptural; biblical heroes and saints; and moralized anecdotes, historical or fictional, ancient or contemporary, secular or religious. In Flavel's sermons and treatises we note the use of all four types of medieval sermon exempla. His use of popular proverbs, his outspokenness and his directness and homeliness of speech may also be traced to medieval homiletics. In distinction from the rhetorical style fashionable among most of the Anglican preachers of his age, however, Flavel's style must be classed as "plaine" with that of Baxter, Owen, Howe, and other Puritans.

¹ Haller, op. cit., pp. 128-129
Favel and most of his fellow puritan preachers had the same grammar school and university education as their Anglican brethren. Hence, both had a thorough knowledge of Greek, Hebrew and Latin, logic, philosophy and rhetoric; both were well versed in the teaching of the Greek and Latin writers, the Church Fathers and Schoolmen, and Reformers; both were familiar not only with the Aristotelian school of thought but with the new Ramist one as well. In fact, Favel’s boast in plainness is to be taken with a grain of salt. The Bible was the great fount of his inspiration and beliefs; yet, behind the Bible was the common heritage of Renaissance learning. So in his sermons Favel makes innumerable references in all three ancient languages, and in addition to countless biblical proof-texts, he quotes profusely from all other sources. Among the ancient "profane" writers, he cites Darius and Artaxerxes, Anacreon and Xenander, Aristippus and Demosthenes, Alexander, Pompey, Augustus, Vespasian, Hadrian, Valens, Lucian and Julian, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the Epicureans and Stoics, Seneca, Pliny, Ovid, Plutarch, Plotinus, Tacitus, Juvenal, Horace, Cicero and Plautus; among the early Church Fathers, he mentions Montanus, Tertullian, Athanasius, Martyr, Constantine, Cyprian, Eusebius, Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, Chrysostom, Theodosius, Arius, Augustine, and Gregory.

He is acquainted with Bernard, Anselm, Aquinas, Bellarmine, Erasmus, Melanchthon, Bucer, Servetus, Zwingli, Oecolampadius. It is interesting to note that Favel quotes from Luther four times as much as he does from Calvin, though he was a strict Calvinist all his life. He also cites his fellow Englishmen, contemporary and otherwise: Hooker, Perkins, and Ames, More, Norris and Chillingworth, Burrough, Collings, Davenant, Reynolds, Greenham, Manton, Caryl, Dod, Baxter, Owen and
Howe. For some reason he does not mention Bunyan. In many sermons Flavel quotes as excessively as the "rhetorical" preachers he condemns.

In the matter of sermon construction, Flavel again reflected his time and school. Perkins, in The Order and Summer of the sacred and only method of preaching, had prescribed four basic steps: reading the text; explaining or opening it; collecting a few and profitable points of doctrine from it; and applying the doctrines to life and manners. Such a construction stems basically from medieval homiletics, where we find this definition of preaching: "Preaching involves the taking up of a theme, the division of the same theme, the sub-division of the theme, the appropriate citing of concordant points, and the clear and devout explanation of the Authorities brought forward."¹ But Flavel had his own reasons for logical sermon structure:

Practical and saving knowledge of Christ is the sincere Christian's excellency above the self-cozening hypocrite, Heb. vi 6, 6 but methodical and well-digested knowledge of Christ is the strong Christian's excellency above the weak, Heb. v. 12, 13, 14. A saving, though an immethodical knowledge of Christ, will bring us to heaven, John xvii 2 but a regular and methodical, as well as a saving knowledge of him, will bring heaven into us, Col. ii 2,3. ²

We might add that such a method also had a practical purpose in that it facilitated note-taking and memory-work for the puritan laity, who had to be indoctrinated without the aid of textbooks.

A typical example from Flavel's sermons is the one entitled, "Of Christ's wonderful Person."³ The text is John 1:14, And the Word was

². Flavel, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 21
³. ibid., Vol. I, pp. 72 ff.
made flesh, and dwelt among us . . .

Flavel first considers the word of the text, going back to the Greek and Hebrew, and draws two points from it:

(1) "The incarnation of the Son of God plainly asserted."

(2) "That assertion strongly confirmed."

He elaborates the second point thus:

(1) "In the assertion we have three parts.

(a) "The Person assuming

(b) "The Nature assumed

(c) "The assumption itself

(2) "This assertion ('that the word was made flesh') is strongly confirmed."

Flavel next states the proposition: "Doct. That Jesus Christ did really assume the true and perfect nature of man, into a personal union with his divine nature, and still remains true God, and true man, in one person for ever." Before dividing this proposition Flavel warns against the errors of Arius and the Nestorians. Then he announces: "But that you may have a sound and clear understanding of this mystery, I will (1) Open the nature; (2) The effects; and (3) The reasons or ends of this wonderful union." In discussing the first point he sub-divides it:

(1) "Negatively.

(a) "Think not when Christ assumed our nature, that it was united consubstantially.

(b) "Nor yet that they are united physically.

(c) "Nor yet is it such a mystical union."
(2) "Positively.

(a) "The human nature was united to the second person miraculously and extraordinarily.

(b) "As it was produced miraculously, so it was assumed integrally;

(c) "We assumed our nature, as with all its integral parts, so with all its sinless intimacies.

(d) "The human nature is so united with the divine, as that each nature still retains its own essential properties distinct.

(e) "The union of the two natures in Christ, as an inseparable union;

(3) "Doubt.

(4) "Resolution."

In the second point of the proposition Flavel makes this subdivision:

(1) "The two natures being thus united in the person of the Mediator.

(2) "The singular advancement of the human nature in Christ.

(3) "The concourse and cooperation of each nature to his mediatory works."

In the third point of the proposition he makes only one comment:
"That the human nature was not assumed to any intrinsic perfection of the Godhead."

Finally, Flavel comes to the application:
"Use 1. Let all Christians rightly inform their minds in this truth of so great concernment in religion, and hold it fast against all
subtle adversaries, that would wrest it from them.

"Use 2. Adore the love of the Father, and the Son, who bid so high for your souls, and at this rate were contented you should be recovered.

"Use 3. And here infinite wisdom has also left a famous and everlasting mark of itself; which invited, yea, even chains the eyes of angels and men to itself.

"Use 4. Hence also we infer the incomparable sweetness of the Christian religion, that shews poor sinners such a fair foundation to rest their trembling consciences upon.

"Use 5. Of how great concernment is it, that Christ should have union with our particular persons, as well as with our common nature?

"Use 6. If Jesus Christ has assumed our nature, then he is sensibly touched with the infirmities that attend it, and so hath pity and compassion for us, under all our burdens.

"Use 7. Hence we see, to what a height God intends to build up the happiness of man, in that he hath laid the foundation thereof so deep, in the incarnation of his own Son.

"Use 8. Lastly, How wonderful a comfort is it, that he who dwells in our flesh is God?"

In matter and form this is a representative example of Flavel's sermons. The basic framework is clear: explanation of the text; statement and division of the proposition or doctrine; application of the doctrine to life and manners through the "uses." It fits the general description of seventeenth century puritan sermons as being three-storied, built on doctrine, reason and use. The sermon is both doc-
trinal and evangelical — offering light and heat. These two elements were not always kept in separate compartments. In the first "use" of the sermon above, Flavel takes time to point out the errors of the Arians, Apollinarians, Sabellians, Eutychians, Seleusians and Nestorians. The style of the sermon is very plain. Flavel does not commit the crime of jargon that South, Bachard, Glanvill charge Puritans with; he himself condemns the right people for the crime: "... but though believers are said to be in Christ, and Christ in them, yet they are not one person with him. They are not christed into Christ, or godded into God, as blasphemous Familists speak."² As to exempla, Flavel cites twelve secular ones and fifty-one biblical references, of which thirty-eight are from the New Testament.

A sermon such as that outlined above may be methodical, but it has its weakness: the temptation to engineer endless divisions and subdivisions. Flavel was not always innocent of this fault, sometimes building too many doctrines, at other times too many "uses." In dealing with one sub-point he further elaborated it under the following heads:
"1. Gradually, 2. Congruously, 3. Powerfully, 4. Effectually, and 5. Finally."³ One of his favorite ways of applying a doctrine was to discuss its "uses" for his hearers: "1. Information. ... 2. Exhortation. ... 3. Direction. ... 4. Examination. ... and 5. Consolation."⁴ And in the application of the first "use" of another sermon Flavel invented this mechanical construction: "... look which way you will, upward

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². Flavel, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 76
³. ibid., Vol. II, p. 71
or downward, inward or outward, backward or forward, to the right-hand, or to the left, you shall find all things persuading and urging the doctrine of patience upon you." He then proceeded to discuss each direction in turn.

Flavel was definitely a New Testament preacher. The common charge that the Puritans were "Old Testament men" cannot be made against him. Of his three major volumes of sermons, The Fountain of Life, The Method of Grace and England's Duty, only ten are based on Old Testament texts, while seventy-nine are on texts from the New Testament. He preached Christ even when he used an Old Testament text.

What are the distinguishing characteristics of Flavel's preaching? We note five.

First, Flavel's preaching was fruitful; he fulfilled his commission. The sole aim in his life and work was to bring souls to Christ. "Dear friends, my heart's desire and prayer to God for you is, that you may be saved. 0 that I knew how to engage this whole town to Jesus Christ, and make fast the marriage-knot betwixt him and you..." Towards this end he imparted a reasoned and solid body of Christian doctrine in every sermon he preached. He brought this message to all: "to those that never felt the power of the world; to those that have only felt some slight and common effects thereof; and to those unto whose very hearts the commandment is come, in its effectual and saving power." That Flavel succeeded in his aim is acknowledged by Anthony Wood, who wrote

2. ibid., Vol. I, p. 28
3. ibid., Vol. II, p. 301
that in Dartmouth, Flavel “became famous in his Conventicle for a popular kind of canting Rhetoric.”¹ From Wood, this is high praise for a Puritan!

Secondly, Flavel preached through his life as well as through his lips. Repeatedly he exhorted: “Be filled with tender affections toward the souls of men, with whom you treat for reconciliation: you had need be men of bowels, as well as men of brains. . . . O study not only to preach exactly, but to live exactly; let the misplacing of one action in your lives, trouble you more than the misplacing of words in your discourses.”² As in other things this exhortation stemmed from his own experience. Nearly all his contemporaries and later historians referred to him as the "affectionate" as much as the "learned" John Flavel. One historian wrote of him: "No man was more generally popular or more beloved by his people."³ Of course, Flavel's practice only followed that of his forbears in the previous generation. Knappen tells us that besides having an unshakable faith in the soundness of his position, the puritan minister of the Tudor period added the strong selling-point of a life far superior, in the moral judgment of his contemporaries, to the normal standards of the clergy of his time. The average Puritan worked at his calling far more energetically than did his conforming neighbor. Both tended to neglect the prescribed routine of morning prayer, evening prayer, and saints' days, but the time saved was not spent by the Puritan at court, at the tavern, or in the hunting field. He felt the obligation to attain to the dizzy heights of at least a sermon a

². Flavel, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 64-65
week; and, if he was frequently a pluralist, it was partly for the sake of providing more people with the opportunity of hearing regular preaching. By thus exceeding the normal demands of his profession, he also took upon himself the supererogatory task of daily study. When he added a week day lecture to his Sunday schedule of sermons and catechizing, or a Sunday sermon to his market-day exposition, it was obvious that he was doing the Lord's work, and when he exhorted his parishioners in daily conversation, visited the sick, and started a school, it was hard to deny that he was instant in season and out of season.\textsuperscript{1}

Flavel's obedience was in season and out of season. Though half of his ministry was spent under persecution, deprived of income and home, he was sustained by the thought that they who keep the Word would be kept by the Word, and so remained faithful to the end. He had to shift from one hiding place to another for twenty years; yet we find neither boasting nor complaining in his sermons. As we have noted in the previous chapter, when he was reviled he turned the other cheek. He tended the sick, poor and persecuted when he himself needed tending. He always followed this advice he gave to his fellow ministers: "Let the keepers of the vineyards remember they have a vineyard of their own to keep, a soul of their own that must be looked after as well as other men's."\textsuperscript{2}

He preached only what he had heard, seen and handled for this cogent reason: "The world hath eyes to see what you can do, as well as ears to hear what you can say; and as long as they see you do no more

\textsuperscript{1} E. W. Knappen, Tudor Puritanism (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939), p. 381
\textsuperscript{2} Flavel, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 130
than others, you may talk your hearts out ere they will believe your way is better than others."\(^1\) Repeatedly he advised younger ministers: "As ever we expect the truths we preach should operate upon the hearts of others, we first labour to work them in upon our own hearts."\(^2\) Because Flavel was on fire, his listeners' hearts burned while he opened the scriptures to them. But he never attributed any success to his own powers. "Without the Spirit and power of God accompanying the word, no heart can ever be opened to Christ... let ministers pray, and the people pray that the Gospel may be preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven."\(^3\) In the last sermon of his ministry he asserted: "Those are the best sermons, that are obtained by prayer."\(^4\)

Flavel was insistent that only those who had the proper qualifications and a solemn call be allowed to preach. Though Christ has "indulged to the meanest and weakest Christian, a liberty to read and judge of the scriptures for himself; yet he hath neither thereby nor therewith granted him a liberty publicly to expound and preach the word to others." Christians may privately edify one another by reading the Bible, counselling and reproving one another. "But for every one that hath confidence enough (and the ignorant usually are best stocked with it) to assume a liberty without due qualification or call to expound and give the sense of scripture, and pour forth his crude and unstudied notions, as the pure sense and meaning of God's spirit in the scriptures; this is what Christ never allowed."\(^5\)

\[\text{References:}\]
\begin{enumerate}
\item ibid., Vol. VI, p. 20
\item ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 572-573
\item ibid., Vol. IV, p. 52
\item ibid., Vol. VI, p. 573
\item ibid., Vol. III, p. 448
\end{enumerate}
All that Flavel was appears in his posthumous sermon, *The Character of a Complete Evangelical Pastor, Drawn by Christ.* The text is Matthew 24:45-47, Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom the Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Verily, I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods. In view of his audience, a gathering of puritan ministers, Flavel spends little time explaining the text. From it he draws two points: "(1) An evangelical pastor described. Christ's description of an evangelical pastor, ver. 45, which he doth by two excellent and essential properties, or qualifications, faithful and wise. (2) The reward of such as answer that description, propounded."

From that Flavel states his proposition: "Doct. That our Lord Jesus Christ will amply reward the faithful and prudent stewards of his house, in the day of their account." He develops this under three "doctrinal branches." First, "Ministers, in a special sense, are the stewards, or chief servants of Christ's house." Secondly, "The properties or qualifications of the stewards of Christ: which are 1. Faithfulness and 2. Prudence." This faithfulness is in reference to God, ourselves, and the flocks committed to us; it includes pure and spiritual aims and intentions; sincerity and integrity of heart; diligence in the discharge of duty; impartiality in the administration of Christ's house; and unshaken constancy and perseverance to the end. Prudence involves our own personal work, to see that be well done, and the work of others, which may be favorable or harmful. Thirdly, "Whoever, or

1. *ibid.*, Vol. VI, pp. 564-585
wherever such faithful and wise servants are, Christ will abundantly reward them in the day of their account."

In the application Flavel also follows a threefold division of "uses."

(1) "For information.
(a) "By this it appears, Christ hath established an order and government in his house, which none must violate.
(b) "In the light of this truth, we may also read our duty, how we ought to govern ourselves in the ordination of men to the ministerial office.
(c) "If there be such rewards, in the hand of Christ, for all his faithful and wise servants; Then we have no just cause or reason to repent of our choice of this office, whatever sufferings and reproaches it hath or yet may expose us to.

(2) "For reprehension. This point casts an ireful countenance upon all unfaithful and impudent ministers, who give their people the chaff for the wheat, and stones for bread, who glory in the title, and live upon the profits, but neither feed the flock, nor mind the account.

(3) "For exhortation. Are faithfulness and prudence the essential requisites of the servants, and stewards of Christ's house? And will he so simply reward them in whomsoever he finds them? Then let it be our care and study to approve ourselves to him, such as he here describes and encourages."

In this sermon and in his life Flavel revealed what the ideal minister should be.
Thirdly, Flavel preached for decisions, spiritual and ethical. He thus defined his office: "Ministers have a double office, to propose and offer Christ, and then to bear witness for or against those to whom he is thus offered." His sermons were not merely for edification but for holy living as well.

O then, since you are thus obliged to holiness of life, thus singularly assisted for it; and since there are such great dependencies upon it, and uses for it, both now and in the world to come, see that ye be holy in all manner of conversations. See that, as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so ye walk in him; always remembering, that for this very end, Christ hath redeemed, or delivered you out of the hands of your enemies, that you might serve him without fear, in righteousness and holiness all the days of your lives. And to how little purpose will be all that I have preached, and you have heard, of Christ, if it be not converted into practical godliness? This is the scope and design of it all.

His listeners had to make an ethical response to the Word: "Either shew the consistency between your profession and practice, or you can never hope to vindicate the name and honour of the Lord Jesus."

The "uses" in his applications were designed to examine and convict as well as to inform, exhort and console. To lead people to decisions, it was necessary for him to know them personally and intimately. Flavel's success resulted from his pastoral work as much as from his preaching; like Baxter he placed heavy emphasis on the necessity of a shepherd's heart in the work of the ministry. This explains his penchant for dissecting men's hearts, including his own. He frequently came out with a sound analysis.

Believers must not wonder to find strange vicissitudes and alterations in the state of their souls: Sometimes a clear, and sometimes a cloudy day; Sometimes they have songs in the night, and sometimes their bitter lamentations. If you ask, why is it thus? the answer is, there are within you contrary principles struggling in your souls; and it is no wonder at all to find peace

1. Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 20
2. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 561
and trouble, hope and fear, light and darkness taking their turns, and sharing your time betwixt them.\footnote{1}

With such a knowledge of men Flavel knew just when to use the mildest wooings or the most fearful threats to lead men to respond to the Word.

Fourthly, Flavel based his preaching on the Bible, following in the footsteps of the Reformers. He was no Mosaic legalist, but derived his knowledge and inspiration largely from the gospels and epistles rather than from the law, prophets and psalms. Even when he did use an Old Testament text he preached and exhorted with as much fervor as when he dealt with a text from the New Testament.

He manifested a wide knowledge of Scriptures and presumed a similar acquaintance on the part of his listeners or readers. Except for a few instances, he was no literalist in his interpretation of Scriptures. Naturally some of his exegesis shows his lack of what higher and lower criticism have revealed to us, but on the whole, his exegesis is sound, and rich in spiritual insight.

For this reason much of his teaching far outlasted the more rhetorical and moralistic sermons of his contemporaries. Their sermons might have been more attractive and famous. Flavel's, however, were more scriptural and evangelical, with a message for all time. That is the "transcendent excellency of saving, spiritual knowledge, above that which is merely literal and natural." That is also the "vast difference betwixt that notional, speculative, and traditional knowledge which man learneth from men, and that spiritual, operative, and transforming knowledge which a man learneth from God."\footnote{1}

\footnote{1} ibid., Vol. II, p. 324
Fifthly, Flavel excelled in the use of imaginative language, though he clung to a "plaine stile." He could, and did, quote from classical writers, sacred and secular, as freely as the Anglican preachers of his time; but more often he referred to experiences in the daily life of his congregations: events connected with the countryside, the household and the sea. He knew the value of an apt illustration. In an early devotional treatise, *Husbandry Spiritualized*, he applied an observation of the joy of harvest in these four reflections:

"a reflection for one that hath a full barn, but no Christ... a reflection for one that hath Christ, but no barn... a reflection for one that hath a full barn and Christ too... a reflection for one that hath neither a barn nor a Christ."¹

One church historian bears witness to Flavel's ability in these words: "Flavel is entitled to occupy a niche, not far from that which is filled by John Bunyan; not that he possessed the inventiveness of the Great Dreamer, yet, like him he delighted to use similitudes, and did it successfully."² John Tulloch, in his study of English puritan leaders, goes so far as to say that "... others, like Flavel surpassed him [Baxter] in piquancy and pith of idea, and homely expressiveness of language, acting on the hearer like a series of unexpected surprises, always stimulating and rewarding attention."³

The following example from one of Flavel's sermons may serve to show his art:

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1. *ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 1
The world is a great hospital, full of sick and dying souls, all wounded by one and the same mortal weapon, sin. Some are senseless of their misery, feel not their pains, value not a physician; others are full of sense, as well as danger: mourn under the apprehension of their condition, and sadly bewail it. The merciful God hath, in his abundant compassion to the perishing world, sent a physician from heaven, and given him his orders under the great seal of heaven, for his office.

Of course, the idea is not original. It appears in Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*, which was written just before the Civil War, thus appearing long before Flavel preached this passage. But note the completely new light Flavel's paragraph sheds in a comparison with Browne's:

Now for my life it is a miracle of thirty years, which to relate were not a history, but a piece of poetry, and would sound to common ears like a fable. For the world, I count it not an inn, but an hospital; and a place not to live but to die in. The world that I regard is myself; it is the microcosm of my own irme that I cast my eye on: for the other, I use it like my globe, and turn it round sometimes for my recreation. Men that look upon my outside, perusing only my condition and fortunes, do err in my altitude; for I am above Atlas' shoulders.

We note a certain homeliness and grace in Flavel's paragraph, lacking in the other, though the latter may be more beautiful prose.

Another example may serve to show the force, directness and concreteness of Flavel's style. Though plain, Flavel's preaching was very much alive.

Look over the several countries in the professing world; go into the families of country farmers, day labourers, and poor people, and except here and there a family, or person, into whose heart God hath graciously shined; what barbarous, brutish ignorance overspreads them: They converse from morning to night with beasts, though they have souls which are fit companions for angels, and capable of sweet converse with God. The earth hath opened her mouth, and swallowed up all their time, strength, thoughts, and

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1. Flavel, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 190
souls as it did the bodies of Corah and his company. They know the 
value of a horse or cow, but know not the worth of Christ, pardon, 
or their own souls: They mind daily what work they have to do with 
hands, but forget all they have to do upon their knees; their whole 
care is to pay their fine or rent to their landlord, but not a 
thought who shall pay their debts to God. They are so far from 
putting unnecessary business aside to make way for the service of 
God, that God's service is put aside as an unnecessary business, 
to make way for the world: The world holds them fast till they are 
asleep, and will be sure to visit them as soon as their eyes are open, 
that there may be no vacancy or door of opportunity left open for 
a thought of their souls, or another life, to slip in: Or, if at 
any time they think, or speak of these matters, then the world, 
like Pharaoh, when Israel spake of sacrificing, is sure to speak 
of more work.¹

¹. Flavel, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 187
CHAPTER IV FLAVEL'S THEOLOGY

In popular accounts Puritans are frequently labeled Calvinists, and then and there left hanging. However, three strands in puritan theology of the seventeenth century in England are to be distinguished.

First, strict Calvinism, the chief representative of which was John Owen. During the Commonwealth Owen was Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, and for five years served as Vice-Chancellor of that university. His treatises concerning Scriptures, God, Christ and man run in terms of covenant, decrees and federal relations, all along the lines of the Institutes and Westminster Confession. His deductions go so far that he may be said to have outstripped Calvin himself. The main pillars of Owen's theology, according to Hunt, are that the Bible is a book written immediately by God, and hence, everything it teaches must be followed, whether or not that be opposed to reason or conscience. This involves two things: the infallibility of the Bible and the limiting of reason solely to discover what the Bible contains.¹ The political eclipse of Owen's party, the Independents, did not retard him in the least. It is no wonder that the so-called Presbyterian Paternoster was also applied to him: "I believe in John Calvin, the Father of our Religion, disposer of Heaven, and Earth, and in Owen, Baxter and Jenkins his deare sons our Lords who were conceived by the Spirit of Fanaticism, born of Schism and Faction, suffered under the Act of Uniformity."²

² Quoted by H. Davies, The Worship of the English Puritans, p. 7
Nevertheless, Owen stands as the foremost puritan dogmatist, whose emphasis on Christ as the standard and source of our faith is still needful today. With Owen we might link the name of another independent, Thomas Goodwin, whose thought and emphasis were along the same lines. These two men became known as "the two Atlases and patriarchs of Independency."

Secondly, Arminianism. Since Laud, this strand had attracted more Anglicans than Puritans. In the period of puritan ascendancy during the Commonwealth and Protectorate it lay hidden. But with the Restoration it reappeared and even caught the fancy of English Presbyterianism. Like Calvinism, Arminianism was another import into England. It was a natural reaction to the new dogmatism of the strict Calvinists. The Arminian Creed, set forth in the *Demonstrance*, addressed in 1610 to the states of Holland and West Friesland, consists of five articles, asserting: conditional election, or election dependent on the foreknowledge of faith; universal atonement, in the sense that it is intended, although it is not actually efficient, for all; the inability of men to exercise saving faith, or to accomplish anything really good without regeneration through the Holy Spirit; that although grace at every step of the spiritual life is indispensable, it is not irresistible; and that the perseverance of all believers is doubtful. All five articles were condemned by the Synod of Dort. Nevertheless, they secured a firm hold on a large section of the Anglican clergy. Not all Puritans escaped from the influence of these doctrines. John Goodwin became the foremost puritan convert to the new creed, joined by others

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like John Horne, Vicar of Allhalls, Lynn; Tobias Conyers, minister of St. Ethelbert's, London; and George Lawson, rector of More, in Shropshire.¹

Third, Baxterianism. Just as Richard Baxter took a moderate position on church order, so he stood between the strict Calvinists and the Arminians. His motto was: In things necessary, unity; in things doubtful, liberty, in all things, charity. Baxter's chief biographer describes his position thus: "Certainly he was not an Arminian in the sense of John Goodwin, though more than once he defended him from the unjust attacks of ignorance and prejudice; nor was he, strictly speaking, a Calvinist, though he applauded the Synod of Dort, and the Westminster Assembly and shared, to the full, the Puritan admiration of Calvin."²

What was Flavel's position? A study of his theology as it appears in his sermons and treatises will show that he stood half-way between Owen and Baxter. We proceed directly to this study, using much of his own language, as seventeenth century thought can seldom be translated accurately into modern terms. But first, we must be reminded that Flavel's works were mostly for the pulpit. He spoke as a popular preacher rather than a systematic theologian. Hence, we find no consistent, definite and exhaustive system of doctrine, as we do in Owen or Baxter.³ Repeatedly Flavel tells us, "My present business is not to

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¹ Stoughton, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 375
³ The volume, Tractatus de Demonstratione methodica, 1651, listed under Flavel's name in The Short-Title Catalog, was not by our subject. According to Anthony Wood (Ath. Oxon. I, 422), that work was produced by another John Flavel (1596-1617), a native of Bishops-Liddiard in Somersetshire, and Professor of Grammar at Oxford. It was first published in 1619, eleven years before John Flavel of Dartmouth was born. A copy of the book may be found in the British Museum.
prove, but to improve on the point." He never forgets that a merely notional theology can become as great a stumbling block between the soul and God as any idolatry.

Flavel accepts the Westminster Divines' answer to the second question of their *Shorter Catechism*, "What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him? . . . . The word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him."¹

As to whether the authority of Scriptures depends on the Church, the Fathers, or the Councils, Flavel answers in the negative, and asserts their authority comes from Scriptures. From the proposition that Scriptures are the Word of God he infers three things: the perfection of Scriptures; the right of the common people to read them; and obedience to human injunctions only as far as Scriptures warrant.²

According to Flavel, the holy doctrines contained in Scriptures, their efficacy on the soul and miracles prove without a doubt that the Bible is of divine authority and inspiration. The authority and efficacy of Scriptures on the soul rest on their power to search and discover the secrets of men, to renew and change lives, and to cheer and restore cast down under inward or outward trouble.³ The truth of Scriptures is also confirmed by daily events, which may be more effective than miracles.⁴

Flavel is in complete agreement with the Puritans in their view

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1. Flavel, op. cit., Vol. VI, p. 143
2. ibid., Vol. VI, p. 144
3. ibid., Vol. VI, p. 143
4. ibid., Vol. IV, p. 187
of the relative merits of Scriptures and reason when he says: "Some think that reason and natural light is abundantly sufficient for the direction of life; but certainly nothing is more necessary to us for that end than the written word; for though the remains of natural light have their place and use in directing us about natural and earthly things, yet they are utterly insufficient to guide us in spiritual and heavenly things."  

To Flavel, "every part of scripture is alike pure." In the next breath, however, he adds this qualification: "Every word of God is pure, and of equal authority, but not of equal weight; as several pieces of gold are alike pure, and of the same stamp, but not of equal value." From this, he concludes that it is our duty to examine what we hear by the word. We must not receive any doctrine because men confidently affirm it, but because scriptures require it. Always, it is the books of the Old and New Testaments that "do jointly make the solid foundation of a Christian's faith."  

Flavel acknowledges that there are in Scriptures some things hard to understand and some things hard to interpret. He observes in Paul's style, "peculiar words, and forms of speech, of which ordinary rules of grammar take no notice, nor give no parallel examples." Nevertheless, he asserts, "the great and necessary things to our salvation are so perspicuously and plainly revealed in the Scriptures, that even babes in Christ do apprehend and understand them."  

But if we are not to be overcome by "a perverse wrangling humour"

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1. ibid., Vol. III, p. 428
2. ibid., Vol. VI, p. 145
3. ibid., Vol. III, p. 428
4. ibid., Vol. III, p. 444
in the interpretation of Scriptures, there are a few rules we must heed.1 First, all obscure and difficult texts of Scriptures are to be constantly examined and expounded according to the analogy or proportion of faith. By the analogy or proportion of faith Flavel means "what is plainly and uniformly in the whole Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as the rule of our faith and obedience." Otherwise, he warns, "what woful work will they quickly make?" Look at the "Papist" when he interprets James 2:24, or the "Socinian" on John 1:28. Secondly, "Never put a new sense upon words of scripture, in favour of your preconceived notions and opinions, nor wrest it from its general and common use and sense." This is not to interpret, but to rack scriptures. We are not to make the Scriptures speak what we think, but what the prophet or apostle thought, whom we interpret. Thirdly, "Whenever you meet with one obscure place of scripture, let the context of that scripture be diligently and thoroughly searched; for it is usual with God to set up some light there, to guide us through the obscurity of a particular text." Fourthly, "Let one Testament freely cast its light upon the other; and let not men undervalue or reject an Old Testament text, as no way useful to clear and establish a New Testament point of faith or duty." Each Testament reflects light upon the other. The Jews reject the New Testament and many of us slight the Old. Without the help of both we can never understand the mind of God in either. Flavel thus would feel very much at home in the current stress on the unity of the Bible. Fifthly, "have a due regard to that sense given of obscure

places of scripture, which hath not only the current sense of learned expositors, but also naturally agrees with the scope of the place."

Flavel presents no arguments for the existence of God. He simply asserts: "Concerning God, we must know that he is . . . and there is but one God."¹

In explaining the trinity, Flavel first defines the Godhead as "the nature, essence, or being of God." He then defines a person as "the Godhead distinguished by personal properties." He next offers three proofs for the trinity, each with a suitable proof-text: from Christ's baptism, Matthew 3:16-17; from the institution of our baptism, Matthew 28:19; and from the apostolical benediction, II Corinthians 13:14. For further evidence he cites I John 5:7 as asserting a trinity of persons and a unity of essence.²

According to Flavel, God's nature is inconceivable. "If I fully knew that, I should be a God myself."³ Yet, men in this life, even with their imperfect knowledge, have two ways of knowing God: by way of affirmation, e.g. "as when we affirm him to be wise, good, merciful, etc.," and by way of negation, "when we remove from God, in our conceptions, all that is imperfect in the creature; so we say, God is immense, infinite, immutable."⁴ With the rest of the Puritans, Flavel presents the paradox of asserting God's incomprehensibility on the one hand, and a precise list of His attributes on the other, since an illimitable mystery can not be contemplated or worshipped. However,

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1. ibid., Vol. V, p. 210
2. ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 159-160
3. ibid., Vol. VI, p. 1h5
4. ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 1h5-1h6
the Puritans realize their difficulty and always try to protect themselves with qualifications like "imperfect" or "in our conceptions."

In his exposition of God's attributes according to the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly -- infinite, eternal, unchangeable, wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness and truth -- Flavel shows his chief concern to be in the practical rather than the dogmatic. He spends more space in drawing out the ethical inferences or "uses" of the attributes than in chopping them up into their divisions and subdivisions as was common in his day. When he comes to expound "Of God's Infinity," he formulates only three questions about the sense and meaning of the word, then draws four practical lessons or instructions from it.¹ A proposition in one of his treatises states that "God's attributes, promises, and providences are prepared for the security of his people, in the greatest distresses that can befall them in the world."² He "opens" the attributes of divine wisdom, faithfulness and unchangeableness as "chambers of security to the saints in difficult times."³ To Flavel, men need truth more to live by than to look at. Thus, he even recommends meditation upon God's attributes to bring "a sweet and sensible communion betwixt God and his people."⁴

In the attribute of love the glory of God is "signally and eminently manifested," and the hopes and comforts of all believers built and founded. The love of God is for believers a stronghold and fortress in the day of trouble, because wherever the special love of God goes,

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1. ibid., Vol. VI, p. 147
2. ibid., Vol. III, pp. 344 ff.
there the special presence of God goes also. Wherever the special love of God is placed, there all events and issues of trouble are sure to be overruled to the eternal advantage of the soul; and upon whomsoever the special love of God is set, that person becomes precious in the sight of God.1

God's power is omnipotent, having no limits except his pleasure and will. It is supreme, from which all human power is derived, and by which it is overruled, restrained and limited. Finally, His power is everlasting. In its operations we find God's power working beyond all limits of human expectation or probability.2

On God's decrees, Flavel stays on the beaten path. All things that come to pass, even the smallest, are decreed by God. The decrees, of course, are for God's glory. Evil is not caused, nor approved, but permitted.3 There are times and seasons appointed by God for the chastisement of the world. Flavel explains why. "Prosperity is the occasion of abundance of sin; this brings on adversity from the justice of God to correct it; adversity being sanctified, humbles, reforms, and purges the people of God, and this again by mercy procures their prosperity." Flavel asserts that these judgments are sermons that God preaches from heaven, and that they startle and rouse the secure world more than all the warnings and exhortations of His ministers could ever do. They are also beneficial to God's people; when others live in fear, the former will live triumphantly by faith.4

The hand of God may be noted in our individual lives. "Here it

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1. ibid., Vol. III, pp. 392-394
3. ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 160-161
4. ibid., Vol. III, p. 323
prevented, and there it delivered. Here it directed, and there it corrected. In this it grieved, and in that it relieved. Here was the poison, and there the antidote. This providence raised a dismal cloud, and that dispelled it again. This straitened, and that enlarged. Here a want, and there a supply. This relation withered, and that springing up in its room.¹

The first performance of providence for us is in our formation and protection in the womb. Two admirable things in this work of providence are the rare structure and excellent composition of the body and the provision of a soul; otherwise, the former would be but "the enamelling of the case, or polishing the casket wherein the rare jewel lies."² Providence also decides upon the place of our birth;³ the stock and family out of which we spring and rise;⁴ the occasions, instruments and means of our conversion;⁵ our civil callings or employments;⁶ our preservation from want, snares and temptations of sin, dangers and miseries;⁷ and our marriage partners.⁸

The practical value of viewing the workings of providence Flavel sets forth in ten "motives": to maintain sweet and sensible communion with God from day to day; to derive pleasure and delight of the Christian life; to overpower and suppress the natural atheism in our hearts; to support faith in future exigencies; to minister to our

¹ ibid., Vol. IV, p. 340
² ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 362-363
³ ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 365 ff.
⁴ ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 370 ff.
⁵ ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 376 ff.
⁶ ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 387 ff.
⁷ ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 395 ff.
⁸ ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 391 ff.
souls continual praise and thanksgiving; to endear Jesus Christ more and more to our souls; to melt the heart and make it thaw and relent before the Lord; to beget and secure inward tranquility in our minds in an unstable world; to advance and improve holiness in our hearts and lives; and to meet death. ¹

It is when Flavel speaks of Christ that he achieves his highest reaches of power. There is no doubt in his mind of the place of Christ in our faith.

Christ shall be the centre to which all the lines of my ministry shall be drawn. I have spoken and written of many other subjects in my sermons and epistles, but it is all reducibly the preaching and discovering of Jesus Christ: of all the subjects in the world, this is the sweetest; if there be any thing on this side heaven, worthy our time and studies, this is it. ²

In view of this emphasis, which did not originate with Flavel, Knappen's judgment on Flavel's forebears strikes a hollow ring:

In fact, Calvin cast such a deep shadow over the Puritan world that he determined the tone of its entire thinking. To this fact may be attributed the surprising lack of christological thought in this avowedly Christian movement . . . Certainly the person of Christ figures very little in their literature. . . after Hooper's time nothing more than incidental treatment of the life and work of the founder of their religion can be discovered in the writings of the Tudor Puritans. ³

Christ's pre-incarnation state, according to Flavel, was "of the highest and most unspeakable delight and pleasure, in the enjoyment of the Father." He was then not lowered to the condition of a creature, He was not under law, and was not liable to the frailties of humanity.

¹. ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 436 ff.
². ibid., Vol. I, p. 33
³. Knappen, op. cit., p. 376
On the other hand, he was in a state of pure, constant and incomparable happiness and sweet communion with the Father. 1

Of Christ's person, we have outlined Flavel's sermon on it in a previous chapter. As true God and true man in one person Christ presents "a mystery by which apprehension is dazzled, invention astonished, and all expression swallowed up." 2

Christ's mediatorship implies "a most dreadful breach and jar" between God and man. The design and end of Christ's mediation was to make peace, by giving full satisfaction to the party that was wronged, for Christ's blood and sufferings were of such infinite value as to be sufficient "to stop the course of God's justice, and render him not only placable, but abundantly satisfied and well-pleased" with rebelling men. In Christ the justice of God was fully satisfied, and the misery of the creature fully cured. As to how it is that Jesus Christ is the true and only mediator between God and men, Flavel answers: "Because he, and no other, is revealed to us by God... because he, and no other, is fit for, and capable of this office... because he is alone sufficient to reconcile the world to God by his blood, without accessions from any other." 3

Flavel describes the work of Christ in orthodox terms, through the offices of prophet, priest and king. "Salvation," he says, "is revealed by Christ as a Prophet, procured by him as a Priest, applied by him as a King." 4

Christ's prophetical office consists of two parts. First, ex-

2. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 74
4. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 113
ternal, consisting in a true and full revelation of the will of God to men. The work of the prophet is to expound the law, declare the will of God, and foretell things to come: all these meet in a singular and eminent manner in Christ. 1 Moses, the greatest of prophets in Israel, prefigured Christ; however, the former was but a star to this sun. Secondly, the illumination of the understanding. By understanding, Flavel means not only the mind, in opposition to the heart, will and affections; but these are opened by and with the mind. "The mind is to the heart, as the door to the house: what comes in to the heart, comes in at the understanding, which is introductive to it; and although truths sometimes go no farther than the entry, never penetrate the heart, yet, here, this effect is undoubtedly included." 2 When this happens, the soul becomes a "new light," seeing former things differently; it becomes an "affecting light," full of heat and power; and it becomes a "growing light," like the light of the morning.

Christ, as our priest, purchases our salvation. His priesthood presupposes man’s revolt and fall, and the unalterable purpose of God to take vengeance for sin. It presupposes man’s impotency to appease God by any act or suffering; it implies the necessity of Christ being God-man. Finally, it implies the extremity of His sufferings and God’s grace in calling and confirming Christ in His priesthood. Flavel holds these two principles to be evident in Scriptures: that God required full satisfaction and would not remit one sin without it; and that fallen man is totally incapable of tendering him any such satisfaction. Hence, Christ, being the only one able had to do it or we

1. ibid., Vol. I, pp. 118-119
would all have perished.¹ Flavel also speaks of the atonement in sacrificial terms. The priest that appears before God with an oblation for us, is Jesus Christ, God-man; the oblation or suffering He makes is not the blood of beasts, but His own.² As our high-priest, Christ lives forever, in the capacity of an Intercessor for believers.³

In His kingly office Christ performs a double duty: one spiritual and internal, by which He subdues the hearts of His people, and the other providential and external, whereby He guides, rules and orders all things in the world for their salvation. Christ has to gain the hearts of His people by conquest. The souls of the elect may be His, but Satan has the first possession; so Christ must fight His way in. "The house is conveyed to Christ by him that built it, but the strong man armed keeps the possession of it, till a stronger than he comes and ejects him."⁴ Christ also has a providential influence over all the affairs of this world. He rules and orders by supporting and rewarding those over whom He reigns. All this, Flavel says, is evident both from scriptures and reason.⁵

The execution of these offices requires the humiliation and exaltation of Christ.

He cannot, as our Priest, offer up himself a sacrifice to God for us except he be humbled, and humbled to death. He cannot, as a king, powerfully apply the virtue of that his sacrifice, except he be exalted, yea highly exalted. Had he not stooped to the low state of a man, he had not, as a Priest, had a sacrifice of his own to offer; as a Prophet, he had not been fit to teach us the will of God, so as that we should be able to bear it; as King, he

¹ ibid., Vol. I, pp. 145-146
had not been a suitable head to the church: and had he not been highly exalted, that sacrifice had not been carried within the vail before the Lord. Those discoveries could not have been universal, effectual and abiding. The government of Christ could not have secured, protected, and defended the subjects of his kingdom.1

Flavel's discussion of Christ's humiliation and exaltation is in orthodox terms; his purpose is not to "dilate" upon certain memorable passages, but only to "observe and improve them."

Flavel's Pneumatologia or Treatise of the soul of man, strictly speaking, is his only theological work. He introduces the work thus: "The study and knowledge of Jesus Christ must still be allowed to be the most excellent and necessary: But the worth and necessity of Christ is unknown to men till the value, wants, and dangers of their own souls be first discovered to them."2

Moses in Scriptures gives us a more enlightened account of the soul's origin than all the heathen philosophers with their "vain, inevident, self-repugnant, and inexplicable theories." Flavel takes Genesis 2:7 literally, and holds that according to Moses, God formed a body out of the dust of the ground, then infused it with his breath, changing it into a living soul. Thus heaven and earth were "married together in one person."

The soul of man is a "vital, spiritual, and immortal substance, endowed with an understanding, will, and various affections; created with an inclination to the body, and infused thereinto by the Lord."3 The soul is not a quality or accident inhering in another being or

1. ibid., Vol. I, pp. 223-224
2. ibid., Vol. II, p. 416
3. ibid., Vol. II, p. 495
subject, but a substantial being of itself for the following reasons: it was created by God; it can and does exist alone, when separated by death; both Scriptures and philosophy agree that the soul is the principal and noblest part of man; it is the subject of properties, affections and habits. The soul is a substance because it has an essential principle of life in itself, and hereby is distinguished from matter. It is a spiritual substance because of its peculiar descent from the father of spirits, its possession of the essential properties of a spirit and its return at death to the Spirit from whence it came. That the soul is immortal may readily be seen from the simplicity and spirituality of its nature.

God has endowed the soul with understanding, the faculty by which man apprehends and judges all things. The conscience belongs to this faculty, "being the judgment of a man upon himself, with respect or relation to the judgment of God." Besides the understanding, God has also endowed the soul with a will to govern, moderate and overrule the actions of life. The will is a faculty of the rational soul, whereby a man either chooses or refuses the things which the understanding discerns and knows. It has freedom and power. These, however, must be understood to be in things natural, and not in things supernatural. Thus, the will can move or not move the body, but it cannot move towards Christ in the way of faith; it can open or shut the eye, but not the heart. Though drawn to Christ by a mighty power, it yet runs freely.

1. ibid., Vol. II, pp. 496-497
2. ibid., Vol. II, pp. 498-501
3. ibid., Vol. II, pp. 502-504
4. ibid., Vol. II, pp. 505-508
The soul's origin is not by way of natural generation; it is not procreated by angels; it is not the result of matter; nor does it appear from a pre-existent state. Rather, Flavel affirms, "The two constitutive parts of man are a soul and a body: these two parts have two distinct originals: the body, as to its material cause, is dust; the soul, in its nature, is a spirit, and as to its origin, it proceeds from the Father of spirits; it is his own creature, in an immediate way. He gave it: he gave it the being it hath by creation, and gave it to us, i.e. to our bodies by inspiration."\(^1\) The soul and body are vastly different in nature, having no affinity or similitude between them. But they are knit together as in a "happy marriage of two persons of different education, constitution and inclinations."

Flavel's proofs for the doctrine of immortality would make a good jig-saw puzzle. The soul is pure, simple and uncompounded. Death is the dissolution of things compounded; where no composition is found, therefore, no death or dissolution can follow.\(^2\) The promises of everlasting blessedness and the threats of everlasting miseries would be delusory if our souls perished with our bodies.\(^3\) Belief in immortality is attested by the universal consent of all nations and ages of the world.\(^4\) The everlasting "habits of grace" inherent in the soul abide forever; so must the soul in which they are planted.\(^5\) man's dignity and dominion over all other creatures, and his desire for immortality\(^6\) are also shown as proofs for the doctrine. Further, he points to

1. ibid., Vol. II, pp. 516-517
2. ibid., Vol. II, pp. 559-562
3. ibid., Vol. II, pp. 562-563
4. ibid., Vol. II, pp. 563-565
5. ibid., Vol. II, pp. 566-567
6. ibid., Vol. II, pp. 567-568
7. ibid., Vol. II, pp. 568-569
scriptural accounts of the return of several souls into their own bodies after death and after real separation from -- II Kings 4:13-37, Matthew 9:18-25, Luke 7:12-15, John 11:39-45.\(^1\) Finally, Christian doctrines and duties are grounded on belief in immortality of the soul—"Take away the immortality of the soul, and all religion falls to the ground."\(^2\)

For obvious reasons these arguments have been superseded, e.g. the belief that the soul or some part of the person survives death is not absolutely universal.\(^3\) Flavel is so fascinated or overwhelmed by these proofs that he does not notice he has wandered from his calvinistic home, and almost confused the immortality of the soul with eternity.\(^4\) As Professor T. F. Torrance has pointed out in his recent study of Calvin's doctrine of man, the soul survives the death of the body only at God's mercy, and has no durability in itself. Man's soul does not perish in death, nor is put out. But it is immortal, not of its own nature; this virtue is borrowed and comes another way. Only as it pleases God to maintain the soul with His virtue does it have being and continuance. The life of the soul depends entirely upon the gracious will of God.\(^5\)

According to Flavel, righteous and holy souls, once separated from their bodies by death, are immediately perfected in themselves and associated with other alike perfect souls in the kingdom of God. Flavel admits that in this matter we can only see through a glass darkly, and that "the waters will prove very deep here, too deep for any line of

\(^{1}\) Ibid., Vol. II, p. 570
\(^{2}\) Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 571 ff.
\(^{4}\) Cf. J. Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, I:15:5-6
mine to fathom. ¹ Nevertheless, he next says that this is no discouragement to a regular search into the future state, and proceeds to "open" twelve propositions on the separate state of the spirits of just men made perfect. ² Upon actual separation, "the soul is not so maimed and prejudiced by its separation from the body, but that it both can, and doth live, and act without it; and perform the acts of cogitation and volition, without the aid and ministry of the body." ³

The souls of the just, when separated from their bodies, do not wander up and down in this world; nor hover about the sepulchres where their bodies lie; nor are they detained in any purgatory; nor do they fall asleep in a benumbed stupid state. "They do forthwith pass into glory, and are immediately with the Lord." ⁴ The pleasure and delights they then enjoy are incomparably greater and sweeter than any they have ever experienced. ⁵

Flavel also deals at length with the end that awaits the souls of men who die in unbelief. They are immediately committed into the "prison of hell," there to suffer the wrath of God due to their sins built from sins committed in this world accumulates, and follows departed souls to judgment. ⁶ From this, Flavel naturally ends the treatise with a section on the value of the soul and the possibility of losing it. To the prevent the latter from happening, he "opens" and "shuts up" twelve ways to hell, wherein millions of souls have been lost, and millions more are now tripping along, more or less confidently and

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¹ Flavel, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 23
² ibid., Vol. III, pp. 22-46
³ ibid., Vol. III, pp. 34-35
⁵ ibid., Vol. III, pp. 42 ff.
⁶ ibid., Vol. III, pp. 130 ff.
consciously. 1

Like the typical Puritan of his age, Flavel appeals to Scriptures and to human experience to prove the doctrine of the fall. He takes the account of it in Genesis 3:07 literally. Man fell by abusing the freedom that God bequeathed him. Consequently, man lost that freedom, and is so wounded that he cannot "put forth one spiritual and saving act" without God's grace. 2

Except for Jesus, no man escapes from the sin and guilt of Adam, because all are included in Adam's covenant. Adam sinned not only as an individual, but also as a public person and representative of all mankind. This sin abides in the whole man, in every part. 3 Even man's reason is tainted. The understanding of man, originally, was perspicacious and deep; all truths lay obvious and orderly before it. But now there is "an haziness or cloud spread over truth by ignorance and error, the sad effects of the fall." 4

Through the fall man also lost communion with God, and fell under His wrath and curse. This wrath and curse lie on all the unregenerate in the world, but believers find deliverance in Christ. 5

How is Christ's redemption made effective in our life? In seventeenth century puritan language, how apply Christ? This is Flavel's greatest concern and chief aim.

It is the work and office of God's Spirit to apply Christ to us.

2. Ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 167-168
3. Ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 171-172
4. Ibid., Vol. III, p. 427
5. Ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 173-174
This is done through the ministry of the gospel, accompanied by the blessing and power of the Spirit. The two bonds of union with Christ are the Spirit on God's part and faith on our part. ¹

"The application of Christ to us," Flavel says, "is not only comprehensive of our justification, but of all those works of the Spirit which are known to us in scripture by the names of reeng:eration, vocation, sanctification, and conversion."² These terms have "small respective differences" among themselves, but are all included in the general term, the application of Christ. Flavel offers the following definitions:

- **Regeneration** expresses those supernatural, divine, new qualities, infused by the Spirit into the soul, which are the principles of all holy actions.
- **Vocation** expresses the terms from which, and to which, the soul moves, when the Spirit works savingly upon it, under the gospel-call.
- **Sanctification** notes an holy dedication of heart and life to God: Our becoming the temples of the living God, separate from all profane sinful practices, to the Lord's only use and service.
- **Conversion** denotes the great change itself, which the Spirit causeth upon the soul, turning it by a sweet irresistible efficacy from the power of sin and Satan, to God in Christ.³

This application of Christ to the souls of men is the great project and design of God in this world, for which the ordinances and officers of the gospel are appointed. But it is limited, being "exactly of the same extent and latitude with the Father's election." Flavel's orthodoxy on this point is decisive.

The Father, Son, and Spirit, (betwixt whom was the council of peace) work out their design in a perfect harmony and consent: as there was no jar in their council, so there can be none in the execution of it: those whom the Father, before all time, did choose; they, and they only are the persons, whom the Son, when

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the fulness of time for the execution of that decree was come, 
died for... And those for whom Christ died, are the persons to 
whom the Spirit effectually applies the benefits and purchases of 
his blood: he comes in the name of the Father and Son.1

Our union with Christ, Flavel holds, is not merely a mental union, 
only in conceit or notion; it is not a physical union; nor is it an 
esential union, or union with the divine nature. It is not a federal 
union, or one by covenant only; nor is it merely a moral union of love 
and affection. Though this union neither makes us one person or essence 
with Christ, it is nevertheless a real union. It is a supernatural 
union, wrought by the power of God alone. The union is immediate, 
fundamental, efficacious, indissoluble, honourable, comfortable, fruit-
ful and enriching.2

To Flavel, the soul is the life of the body, faith is the life of 
the soul, and Christ is the life of faith. Flavel thinks of faith 
as a "trusting or staying upon Christ." He makes some sound distinctions 
in defining faith.

There be three acts of faith, assent, acceptance, and 
assurance: but it can be neither way so. Assent doth not agree 
only to true believers, or justified persons. Assurance agrees 
to justified persons, and them only, but not to all justified 
persons, and that at all times.

Assent is too low to contain the essence of saving faith; it 
is found in the unregenerate as well as the regenerate: yea, in 
devils as well as men, James 2:19 it is supposed and included in 
justifying faith, but it is not the justifying or saving act. 
Assurance is as much too high, being found only in some eminent 
believers: and in them too but at some times. There is many a 
true believer to whom the joy and comfort of assurance is denied; 
they may say of their union with Christ, as Paul said of his vision; 
whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell; so they,

1. ibid., Vol. II, p. 21
whether in Christ or out of Christ, they cannot tell.

A true believer may 'walk in darkness, and see no light,' Isa. 50:10. Nay a man must be a believer before he know himself to be so; the direct act of faith is before the reflex act: so that the justifying act of faith lies neither in assent nor in assurance. Assent saith, I believe that Christ is, and that he is the saviour of the elect. Assurance saith, I believe and am sure that Christ died for me, and that I shall be saved through him. So that assent widens the nature of faith too much, and assurance upon the other hand straitens it too much; but acceptance, which saith, I take Christ in all his offices to be mine, this fits it exactly, and belongs to all true believers at all times. This therefore must be the justifying and saving act of faith. 1

In an age of enthusiasm and in spite of the fall, Flavel lays great importance on the exercise of reason in faith. No man can receive Christ in the darkness of natural ignorance: we must understand and discern who and what Christ is. "If we know not his person, and his office, we do not take, but mistake Christ." He who sees Christ as mere man or mere God, or denies the atonement, may "cry up as high as they will his spirituality, glory, exemplary life and death; they will not receive Christ." All saving faith is founded in light and knowledge, and seeing is inseparably connected with believing. At the same time, Flavel adds that he will not presume to state the degree of knowledge necessary for the reception of Christ. 2

The consent and choice of the will is necessary in the matter of faith, for this is the opening of the heart and stretching forth of the soul to receive Christ. Thus, faith consists in the approbation of the judgment on the one hand and the consent of the will on the other. 3

As such, faith becomes "the bond of union; the instrument of

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1. ibid., Vol. II, pp. 114-115
2. ibid., Vol. II, p. 106
3. ibid., Vol. II, pp. 107-109
justification; the spring of spiritual peace and joy; the means of spiritual life and subsistence; and therefore, the great scope and drift of the gospel, which aims at and presseth nothing more than to bring men and women to believe."¹

It is surprising to discover that an explicit doctrine of the Church can not be gleaned from the voluminous sermons and treatises of Flavel. It may be that he was so concerned with the main issue that he refused to be sidetracked by lesser ones.

O deceive not yourselves with names and notions. Think not, because you are for a stricter way of worship, or because you associate with, and are accordingly denominated, one of the more reformed professors, that therefore you are safe enough: Alas! how small an interest have titles, modes, and denominations in religion? . . . take an unregenerate, carnal man, let his life be reformed, and his tongue refined, and call him a zealous Conformist, or a strict Nonconformist; call him a Presbyterian, an Independent, or what you will; he is all the while but a carnal Conformist, or Non-conformist; an unregenerate Presbyterian, a carnal Independent; for the nature is still the same, though the stamp and figure his profession gives him be not the same.²

This is the kind of thinking that runs through his sermon, *Gospel Unity Recommended to the Churches of Christ.*³ The proposition of the sermon is: "Unity amongst believers, especially in particular church-relations, is as desirable a mercy, as it is a necessary and indispen-sable duty."⁴ In this sermon there are no charges, no recriminations to any group, but simply an evangelical message on the necessity and desirableness of a mystical union between Christ and believers, and a

¹ ibid., Vol. II, pp. 116 ff.
² ibid., Vol. V, p. 527
⁴ ibid., Vol. III, p. 594
moral union between believers themselves. "God hath distributed variety
of gifts and graces, in different degrees amongst his people; the im-
provement of these gifts and graces to the glory of God and our mutual
edification, is the very scope and end of particular church-fellowship
and communion." Flavel's "uses" for exhortation in this sermon are
still applicable today:

1. Reflect upon the late long and continued troubles you
have been under, as the just rebukes of God for your former contentions
and follies.
2. Consider the common, imminent danger that now threatens
us, both from enemies upon our borders, and within our own bowels.
3. Reflect upon the scandal your divisions give to the world;
how it hardens and prejudices them against religion and reformation.
4. Consider how directly your divisions cross, and frustrate
the design and end of church fellowship, which is instituted for
the improvement of each other's graces, and helping on the morti-
fication of each other's corruptions.

Flavel's reasons for refusing to conform stem from the puritan
doctrine of scriptural authority. The Bible is authoritative not only
for preaching and doctrine, but for every aspect of ecclesiastical life
as well. All the liberty that Scriptures give is but to observe and
perform those things which God has instituted. We have no right to
innovate things on the pretense of order and decency, because even
those things have not been left to the will of men. So that "if the
worship you perform to God, be corrupted by a mixture of mere human,
doctrinal, symbolical rites and ceremonies, which God hath not appointed
in his worship by the word; though your worship be right for the ob-
ject, yet it is idolatrous in the manner."

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1. Ibid., Vol. III, p. 602
2. Ibid., Vol. III, pp. 598-602
3. Ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 522 ff.
this judgment, the Romans are gross idolators, while the Anglicans are not too far behind. Flavel heartily endorses a contemporary's judgment on conformist practices:

A bishop's wearing a surplice, cope, mitre, using the cross, bowing to the altar, etc. (although they may be errors) yet all, or one of these make him not a Pope, or popelling, or properly anti-Christian; but receiving these from the Pope's dictates, doing them, because he commands, acknowledging him in commanding them, passing them on others with such a despotic power, makes a true Pope, a real Antichrist! Nor may our bishops evade by this, which I easily see will be answered, that though indeed they do, and command these things, yet they neither do them from the Pope's command, nor command them in the Pope's power.¹

All that is superstition, i.e. any excess in religion. These things may be indifferent; nevertheless, they are the seeds of corruption. So Flavel argues, "If we are heartily resolved against popery, what do we with their garments, gestures, altars, crosses, liturgies, and officers among us?"² Flavel consequently cannot go along with the Anglicans, because they defend abominable superstitions and persuade their congregations to accept them. "Would bishops cast out those popish ceremonies, our fears of popery would by so much be abated; but those that nurse up these Romish brats, we cannot but suspect to have too much love for that harlot that begot them."³

For the call to the Christian ministry, Flavel sets these requirements: personal qualifications; free election by the church to which the ministry is given; and ordination by fasting, prayer and imposition of hands. On all three counts Flavel is at odds with the ministry of the Established Church.

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¹ Ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 526-527, quoting from Lord Brook's Treatise of Episcopacy
² Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 564
³ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 565
For their gifts and qualifications necessary to fit them for such a work, let their congregations witness, who are fed upon husks, and starved under them.

For their election by the church, let the godly in their respective parishes witness, whether they were elected by them, or obtruded upon them, and so stand upon the ruins of their own lawful and godly pastors.

As for their ordination. . . if the prelate's hand be the rule of ordination, they cannot but be well ordained; but if the scriptures be indeed the rule, I am at a loss where to find a text parallel to this practice, unless it be that in II Chron. 13:9 which, I confess, suits it to an hair's breadth.1

However, Flavel admits that there are many ministers in the Anglican fold, "as they were, and as they are, that are the true ministers of Jesus Christ, and have a true call from Christ."2

On the general question of toleration, Flavel was much more liberal than most of his Presbyterian brethren. He held that it was quite right to require a conformity in fundamentals and things necessary in religion, but in matters of indifference a larger liberty should be granted. He firmly believed that "amongst those who differ from us, there are many learned, pious, and peaceable men, who can heartily rejoice to see the work of Christ carried on by those that follow not them."3 No body should assume the liberty of dividing the church and dissolving brotherly unity on principles that neither Christ, the apostles, nor the early church would ever have sanctioned.4 Flavel was saved from intolerance by this guiding principle: "In your receiving Christ, Beware you do not mistake the means for the end. Many

1. Ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 533-534
2. Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 535
3. Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 576
4. Ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 12-13
do so, but see you do not. Prayer, sermons, reformation are means to bring you to Christ, but they are not Christ; to close with those duties is one thing, and to close with Christ is another thing."¹ He also rightly insisted that errors of judgment could not be cured by compulsion or any other external means, but only by rational conviction and proper spiritual remedies. "Bodily sufferings rather spread than cure intellectual errors."²

For the country's turmoil and strife Flavel blamed the Puritans as much as the Anglicans.

Let all the wise in heart henceforth depose their animosities, sadly reflect on their follies, encourage and assist the labours of their brethren in the Lord's harvest; and rejoice that God hath set them at liberty by law, whose assistance in so great an opportunity is necessary and desirable. It is against the laws of wisdom and charity to envy the liberty, and much more the success of our brethren... In a word, if we still bite and devour one another, we shall be devoured one of another. Let us not lay the fault upon others, we ourselves have been the authors and instruments of our own ruin.³

Flavel, however, could not rid himself of the seventeenth century puritan dislike and fear of Romanism, which he referred to as "a false, bloody, blasphemous, uncomfortable and damnable religion."⁴ Till the end he lamented:

There are two sad sights in the world which cannot but deeply affect every upright heart: one is to see so many thousands of rational and ingenuous men in the Romish Church, by an implicit faith in their guides, venturing their souls upon their bare word; never searching the scripture with their own eyes, but wholly trusting to the infallibility of a pope or a council; when, in the mean time, they would fear to take their word for a sum of money.

¹. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 139
². Ibid., Vol. III, p. 439
³. Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 4
⁴. Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 574
It is amazing to behold the soul-destroying, easy credulity of these men.1

This was mild compared with what some of Flavel's brethren had to say about the Romanists. For Catholicism then appeared to most Englishmen in much the same light as Communism strikes the Americans today.

Flavel kept close to Geneva in his thought on the sacraments. In the sacraments God obliges Himself to us and we oblige ourselves to God. Sacraments are called means of salvation because they have been appointed by God for our deliverance from sin and misery. As means of salvation, sacraments differ from the Word thus: the Word is the first means of begetting faith; sacraments seal and confirm it. However, sacraments are not efficacious for all that partake of them: "Baptism may pass on a cast-away and the Lord's Supper may be received unworthily."2 Their virtue and efficacy are not in themselves, nor in the officiating minister, but in the "spirit of Christ working in them, and by them on the souls of men."3

In every sacrament five things must be considered: author; parts; union of those parts; subjects; and ends and uses. Jesus Christ, as King of the Church, is author of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, which supplant the old sacraments of circumcision and the passover respectively. Every sacrament consists of the external or earthy and the internal, heavenly or spiritual. Bread, wine and water are the external, Christ's blood the internal part. The sacramental

1. Ibid., Vol. V, p. 586
2. Ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 275-276
3. Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 277
union of these parts take place through "apt signification, firm ob-
signation, and real exhibition of the blessings signified and sealed." 
Believers and their children are the proper subjects of baptism, but 
only adult Christians may participate in the Lord's Supper. Following 
Calvin, Flavel quotes I Corinthians 11:28 as authority for the latter 
qualification. Finally, the main use and end of sacraments are to 
ratify and confirm God's covenant with believers.¹

Baptism, according to Flavel, is to be performed with pure un-
mixed water, as against "a vile practice of Papists, to add oil, salt, 
and spittle to water in baptism."² The water in baptism signifies 
the blood of Christ in the freeness of it to all, in its refreshing 
quality, and in its purifying virtue.

Flavel makes no mention of the puritan objections to the Anglican 
practice of crossing the child in baptism, the custom of godparents 
answering the questions on the child's behalf, and the custom of private 
baptism by a private person.

The authority for the Lord's Supper, according to Flavel, comes 
from Christ. Its first particular end and use is "to bring Christ and 
his sufferings afresh to our remembrance." Its other particular end 
and use is to "represent Christ to believers, as an apt sign of him, 
and of his death; and that both memorative, significative, and instruc-
tive."³

Against the doctrine of transubstantiation Flavel argues that the 
end of the sacrament is to bring Christ's body and blood to our remem-

¹ ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 273-279
² ibid., Vol. VI, p. 281
³ ibid., Vol. VI, p. 286
brance; signs for remembrance are of things absent, not present. The
language Jesus used had no other property of expression, there being
no other word for signify. Moreover, the manifold gross absurdities
that follow from the doctrine of transubstantiation all argue against
it. "This doctrine allows that to a silly priest, which is not to be
allowed to all the angels in heaven. It allows him power to make his
Maker, and eat his God." It denies the testimony of our senses, which
informs us that the elements are real bread and wine after consecration
and not flesh and blood. "It implies, that the entire living body of
Christ sat at the table, and at the same time was dead, and in the
disciples mouths and stomachs in the first sacrament; and that in all
after-sacraments it is wholly in heaven, and wholly in as many thousand
places in the world, as there are sacraments administered." ¹

As to the question, Who are fit subjects to receive the Lord's
supper?, Flavel answers: "None that are grossly ignorant, scandalous,
or unbelievers in their natural state, for such cannot examine themselves,
as the word requires." Neither are morally honest and sober persons
qualified for this sacrament on account of their civility and morality;
"these are not the wedding-garment." Partakers of the Supper are qualifi-
cied by regenerating grace and faith. ²

Since Flavel was always interested more in the "affectionate heart-
melting" aspects of a doctrine rather than the "mere speculative," the
above was all he had to say on this sacrament. On the other hand, he
published twelve sacramental meditations, ³ wherein "Believers are

¹ ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 287-288
² ibid., Vol. VI, p. 288
³ ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 387-460
assisted in preparing their Hearts, and exciting their Affections and Graces, when they draw nigh to God in that most awful and solemn Ordinance of the Lord's Supper." According to Flavel, even a believer does not eat and drink worthily in the sacrament unless the grace that is in him is excited and exercised, and that is the aim of these meditations. That he succeeded in his aim is shown by the republications of these sermons in the next century on both sides of the Atlantic. Flavel also published a short dialogue, entitled A Familiar Conference between a Minister and a Doubting Christian, concerning the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper,¹ which obviously was the result of catechetical sessions, e.g.

Christian: What are the necessary preparations for this solemn ordinance?
Minister: (1) That a man have the habit of faith. (2) That he have an hearty disposition and willingness, to receive Christ as his Lord and Redeemer. (3) That he be in charity with all men; John 1:7, Matthew 15:26. We must also exercise renewed acts of repentance, and clear up our interest in Christ, and have our souls full of faith and love toward him.

Christian: What are the benefits that Christ gives, and we receive in this ordinance?
Minister: The exercise and increase of every grace; the cleansing our souls from the guilt of sin; healing the wounds which sin hath made in our consciences; a confirmation of the truth and promises of God; an humble and holy delight in Christ, and our fellow Christians; and a more earnest longing for, and expectation of, the blessedness of the life to come: And is an ordinance chiefly intended for confirmation of our faith, love, and increase in grace; so that no person ought to come thereunto, but in faith.²

This is a general summary of Flavel's theology. One can not but

¹ ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 460-469
² ibid., Vol. VI, p. 467
notice that there is nothing original in his thought. Essentially it is a repetition and elaboration of Augustine's doctrine of conversion, Luther's doctrine of justification and Calvin's doctrine of election. Flavel's interpretation of Scriptures, definition of terms, orientation of interests and evaluation of other thinkers all come from the great Reformers. This was true of Flavel; it was true of all the Puritans. They merely moved into the castle of theory left them by their forefathers, made no structural alterations, but simply repaired a few spots on the roof when necessary. Haller says that the history of Puritan thought in England is primarily the history of the setting forth of the basic doctrine of predestination in terms calculated to appeal to the English populace, though the preachers referred as often to St. Augustine as to the author of the Institutes.¹ And the Anglicans were no different. At the end of his study, Mitchell writes that the great seventeenth century preachers were not men who opened up new aspects of doctrine or introduced surprising variations in style. Their greatness was not emphasized by any marked break with the beliefs or practice of the theological parties to which they belonged. It was demonstrated not by their choice of different preaching material, but by their different handling of the common deposit.²

Through the intricate weave of Flavel's custom-tailored theologizing, what first strikes the eye are his supreme passion for Jesus Christ and his forcible appeals to apply Christ. Christ is the keynote of the whole of Flavel's theology. The theme of his first sermon

1. Haller, op. cit., p. 85
in the first volume of his collected works is: "That there is no doctrine more excellent in itself, or more necessary to be preached and studied, than the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and him crucified." And this, of course, leads to the necessity of getting a saving knowledge of Him above all else.

1. Flavel, **op. cit.**, Vol. I, p. 34
CHAPTER V FLAVEL'S CONTROVERSY

A. ANTINOMIANISM

Just as Flavel had no yearning for theological gymnastics, he kept away from the numerous theological wrangles of his day -- except two over Antinomianism and Infant-baptism. He was not one to keep peace at any price. "Reprove we must, or we cannot be faithful." But he could not help fretting at the pressure of events that forced him into controversy, as this confession reveals: "If ever I felt a temptation to envy the happiness of my brethren, it hath been whilst I saw them quietly feeding their flocks, and myself forced to spend some part of my precious and most useful time (devoted to the same service) in combating with unquiet and erring brethren; but I see I must not be my own chuser."2

The name, Antinomianism, is a comparatively modern designation of several types of ethical thought characterized by a rejection of the law. Traces of such thought are evident in New Testament times, e.g. Romans 6; If Peter 2:13-19. The spiritualization of the law into the precept of love encouraged some overenthusiastic devotees to believe that they had been elevated to such a height of spirituality that they needed to have no regard to moral precepts or to outward

1. Flavel, op. cit., Vol. VI, p. 577
2. ibid., Vol. VII, p. 419
Antinomian doctrines were vigorously discussed in Germany during the Reformation period, until the Formula of Concord made a final adjustment of the matter in 1577. The term was first applied by Luther to the opinions advocated by an early coadju tor, Johannes Agricola (1492-1566). In his emphasis on justification by faith, Luther held that true repentance proceeded from a realizing sense of Christ's atonement. However, to him, the process of salvation began with the operation of the law upon the soul, which in repentance cast about for aid, and was met with the promise of remission of sins through Christ. Agricola, in opposition, denied the preaching of the law should precede the preaching of the gospel, and contended that repentance as well as faith must proceed from the influence of the gospel alone. According to Agricola, Christians owed no subjection to any part of the law, including the decalogue; believers had nothing to do in order to justification, for faith was all-sufficient.

The man chiefly responsible for introducing Antinomian doctrines into England was Dr. Tobias Crisp (1600-1663), conformist minister. Crisp went to Eton for his early training, received his B.A. from Cambridge and his M.A. from Oxford; when he obtained the degree of D.D. is not known. In 1627 he was presented to the rectory of Newington Butts, from which he was removed several months later for being a party to a simoniacl contract. Later in the same year he was presented to the rectory of Brinkworth, Wiltshire, where he became very popular on

4. Fisher, op. cit., p. 294
account of his preaching and lavish hospitality. Because of puritan
leanings, he was forced by royalist soldiers to leave his rectory in
1642, and subsequently retired to London. While at Brinkworth, Crisp
had been suspected of Antinomianism; when his opinions became known
from his preaching in London, his theories on the doctrine of free grace
were bitterly attacked. Towards the close of 1672, he held a controversy
on the subject with fifty-two opponents.¹

In the earlier part of his ministry Crisp had been an Arminian;
but having renounced it, he swung like a pendulum to the other side. As
Bogue and Bennett put it,

he became a calvinist, and more than a calvinist. . . . His
ideas of the grace of Christ had been exceedingly low, and he had
imbibed sentiments which produced in him a legal and self-righteous
spirit. Shocked at the recollection of his former views and con-
duct, he seems to have imagined that he could never go far enough
away from them; and that he could never speak too highly of the
grace and love of the Redeemer, nor in too degrading terms of
legality and self-righteousness.²

Crisp's sermons were published under the title, Christ Alone Exalted,
in 1643-46. They were censured by Howe, George and Baxter. The West-
minster Assembly ordered them to be burnt.³ Next to Crisp in the
leadership of the Antinomians in England was John Saltmarsh, minister

the Puritans (London: 1736), Vol. III, p. 18
² Bogue and Bennett, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 460
³ O. C. Griffiths, Religion and Learning (Cambridge: The University
terians in England (p. 147), reports that "Crisp's heresies arrested the
attention of the Westminster Assembly Divines, who, however, reckoned
them too weak for further notice beyond their exposure by John Flavel
and others at the time." Drysdale is in error as regards the date of
Flavel's refutation, because his treatise was not written till after
the republication of Crisp's sermons in 1690.
of Brasted, Kent; the latter wrote books with titles like: *Free Grace,* or the *Flowings of Christ's Blood freely for sinners;* and *Sparkles of Glory.* Other leaders included Paul Robson, William Dell, Robert Town, H. Denne and John Eaton.¹

When Richard Baxter was chaplain to the army he found Antinomianism one of the prevailing heresies. He noted: "The books of Dr. Crisp, Paul Robson, John Saltmarsh, Cradock and abundance such like, were the writings most applauded; and he was thought no spiritual Christian but a legalist, that savoured not of Antinomianism, but was sugared with the title of free grace."² Against this heresy Baxter produced a number of books: *Aphorisms of Justification; An Appeal to the Light; A Treatise on Justifying Righteousness; Catholic Theologie; and Scripture Gospel Defended.* These books in turn roused a multitude of answers for and against him.

In 1690 the works of Dr. Crisp were republished by his son, Samuel.³ To this edition was prefixed the following endorsement:

> Whereas Samuel Crisp, Esq.; hath transcribed some sermons of his Reverend Father's, which were never as yet printed, to annex to those of his said Father's (the late Dr. Crisp's) sermons, that were printed formerly, and are now re-printed in one volume; these are to certify, that we have sufficient reason to believe, that the sermons now added to them (that were printed formerly) are the said Dr. Crisp's Sermons; and have been faithfully transcribed from his own notes, left written with his own hand, as the said worthy gentleman, his son (the transcriber) hath assured the reader, in that preface of his own, which is set before the whole works.

For this statement Samuel secured the signatures of twelve leading

¹ Whiting, op. cit., pp. 267-268
² Quoted by Whiting, *ibid.*, p. 133, from Rev. Baxter.
³ *Christ Alone Exalted: being the compleat works of Tobias Crisp, D.D.* containing *XLII sermons* (London: Printed for W. Marshall, 1690)

This Samuel did to promote the sale of an Anglican clergyman's books among Puritans. 2

In his own preface Samuel Crisp wrote:

I know these Sermons have had hard Censures put on them by some Persons of great Learning; I wish they had better learned Christ, then they would not have quarrelled at the Honour ascribed to him by my Father. If Learning must take the upper-hand of Divinity, then Antichristian, Socinian, Pelagiar, Arminian Doctrines would have jostled out Christianity long since; for who more Scholastically Learned than Antichrist's Doctores, and yet who greater Dunces, like Nicodemus, in Christ's School, where we are to account all our own Righteousness, much more our Learning, Dung, for the Excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ . . . Of 5200 Discourses I have by me, (besides many lost,) taken from the Lips of several Gospel Preachers, such as famous Doctor Goodwin, Doctor Owen, Doctor Wilkinson, Dr. Christopher Fowler, that great Lover of our Lord Jesus, and Exalter of his Righteousness alone in the Latter of Justification, I can scarce reckon six of the 5200 that do Oppose the Doctrines my Father asserted.

Controversy over Antinomianism, which had subsided for awhile in England, flared up, and blazed for seven years. It split the Happy Union of Congregational and Presbyterian ministers in London, as the extremists favoring Antinomianism were in the former party, while the Presbyterians proved to be most hostile to Dr. Crisp's ideas. Partisan feelings were heightened as the controversy continued; by the end of the debate the Presbyterian body was committed to Arminianism and Independency to a stricter Calvinism. 3

The republication of Crisp's sermons also nearly caused a split

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1. ibid., preface
2. Drysdale, op. cit., p. 470
3. Griffiths, op. cit., p. 100
between Baxter and Howe. Howe's subscription to this new edition of Crisp's sermons seemed strange, especially since he had condemned them when originally published. It was then revealed that the twelve signatures for the endorsement of the book had been secured in a curious manner. Some of those who subscribed had not read the sermons; others had not seen the son's preface. Howe's biographer offered this explanation for his subscription:

The impression which the signatures in question produced, was such as might be expected. It was in vain that Howe protested against the absurdity of confounding a simple attestation to the genuineness of a document with a belief in the truth of its contents. Simple and obvious as the distinction was, the explanation, to many, was far from satisfactory. The stupid could not see it, and the prejudiced would not.

Baxter, though neither stupid nor prejudiced, was indignant that Crisp's doctrines should appear to be countenanced, even in the slightest degree, by such persons. He prepared once more to enter his old and favorite field of battle, but in deference to Howe's solicitations he refrained from publishing what he had written. Howe, on his part, promised to recommend a book of Flavel's that contained a refutation of Antinomianism, and was at the moment being prepared for the press.

Flavel's work is entitled, A Blow at the Root; or Planelogia, A succinct and reasonable Discourse of the Occasions, Causes, Nature, Rise, Growth, and Remedies of Mental Errors. It composes "a general discourse of the causes and cures of errors, very necessary at all times (especially at this time) for the reduction and establishment

2. Rogers, op. cit., p. 169
of seduced and staggering Christians."\(^1\) The actual refutation of Antinomianism appears in the second appendix to the work, "Giving a brief Account of the Rise and Growth of Antinomianism; the Declaration of the principal Errors of that sect, with modest and reasonable reflections upon them."\(^2\) Prefixed to Flavel's book is an explanation by seven of the twelve ministers -- Howe, Alsop, the two Mathers, Turner, Dures and Powel -- who had subscribed to Samuel Crisp's 1690 edition of his father's sermons, and started the war of words. Their statement begins:

The reverend author of the ensuing treatises, having in them explained and defended several gospel-truths, unto which divers things in the writings of the reverend Dr. Crisp, deceased, do seem very opposite; whereas some of us, who subscribed a paper, the design whereof was only to testify, that we believed certain writings of the doctor's never before published, were faithfully transcribed by his son, the publisher of them, which paper is now, by the bookseller, prefixed to the whole volume. . . and are here-upon by some weak people misunderstood, as if, by that certificate, we intended an approbation of all that is contained in that volume. We declare we had no such intention: As the paper we subscribed hath no word in it that gives any such intimation, . . .

Of Flavel's work the seven say: "Upon the whole we are so well assured of the peaceful, healing temper of the present author of these treatises, that we are persuaded he designed such a course of managing the controversies wherein he hath concerned himself, as to prevent, on the one hand injury to the memory of the dead; and on the other any hurt or danger to the living."\(^4\)

In his treatise on Antinomianism Flavel has a threefold design:

\(^{1}\) ibid., Vol. III, p. 419
\(^{2}\) ibid., Vol. III, p. 551
\(^{3}\) ibid., Vol. III, pp. 413-414
\(^{4}\) ibid., Vol. III, p. 418
"to discharge and free the free grace of God from those dangerous errors, which fight against it under its own colours; partly to prevent the seduction of some that stranger; and lastly, (though least of all) to vindicate my own doctrine."¹

According to Flavel, the Scriptures, foreseeing there would arise such a sort of men in the church, "as would wax wanton against Christ, and turn his grace into lasciviousness," have not only warned us in general to beware of opinions that corrupt the doctrine of free grace, as in Romans 6:1-2, What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. There are also in Scriptures particular warnings against slighting God's holy law, Romans 7:7, 12; against disregarding and neglecting the duties of obedience, under pretense of free grace, James 2, Matthew 25; and against neglecting or slighting sanctification as the evidence of our justification, I John. Nothing is more contrary to moral looseness than the free grace of God, which teaches that, "denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world." The gospel makes sin more hateful than the law did; it shows our obligations to duty and encouragements to holiness to be stronger than ever.²

The perversion of the doctrine of free grace and Christian liberty is chargeable to both wicked and good men. The wicked have corrupted it by design, that they might "sin the more quietly and securely." As for the godly who have succumbed to this error, some were probably suffering from a guilty conscience and therefore grasped anything that

¹. ibid., Vol. III, p. 551
². ibid., Vol. III, pp. 551-552
promised relief; a few were led to Antinomianism from an over-zealous crusade against Romanism; others were caught by separating the Spirit from the written word; still others were corrupted by "a comparative weakness and injudiciousness of mind."¹ It is fortunate for the world that God has provided two powerful antidotes to resist the malignity and contagion of this error: the scope and current of Scriptures and the experience and practice of the saints.² After this introduction, Flavel proceeds to refute the chief errors found in the teaching of the Antinomians, including Crisp, Saltmarsh, Eaton and Town.

The Antinomians argued that the justification of sinners was an immanent and eternal act of God, not only preceding all acts of sin, but the very existence of the sinner himself, and so perfectly abolishing sin that men were as free from sin as Christ Himself. Some, like Crisp, asserted that the elect were all justified at the time of Christ's death. In answer, Flavel charged that the Antinomians were heretical in their doctrine of justification because they did not distinguish its many parts. Justification had to be considered according to God's eternal decrees and according to its execution in time in Christ. It also had to be considered according to its application to men universally and particularly, privately and publicly. The Antinomian doctrine was irrational, unscriptural and injurious to Christ and the souls of men. It was asking too much to think of men being actually justified before they were born. Scriptures spoke of remission

¹ ibid., Vol. III, pp. 553-554
² ibid., Vol. III, pp. 557-558
or justification as a future act; hence, it was not from eternity. The Antinomian doctrine would make the atonement worthless.¹

Saltmarsh defined faith as "a being persuaded more or lesse of Christ's love; and therefore it is called, A Believing with the heart."² Other Antinomians added that justification by faith was merely the manifestation of what was actually done before, and when a person believed, that which was hid before was then revealed. This teaching, Flavel asserted, corrupted the Christian doctrine of faith, just as the other vitiated the doctrine of justification. There were multitudes of believing and justified people who had no such manifestation, evidence or assurance of God's love and the forgiveness of sins through Christ's death. Besides, these manifestations came and went, and were frequently lost and recovered. Such could not be justifying acts of faith.³ It was not persuasion of Christ's love, but acceptance of Him that conferred saving benefits upon believers. A man might be strongly convinced of God's love and the forgiveness of sins, and yet have no interest in Christ, nor be in a pardoned state.⁴ The Antinomians confused the distinction between dogmatical and saving faith. They made it all one to believe a proposition and to believe savingly in Christ.⁵

Saltmarsh also argued that "none ought to question whether they do believe or no, but to believe till they be persuaded that they do believe, and more and more of the truth of their faith or belief, right-

¹ ibid., Vol. III, pp. 552-562
² Saltmarsh, Free Grace... (London: Printed for Giles Calvert, 1645), p. 24
³ Flavel, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 564-565
⁴ ibid., Vol. III, p. 566
⁵ ibid., Vol. III, p. 567
eousnesse being revealed from faith to faith." According to him, "We ought no more to question our Faith, which is our first and foundation Grace, then we ought to question Christ the Foundation of our Faith."¹

To this, Flavel gave the orthodox reply by pointing out that the questioning and examining of our faith was a duty commanded in Scriptures, e.g. II Corinthians 13:5, II Peter 1:10, I Corinthians 10:12, II John 8. He argued that this Antinomian teaching would only confirm and establish a sinner in his mistakes and cut off all means of conviction or enlightenment. Such a doctrine could not be true, because it presumed every "persuasion of a man's heart to be infallible."² In other words, enthusiasm was not to be trusted by itself; it had to be tempered by reason.

Another Antinomian doctrine was that believers were not bound to confess their sins, or pray for the pardon of them, because their sins had been pardoned before they were committed. This was the teaching of Eaton.³ Flavel's rebuttal was that if this were true, then one could go on to say there was no sin in believers; or "if there be, the evil is inconsiderable; or whatever evil they commit need not be confessed or repented of."⁴

Eaton and Town went so far as to say that God saw no sin believers.⁵ To Flavel, of course, this was blasphemy, for "he that denies that God seeth his most secret sins, therein, consequentially denies him to be God." Eaton and Town's teaching was also inconsistent with "God's

¹ Saltmarsh, op. cit., pp. 92, 95
² Flavel, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 563-569
³ ibid., Vol. III, p. 556, quoting from Eaton's Honeycomb
⁴ ibid., Vol. III, pp. 570-571
⁵ ibid., Vol. III, p. 556, quoting from Town's Assertion and Eaton's Honeycomb
providential dispensations to His people, for His afflictions or pardons are not blindfold acts." Moreover, Flavel asserted that this teaching had to be rejected because it lacked scriptural support. 1

A belief, spread generally in the writings of the Antinomians, was that "God is not angry with the elect, nor doth he smite them for their sins; and to say that he doth so is an injurious reflection upon the justice of God, who hath received full satisfaction for all their sins from the hand of Christ." These Antinomians, Flavel charged, have misunderstood the end of Christ's death, because "God's antipathy to sin can never be taken away by the satisfaction of Christ, though his hatred to the persons of the redeemed be." According to Flavel, the Antinomians have been led astray in this by their extreme reaction to the Roman doctrine, which erred in the other direction, and by a groundless fear of inconsistency between divine justice and love. They would not have been lost if they had distinguished between "the vindictive punishments from God, the pure issues and effects of his justice and wrath against the wicked," and "his paternal castigations, the pure issues of the care and love of a displeased Father." 2

One of Crisp's beliefs was that "by God's laying our iniquities upon Christ, he became as completely sinful as we, and we as completely righteous as Christ." 3 Flavel pointed out the obvious errors in these two propositions: "the first sinks and debases Christ too low, the other exalts the sinful creature too high." To support his answer, Flavel turned to "a clear and learned divine," John Owen, who had

2. ibid., Vol. III, pp. 574 ff.
3. ibid., Vol. III, p. 556
written: "Nothing is more absolutely true, nothing more sacredly and assuredly believed by us, than that nothing which Christ did or suffered, nothing that he undertook, or undertook, did, or could constitute him subjectively, inherently, and thereupon personally a sinner, or guilty of any sins of his own."\(^1\) As to the proposition that we were as completely righteous as Christ, Flavel asserted that only a conceited and fanciful man would make such a claim. We were justified and saved by the righteousness of Christ, but that righteousness was only "ours relatively, not formally and inherently."\(^2\)

Another Antinomian doctrine was that "believers need not fear their own sins, nor the sins of others; forasmuch as neither their own, nor other's sins can do them any hurt, nor must they do any duty for their own good or salvation, or for eternal rewards."\(^3\) The Antinomians, Flavel charged, committed a double error here. They misunderstood the nature of sin, and they failed to distinguish between "ends" and "self-ends." They looked at only one aspect of sin, i.e. the fact that it could be overruled by God's grace. They did not distinguish between duties for God's glory and those for their own benefit, the latter of which had to be differentiated further into carnal and spiritual "self-ends."\(^4\)

Flavel also attacked Saltmarsh's teaching that the new covenant was a promise requiring no condition upon our part. The latter had written: "God agreed to save man, but this agreement was with Christ,

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1. ibid., Vol. III, p. 581
2. ibid., Vol. III, p. 582
3. ibid., Vol. III, p. 583
and all the conditions were on his part: He stood for us, and arti-
cled with God for us, and performed the conditions for life and glory." Flavel's reply was that in the covenant of grace, as distinct from the covenant of redemption made with Christ alone, there were duties re-
quired as well as mercies promised. So until we repented and believed in our own persons, we shared none of the blessings.

The Antinomians' denial of sanctification to be the proof for justification provoked a final blast from Flavel. The former had de-
clared that this was "to light a candle to the sun." Flavel answered that the examination of our justification by our sanctification was not only lawful and possible, but excellent and necessary. It was the course that Christians had taken in all ages, and that which God had blessed by furnishing us with self-reflecting powers and abilities. In fact, God had expressly commanded us in Scriptures to examine our- selves, e.g. II Corinthians 13:5, I John 5:13.

After dealing with these ten errors of the Antinomians, Flavel characteristically ended on this note: "Having discharged my duty thus far, I now resolve to return (if God will permit me) to my much sweeter, and more agreeable studies; still maintaining my Christian charity for those whom I oppose; not doubting but I shall meet those in heaven, from whom I am forced, in lesser things, to dissent and differ upon earth." If all the disputers in this controversy had fol-

1. Saltmarsh, op. cit., p. 126
2. Flavel, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 583-589
3. Ibid., Vol. III, p. 590
4. Ibid., Vol. III, p. 591
lowed Flavel in this spirit, there would not have lasted seven years of bitter wrangling.

However, Flavel's treatise did not heal the trouble started by the republication of Crisp's sermons. Flavel failed because he could not give a satisfactory answer to those who were seeking a doctrine of assurance. Even the elect were not always certain of their election, but had their fluctuations of doubt and melancholy lapses from grace. The best of them were imperfectly sanctified. The orthodox answer that "Christ may come into thy soul and thou dost not know him" was not good enough. So the Antinomians simplified all problems of election, regeneration, assurance and imperfect sanctification with an absolute assurance, an immediate and personal revelation. They made God's grace do all. This had such a strong appeal to those who could not keep balanced between piety and reason, between faith and works, that soon both Englands had ardent followers of Crisp.

After Flavel, Dr. Daniel Williams was requested to undertake another refutation of Crisp's doctrines. Williams published his book under the title, Gospel Truth Stated and Vindicated, in 1692. This work, however, only succeeded in starting a long series of charges and countercharges under titles like Crispianism Unmasked; Neonomianism Unmasked; and A Faithful Rebuke to a False Report. During the course of the controversy, the Presbyterians referred to the Antinomians as "whaffling whelps"; one Antinomian was also described as "a prevaricating, partial, insolent, pedantick, a great Wit (in a Scoff), a

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writer of Fireballs." In retaliation, the Antinomians accused the Presbyterians of retaining dregs of popery, and compared them to the youths who harried Elisha. Only time brought all this to an end.

1. Quoted by Griffiths, op. cit., p. 105
B. INFANT-BAPTISM

Flavel's second controversy was over infant-baptism with a neighboring Baptist minister, Philip Cary. There is very little information about Cary to be found. His father was an apothecary in Dartmouth, and he himself attended the Baptist general assemblies in London as the minister and messenger of the church in Dartmouth. Cary also felt the weight of persecution for his nonconformity, and was for a considerable time imprisoned in Exeter gaol. He published three books: A disputation; A solemn call; and A Just Reply to Mr. John Flavel's arguments. The second of these was his major work, and was advertised in 1689 as follows: "A solemn Call, unto all that would be owned as Christ's faithful witness, speedily and seriously to attend unto the primitive purity of the gospel doctrine and worship, or a discourse concerning baptism. Wherein that of infants is disproved as having no footing at all in the word of God . . . . By Philip Carey, a Lover of Truth and Peace. Price bound, 2 shillings." This work was an attempt to answer the arguments of "Dr. Allen, Dr. Baxter, Mr. Sydenham, Mr. Sedgwick, Mr. Roberts and Dr. Burthogge," who had written in defense of infant-baptism at one time or another.

Against Cary Flavel produced two treatises. The first was published under the title, Vindiciae Louis et Foederis; or a Reply to Philip Cary's Solemn Call. In the preface to this treatise Flavel first points out how peaceful and respectful he has been towards the

Baptiste. He has always regarded them as Christians, sound in the other great doctrines of the gospel. He realizes there are difficulties in this controversy which may puzzle the minds of well-meaning Christians, but he values the peace of the church too highly "to keep open the breaches" on such a matter. However, now he has to speak out, as he tells Cary: "Sir, were my own father alive, I must and would oppose him, should he attempt what here you do." In Cary's A Solemn Call, Flavel finds the great doctrines of God's covenants abused, and several of the objections he had written privately in reply to Cary's requests refuted publicly. So Flavel writes: "Thus I am necessarily brought into the field of controversy: whither I came not a volunteer, but a pressed man; not out of choice, but necessity." He hastens to add: "Now I am here, I resolve to be only Adversarius litis, non personae, an adversary in the controversy, not to the person, especially of my friendly neighbor."  

The opening paragraph of Flavel's reply, however, does not bear out this profession of friendship towards his neighbor: 

The book I have undertaken to animadvert briefly upon, bears the title of a solemn call; but I am not so much concerned with the solemnity, as I am with the authority of this call. Not how it is, but whose it is. If it be the call of God, it must be obeyed though it be to part not only with the privileges, but lives of our dearest children; but then we had need to be very well assured it is the call of God, else we are guilty at once of

1. ibid., Vol. VI, p. 321  
2. ibid., Vol. VI, p. 377  
3. Unfortunately our only source of Cary's arguments are those quoted by Flavel. The major libraries of Britain, including the British Museum, Dr. Williams Library and the Scottish National Library, do not have a copy of A Solemn Call. In connection with it the Congregational Library, London, is the only British library listed in The Short-Title Catalog; a visit was made to this library on 30 January 1952, but the book could not be located.  
4. Flavel, op. cit., Vol. VI, p. 322
the highest folly, and basest treachery, to part with so rich an inheritance, conveyed by God's covenant with Abraham, to us believing Gentiles, and our seed, at Mr. Cary's call. ¹

Flavel next informs Cary it is his "great evil to lay salvation itself on such a point as the proper subject of baptism, and to make it the very basis on which the whole Christian religion, and its professors' salvation must stand." This, Flavel thinks, is "most uncharitable... unwarrantable... and dangerous."²

Flavel and his brethren who upheld infant-baptism based their arguments for it on the covenant of God with Abraham, as recorded in Genesis 17. They held that God's covenant with Abraham was the same covenant gentile believers were under; that in Abraham's covenant children were accepted with their parents and had the sign of the covenant applied to them. They argued that the promise of God to Abraham and his children now descended to believers and their children, and that none of the privileges made to Abraham's children were revoked by Christ or his apostles. Therefore, believers' children still possessed them, and no new command or promise was required.³

Cary, on the other hand, tried to prove this covenant to be the same covenant of works made with Adam. This, according to him, was "the very hinge of the controversy" between the two.

In answer to Cary's A Solemn Call, Flavel presented for refutation three principles of Cary's book, which supposedly made up the latter's whole argument.

First, "That the Sinai law is the same with Adam's covenant of

¹. ibid., Vol. VI, p. 327
². ibid., Vol. VI, p. 328
³. ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 329-330
works, made in paradise." According to Flavel, the difference between Cary and himself on this point was "whether the Sinai law do in its own nature, and according to God's purpose and design in the promulgation of it, revive the law of nature, to the same ends and uses it served to in Adam's covenant; and so be properly and truly a covenant of works?" or "whether God had not gracious and evangelical ends and purposes?" Flavel defended the latter, Cary the former. 1

Secondly, "That Abraham's covenant, Gen. 17, is an Adam's covenant of works also, because circumcision was annexed to it, which obliged men to keep the whole law." Cary held that circumcision was in itself a condition of the covenant of works, and when it was attached to God's covenant with Abraham, it made that a covenant of works also. This, Flavel utterly denied. To him, Abraham's covenant was a true covenant of grace. Circumcision was a seal of righteousness of faith, and therefore could not possibly belong to the covenant of works. Moreover, as it was applied to both "the ordinary and extraordinary infant-seed" of Abraham during that administration of the covenant, so it was Christ's will that baptism should take its place under the gospel, and be applied to all the children of Abraham's spiritual descendents. 2

Thirdly, "That neither Moses' law, Exod. 20 nor God's covenant with Abraham, Gen. 17, can be any other than an Adam's covenant of works, because they have each of them conditions in them on man's part; but the gospel-covenant hath none at all, but is altogether free and absolute." The question here was, "whether in the new covenant some act

2. ibid., Vol. VI, p. 325
of ours (though it have no merit in it, nor can be done in our own single strength) be not required to be performed by us, antecedently to a blessing or privilege consequent by virtue of a promise? And whether such an act of duty, being of a suspending nature to the blessing promised, it have not the true and proper nature of a gospel-condition?" Flavel took the affirmative and Cary the negative side of the question.

After going round and round Cary's three principles, Flavel finally came to a stop with this challenge:

If you think fit to rejoin to this my answer, I desire you will avoid, as much as you can, a tedious harangue of words, and speak strictly and regularly to my arguments, by limiting, distinguishing, or denying, as a disputant ought to do: If so, I promise you a reply; but if I find no such thing, it shall pass with me but for waste paper; nor will I waste time about it. The Lord give us unity in things necessary, liberty in things indifferent, and charity in all things."

Philip Cary, "a Lover of Truth and Peace," took up his pen immediately and published A Just Reply to Mr. John Flavell's Arguments, By way of Answer to a Discourse Lately Published, Entitled, A Solemn Call. In this work, according to the author and title page, "it is plainly proved, that the covenant made with Israel at Mount Sinai, as also the Covenant of Circumcision made with Abraham, whereon so much stress is laid for the support of Infant Baptism, are no other than two several Editions of the Covenant of Works; and consequently, that no just Arguments can thence be deduced for the Justification of that Practice."

Cary charged Flavel with hypocrisy: "Mr. Flavell tells me indeed

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1. ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 325-326, 343 ff.
2. ibid., Vol. VI, p. 378
in his present Reply, that he isResolved to Contend with me in Friendship and Courtesie, Alexander like, when he intended to fall on Taxiles an Indian Prince. But as there was little of Justice in Alexander's Enterprise; whatever Honesty, or Courtesie, was pretended by him: So neither is there in Mr. Flavell's. He also charged Flavel with prevarication, and with having "a mighty Itch to find out some Absurdity, or some Contradiction or other." Cary then repeated and elaborated the three principles in A Solemn Call, which Flavel had attacked.

Though Cary had not replied "as a disputant ought to do," Flavel did not let his answer pass as he had threatened. Instead he produced a second answer, entitled Vindiciarum Vindex: or a Refutation of the weak and impertinent rejoinder of Mr. Philip Cary, which he appended to his treatise on the Causes and Cures of mental Errors. He was probably stung by Cary's charges. He spent the first two pages to explain the necessity of a second rebuttal. "As for the rude insults, uncomely reflections, and passionate expressions of my discontented friend," he remarked, "I shall not throw back the dirt upon him, when I wipe it off from myself; I can easily forgive and forget them too: The best men have their passions."

Like Cary in A Just Reply, Flavel, in this treatise, merely reviewed what he had presented in his first answer, under the following three general heads:

I. I shall clearly evince to the world that Mr. Cary hath not been able to discharge and free his own thesis from the horrid consequents and gross absurdities which I have laid to their

1. P. Cary, A Just Reply... (London: Printed for J. Harris, 1690), preface
2. ibid., pp. 16, 24
4. ibid., Vol. III, p. 420
charge in my first reply.

II. That he hath left my arguments standing in their full strength against him.

III. And then I shall confirm and strengthen my three positions, which destroy the cause he manages by some farther additions of scripture, reason, and authorities, which, I hope will fully end this matter betwixt us.¹

It was another long-winded reply, but eventually Flavel ran short of breath. However, he did not stop until he had made this final thrust:

Sir, in a word, I dare not say but you are a good man; but since I read your two books, you have made me think more than once, of what one said of Jonah after he had read his history, that he was a strange man of a good man: Yet as strange a good man you are, I hope to meet you with a sounder head and better spirit in heaven.²

¹ ibid., Vol. III, pp. 496 ff.
² ibid., Vol. III, p. 550
Sirs, what must I do to be saved? Repeatedly this question was asked by the puritan rank and file. Their shepherds responded with not only the apostles' answer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ;" they also provided guides with maps and useful information. Bunyan, of course, produced the most famous and lasting guide, but there were others much earlier and almost as good, such as Arthur Dent's The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven and John Downman's The Christian Warfare. Then there was Richard Baxter's A Christian Directory: or, a Sum of Practical Theology, and Cases of Conscience, which was, in R. H. Tawney's view, "a Puritan Summa Theologica and Summa Moralis in one; its method of treatment descends directly from that of the mediaeval Summae, and it is, perhaps, the last important English specimen of a famous genus." The work comprises four parts: Christian ethics or private duties; Christian economics or family duties; Christian ecclesiastics or church duties; and Christian politics or duties to our rulers and neighbors. Many other ministers gave much time and space in sermons and treatises to answer questions put to them on various phases of the Christian's pilgrimage. These questions or cases of conscience led to a new development in moral theology.

H. H. Benson has pointed out that in seventeenth century England there was a new casuistry for the guidance of Christians, to take the

place of the canon and the confessor's directions. According to Henson, casuistry in the mouth of a Protestant did not mean the same thing as in that of a Roman Catholic. Protestant casuistry was primarily intended for the use of perplexed persons, and served more or less as a living guide. It discussed principles and showed the general line of practical application, and appealed to the conscience and reason of the perplexed as being responsible for whatever decision taken. Roman Catholic casuistry, on the contrary, was the private manual of the priest, designed to equip him for his work in hearing confessions. Not the morally perplexed were his concern so much as the morally polluted. In contrast to that, we could compare Baxter's concern in his casuistry: "To direct ungodly, carnal minds, how to attain to a state of grace; to direct those that have saving grace, how to use it. . . . And by the way, to direct those that have grace, how to discern it, and take the comfort of it; and to direct them how to grow in grace, and persevere unto the end." Puritan piety, as puritan theology, was based on God, sin and regeneration.

The pilgrim on his way to heaven must begin with a definite Christian experience. Flavel never tired of telling his flock: "Do not think God hath set the blood of Christ to sale, and that those only are capable of the benefits of it, who have lived the strictest and soberest lives. No; though sobriety, morality, and strictness in religious duties be things commanded and commended in the gospel; yet no

man by these things can purchase a pardon for the least sin." Action
followed from the condition of one's soul. No restitution or refor-
mation, no common gifts or abilities, no religious duties or services
could save any man from hell, without a change by thorough conversion. Other Puritans put it more bluntly: the good works of the unsaved
stank in the nostrils of God.

What was the nature of this conversion? Flavel insisted it did
not consist in external things like infant baptism or common profession
as such. True conversion "is nothing less, than the total change of the
inward temper and frame of the heart, and the external course of the
life. It is not the cool confession, but the real forsaking of sin ... There is a positive turning unto God, a whole heart-choice of him, for
your supreme and ultimate happiness and portion." Of course, such a
change was impossible "until the day of God's power come." But every
man could do much that would "have a true (though remote) tendency to
his conversion. ... The same feet that carried a man to a tavern,
could carry him to a closet." 1

Conversion of the vilest sinner was possible. It was never too
late. In fact, the conversion of profane men was highly probable,
because "nothing fixes men in a state of evil, more than a strong con-
ceit that their condition is good." The man who had been a profane
swearer, a beastly drunkard, a lascivious person, an hater and per-
secutor of good men could still receive pardon, mercy and salvation if

1. Flavel, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 159
2. ibid., Vol. VI, p. 538
3. ibid., Vol. VI, p. 537
4. ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 539-540
5. ibid., Vol. VI, p. 535
he would cast himself down "at the feet of mercy, and pour forth his laments and desires before the Lord."\textsuperscript{1}

Flavel shared Baxter's concern for souls, but was not so systematic or exhaustive in writing on the subject. Flavel spread his practical teaching throughout all his sermons and treatises. But for his flock in Dartmouth he published two modest volumes entitled The Touchstone of Sincerity: or, The Signs of Grace, and Symptoms of Hypocrisy; and A Saint Indeed: or, The Great Work of a Christian, opened and pressed from Proverbs li:23. The first was for searching the heart, the second for keeping the heart. These books were to help not only the people in Dartmouth, but five succeeding generations of pilgrims on both sides of the Atlantic as well, for the first volume went through two editions, and the second had ten printings. The immediate occasion for the publication of A Saint Indeed was this typical incident, as related by Flavel:

A dear and choice friend of my intimate acquaintance being under much inward trouble, upon the account of some special heart-disorder, opened the case to me, and earnestly requested some rules and helps in that particular; whilst I was bending my thoughts to that special case, divers other cases of like importance (some of which were dependent upon that consideration) occurred to my thought, and this scripture, which I have insisted upon, presented itself, as a fit foundation for the whole discourse; which being lengthened out to what you see, divers friends requested me to transcribe for their use, divers of the cases here handled, and some others begged me to publish the whole.\textsuperscript{2}

Thus Flavel's work was similar to that reported by Baxter: "Every Thursday evening my neighbors that were most desirous and had opportunity met at my house, and there one of them repeated the sermon, and

\textsuperscript{1} ibid., Vol. VI, p. 531
\textsuperscript{2} ibid., Vol. V, p. 419
afterwards they proposed what doubts any of them had about the sermon, or any other case of conscience, and I resolved their doubts.\(^1\)

To Flavel, the heart of man was his worst part before regeneration and the best afterwards: it was the seat of principles and the fountain of actions. The greatest difficulty in conversion was to win the heart to God, and the greatest difficulty after conversion was to keep the heart with God. "Here lies the very pinch and stress of religion."\(^2\)

As noted in the last chapter, orthodox Puritans contended that regeneration was usually ascertainable, as against the Antinomian doctrine that one could secure immediate and intimate assurance from the Spirit without marks and signs. According to Flavel, "the Spirit of God dwelling in us is a mark of our adoption. Now the Spirit cannot be discerned in his essence, but in his operations; and to discern these is to discern the Spirit." These operations do not include miraculous voices from trees and stones in the fields. The Christian attained assurance, "not by any extraordinary revelation, but by subjecting his understanding to the scriptures, and comparing his own heart with them."\(^3\)

So in the end it was Scriptures, reason and conscience that decided the question. Flavel cautioned: "He that will keep his heart must have the eyes of his soul awake and open upon all the disorderly and tumultuous stirrings of his affections; if the affections break loose, and the passions be stirred, the soul must discover and suppress them before they get to an height."\(^4\) This did not mean Flavel sought a cold in-

\(^1\) Quoted by Powicke, op. cit., p. 92
\(^2\) Flavel, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 423
\(^3\) ibid., Vol. V, p. 434
\(^4\) ibid., Vol. V, p. 427
tellectualism, because he also held that "A man that never read the nature of love in books of philosophy, nor the transports and extasies thereof in history, may yet truly describe and express it by the sensible motions of that passion in his own soul; yea, he that hath felt, much better understands, than he that hath only read or heard."¹

Though Flavel admitted that "the portraiture of a Christian is such as none can draw to one model," yet he was able to distinguish exclusive, inclusive and positive marks and signs in regeneration.

Exclusive marks serve to shut out bold pretenders, by shewing them how far they come short of a saving grace; and they are commonly taken from some necessary duty, as hearing, praying, etc. He that hath not these things, cannot have any work of grace in him. . .

Inclusive marks rather discover the degrees than the truth of grace, and are rather intended for comfort than for conviction; If we find them in ourselves, we do not only find sincerity, but eminency of grace; They being taken from some raised degree and eminent acts of grace in confirmed and grown Christians.

Bewtixt the two former there is a middle sort of marks, which are called positive marks, and they are always, and only found in regenerate souls: The hypocrite hath them not; the grown Christian hath them, and that in an eminent degree; The lowest Christian hath them in a lower, but saving degree.²

Other marks discovered by "some of our most skilful heart anatomists" were collected by Flavel for his people's use. According to a Mr. Gurnall, the new heart must be simple, plain, uniform and progressive. A Mr. Obadiah Sedgwick asserted constancy, simplicity, spirituality and humility to be the marks of uprightness.³

Even after the Christian's soul had been "rectified" by grace, he still had to exercise constant care and diligence to preserve it, be-

2. *ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 537
cause "a gracious heart is like a musical instrument, which, though be it never so exactly tuned, a small matter brings it out of tune again: yea, hang it aside but a little, and it will need setting again before you can play another lesson on it." 1 In keeping the heart there were certain duties to be performed.

To begin with, there must be repentance for every known sin. "It is with the heart well kept, as it is with the eye, which is a lit emblem of it; if a small dust get into the eye, it will never leave twinkling and watering till it have wept it out." 2 Repentance, Flavel taught, began with "a true sight and sense of sin," followed by "an apprehension of mercy and forgiveness with God." Otherwise, there would be no distinction between the church and the world. "If men may be Christian without mortification, we may as well go into the taverns, ale-houses, or brothel-houses, among the roaring or sottish crew of sinners, and say, here are those that are redeemed by the blood of Christ." 3

There must be "earnest supplications and instant prayer." 4 The man of faith was the man of prayer, because faith was the soul of prayer. Prayer served as an outlet of troubles and an inlet of comfort and consolation, courage amid magnanimity. 5 It was the best office one Christian could do for another. There were two sorts of prayers: "Stated prayer is our conversing with God, either publicly, privately, or secretly, at the constant seasons allotted for it, in the returns

1. Ibid., Vol. V, p. 126
2. Ibid., Vol. V, p. 125
3. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 377
4. Ibid., Vol. V, p. 127
5. Ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 64-65
of every day and week. Occasional, is the Christian's address to God at any time upon extraordinary emergencies, and calls of providence."¹

Prayers were to be directed to God only through His name, without the mediation of angels and saints. After a Christian had decided his request was acceptable to God, and his manner sincere and fervent, he was to exercise a resolute persistence until God answered his prayer. However, the Christian was to remember that God might delay or suspend His answer for a time.² Prayer was not so much for God's information as it was a testimony of our submission to Him. Thus, Flavel advised seamen it was right to pray for pardon of sin, for God's presence and strength in facing temptations, for divine protection against dangers and hazards, for counsel and direction in their affairs and undertakings, and for success in their lawful employments and designs.³ Flavel observed that there was much hypocrisy and formality in the prayers of the saints. They could improve themselves by being more frequent in the duty, by honouring the Spirit who enabled them to pray, by searching their hearts and by working more for impressions than expressions.⁴

This was the work required of all who would keep their hearts, and according to Flavel, "of all works in religion it is the most difficult, constant, and important work."⁵ This bears out Knappen's observation that the Puritan writing theology gave to God all the responsibility and, therefore, all the glory for man's salvation; but in the pulpit, as in popular writing, he was delightfully inconsistent.

¹ ibid., Vol. V, p. 346
² ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 291 ff.
⁴ ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 66-67
⁵ ibid., Vol. V, p. 428
Putting the burden on the individual. Knappen goes on to say that in theory good works were not meritorious but a sure evidence of grace. In practice this brought good works back into Protestantism, and made it possible to preserve the original moral fervor of Puritanism from the blight of Antinomianism which must logically have overtaken it had those who made the practical application of puritan principles been doctrinaires rather than men of common sense. ¹ Accordingly, Flavel argued that "all the duties in the world will never make an hypocrite more holy, humble or heavenly than he is," and in the same breath taught that "there is real communion betwixt God and his people in duties." ²

For "members of particular churches," Flavel listed ten duties:

To be often together in acts of Christian communion . . . to follow and back the great design of the gospel in the world . . . humble condescension to the infirmities of their weaker brethren. . . . to be exceeding tender of the church's unity, both in judgment, love and practice. . . . a respectful carriage towards the meanest Christian. . . . weekly to receive reproofs from each other for their sins. . . . to communicate their spiritual stock of gifts, graces and experiences. . . . cheerfully to communicate their outward good things for the relief of their brethren. . . . not only to relieve the distressed members of Christ, but to seek out and visit them. . . . to put charitable constructions upon doubtful words and actions. ³

By walking strictly according to these rules, Flavel declared, Christians would win the world over to their Lord and stop the mouths of detracting and blaspheming enemies. They would also fill themselves with inward peace and secure and secure God's presence with them. ⁴

¹. Knappen, op. cit., pp. 392, 394  
². Flavel, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 571  
³. ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 587-588  
⁴. ibid., Vol. VI, p. 589
In another treatise entitled *Antipharmacum Saluberrimum; or, A
serious and seasonable Caveat to all the saints in their Hour of
Temptation*, Flavel gave his "best advice and counsel, to preserve hum-
ble and hungry souls from the snares and evils that are and are coming
upon the world."¹ Christians were to "cleave fast to Christ, and the
profession they had formerly made of Him" whatever the conditions of
their lives might be. They were to "touch not with idolatry and super-
stition; under what name or notion soever it be presented."² The
saints were to "beware of such persons as are factors and agents for
antichrist, and keep off from such a ministry, the tendency and scope
of which, is to entice and draw to idolatry." Finally, they were to
keep themselves pure from the corruptions of the present world, and to
exercise faith, courage, magnanimity, patience and self-denial.³

The picture that Flavel drew of the Restoration period was almost
black. In 1671 he referred to "this atheistical age of the world,
wherein all serious piety and thoughts of immortality are ridiculed,
and hissed out of the company of many... And as the Atheism of
some, so the tepedity, and unconcerned carelessness of the most."⁴
Eight years later he lamented: "how many more profess religion in these
days, than ever made religion their business!... that take religion
for ostentation than for an occupation, who never mind the duties of re-
ligion, but when they have nothing else to do; and when their outward

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1. ibid., Vol. IV, p. 557
2. ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 518 ff.
3. ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 530 ff.
4. ibid., Vol. II, p. 476
man is engaged in the duties of it, yet their heart is not in it."¹

In 1680 he noted: "Many eyes are now opened to see the common danger, but some foresaw it long ago; when they saw the general decay of godliness everywhere, the notorious profanity and atheism."² And in 1689 he remarked: "It is astonishing to think, that a nation so swarming with drunkards, persecutors, formalists in religion, yes, atheists and scoffers at all practical and serious piety, should nevertheless be thus favored, delivered, and exalted in mercy above all the nations round about us."³ Flavel's observation of the times has been confirmed by a modern writer on Restoration Puritanism, who says that there is no mistaking the prevalence of swearing and drunkenness and the existence of bawdy houses, mention of which appeared constantly in the charges made by the Society for the Reformation of Manners after 1630.⁴ As for the morals of the court, Trevelyan writes that a hard-hearted and cynical frivolity prevailed in Whitehall and Westminster much more than in England as a whole. "The men who haunted Charles II's Court, the first leaders of the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Bill laughed at all forms of virtue as hypocrisy, and believed that every man had his price."⁵ Speaking of the conformist clergy of the Restoration, Burnet says that,

they generally took more care of themselves than of the Church. The men of merit and service were loaded with many livings and many dignities....And with this overset of wealth and pomp that came on

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¹ ibid., Vol. V, p. 521
² ibid., Vol. II, p. 11
³ ibid., Vol. IV, p. 319
men in the decline of their parts and age, they, who were now growing into old age, became lazy and negligent in all the true concerns of the Church; they gave themselves up to ease and sloth. In all which sad representation some few exceptions are to be made.¹

For a local picture by a contemporary we could turn to Baxter's description of conditions in Cheshire and Kidderminster. To the Puritans merry England was not all cakes and ale, maypole dancing and frolics on the village green.

So it should not be surprising to find Flavel producing a work for seamen entitled A Pithetical and Serious Dissuasive from the horrid and detestable Sins of Drunkenness, Swearing, Uncleanliness, Forgetfulness of Mercies, Violation of Promises, and atheistical Contempt of Death, though this evoked only scorn from Tawney.² It was an "essay toward their much-desired Reformation, fit to be seriously recommended to their profane Relations, whether Seamen or others, by all such as unfeignedly desire their eternal Welfare."³ In the preface Flavel reminds his readers that he is not charging all seamen with these sins, but only "the profane and looser sort." Since he finds plain dealing necessary for the cure of the latter, he would rather offend all than offend God by keeping silent.⁴ This treatise was republished forty years later in America, "particularly recommended to the merchants of Boston, etc. as proper to be given to their mariners."

To Flavel the evil of sin lay in the offence it gave to God. Hence, sins committed against God were much worse than sins "immediately

². Tawney, op. cit., p. 318
³. Flavel, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 293
⁴. ibid., Vol. V, p. 295
committed against man." Of the former were murder, oppression, atheism, idolatry and blasphemy. According to Flavel, these were the signs of sinners "dead-ripe for hell":

When conscience is wasted, and grown past feeling, having no remorse for sin; when men give themselves over to the satisfaction of their lusts, to commit sin with greediness; that man that is become a contriver of sin, a designer, a student in wickedness; he that of a forward professor is turned a bitter persecutor; he that can endure no reproof or controul in the way of his sin, but derides all counsel; when a man comes to glory in his sin, and boast of his wickedness.1

In addition, there were other "locks and bars which oppose and forbid Christ's entrance into the hearts"; these included ignorance, unbelief, pride, custom, presumption and prejudices against the ways of holiness.2 Naturally, different sins would reap different degrees of torments in hell.3

Hypocrisy was the sin that Flavel condemned most severely. It was most dangerous because it permitted a man to be dishonest with himself as well as with others about the state of his soul. According to Flavel, "thousands of hypocrites embark themselves in the profession of religion in a calm; but if the wind riseth, and the sea rageth, and they see religion will not transport them safely to the cape of their earthly hopes and expectations, they desire to be landed again as soon as may be."4 So one design of God in the trials of His people was the unmasking of hypocrisy; at the same time, it was an opportunity for "the self-concealing hypocrite to recover himself out of the snare of

1. ibid., Vol. V, pp. 113-114
2. ibid., Vol. IV, p. 44
3. ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 256-257
4. ibid., Vol. V, p. 573
This emphasis on one sin naturally led to troubled consciences. Hence, Flavel had to turn round and counsel the "upright" not to censure themselves unjustly. They must not convict themselves of hypocrisy if they find a touch of it in their lives. "Hypocrisy is a weed naturally springing in all ground." The upright were to distinguish between the presence and the predominance of the weed. Otherwise, they would always be cut off from the peace and comfort of the Christian life. 2

For the guidance of these tender consciences Flavel made up a list of test questions:

Do I make the approbation of God or the applause of men the end and design of my religious performances? Is it the reproach and shame that attends sin at present, and the danger and misery that will follow it hereafter, that restrains me from the commission of it? Or is it the fear of God in my soul, and the hatred I bear to it as it is sin? Can I truly and heartily rejoice to see God's work carried on in the world, and his glory promoted by other hands, though I have no share in the credit and honour of it? Is there no duty in religion so full of difficulty and self-denial, but I desire to comply with it? Am I sincerely resolved to follow Christ and holiness at all seasons, however the aspects of the times be upon religion? Do I make no conscience of committing secret sins, or neglecting secret duties? Or am I conscientious both in the one and the other, according to the rules and patterns of integrity? 3

Just as the upright were too quick to condemn themselves of hypocrisy, so hypocrites were as apt to number themselves with the elect. For the conviction and recover of the latter, Flavel drew up the following "rules":

It is not enough to clear a man from hypocrisy, that he knows not himself to be an hypocrite. Zeal and forwardness in the cause of God, and for the reformation of his worship, will not clear a man from the danger of hypocrisy. It is no sufficient evidence

1. ibid., Vol. V, p. 580
2. ibid., Vol. V, p. 595
3. ibid., Vol. V, p. 598
of a man’s own integrity, that he hates hypocrisy in another. The mere performance of private duties will not clear a man from hypocrisy. The vogue and opinions you have got among Christians, of your sincerity, will not be sufficient to clear you from the danger of hypocrisy. Your respects and love to them that are the sincere and upright servants of God, will not clear you from the danger of being hypocrites yourselves.1

On the active side in the struggle against hypocrisy, Christians were to pray, to examine the motives of their actions, and to "scare themselves with the daily fears of the sin." They should also be uniform and steady in their profession and practice of religion, and keep their hearts "under the awe of God’s all-seeing eye."2

Flavel also had words of warning against the lesser sins, particularly those committed after conversion. As noted in the last chapter, he rejected the Antinomian teaching that the regenerate could not sin. Church members were to beware of the following sins:

a defect in their care and circumspection to prevent all just offences to them that are without... idleness and neglect of their civil callings... talesbearing... an easy credulity of private whispers, and rash censures thereupon... their neglect of God’s ordinances upon slight diversions... a defect in zeal for God’s ordinances, manifested in their dilatory attendance... irreverence and want of seriousness... neglect of giving and taking due reproofs from each other... mutual strifes and animosities exposed to the view of the world... the privateness of their spirits, centering too much in their own concerns.3

In all his denunciations of the flesh Flavel did not point to ascetic renunciation as the solution. "The crucifixion of sin doth not consist in the severe castigation of the body, and penancing it by

1. ibid., Vol. V, pp. 599-600
2. ibid., Vol. V, p. 603
stripes, fasting, and tiresome pilgrimages. This might pass for mortification among Papists, but not for the Puritans. That was also true concerning passions and desires. According to Flavel, "it is not the eradicating, but regulating of the affections," that one should aim for in life. Hence, Macaulay's familiar gibe, "The Puritan hated bearbaiting, not because it gave pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectator," would be wholly inapplicable to Flavel. Nowhere did he say that the things of this life were inherently bad. He could not, because he believed God created the universe good. Sin lay not in things but in a sinful use of them. "When our outward enjoyments are by providence shaped, and fitted to our condition, as a suit is to the body that sits close and neat, neither too short, nor too long; we cannot desire a better condition in this world." A Christian was to avoid both "redundancy and penury." Only in spiritual matters might he be most greedy and unsatisfied.

Neither was the Christian to fall into apathy because his sinful nature frequently got the better of him. Rather, he was to fight the harder. No one was to despair, because the most heinous sins could be erased upon true repentance. Life was grim but not tragic. The Puritan's condemnation of sin and sinners was excessive, but the times required it. The picture was deliberately painted dark for a purpose. This, Flavel revealed when he wrote: "Reason and conscience having been shaming men out of their profaneness... free grace invites them to the life of holiness and thereby to the life of blessedness." As

1. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 371
2. Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 94
3. Ibid., Vol. V, pp. 111-12
4. Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 257
5. Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 530
a modern scholar has pointed out, the Puritan was peculiarly alive to
the existence and the possibility of evil. He was realistic. He re-
fused to ignore or to sentimentalize the pain, the labor, the misery,
the brutality, the perpetual exposure to war and pestilence, the sense
of helplessness, and the imminence of death that were the lot of man in
the seventeenth century. So the medicine he recommended was homeopathic,
to treat evil with evil. Men must be made to feel worse before they
could feel better. 1

Thus, with the anatomy of the spiritual life the puritan preachers
also set forth a pattern of daily life which should follow. As one
historian has pointed out, the Christian might sojourn in a strange
land, his true home might be outside this life, and sin might have spoiled
almost all the delights of the temporary dwelling-place. Nevertheless,
while he lived here, he had to be serviceable to the worldly community.
The sense of sin caused the Puritan to center his hopes upon heaven,
but it did not require him to withdraw his attention from the earth. 2
The puritan code was not only a table of vices to be avoided and virtues
to be learned. Hence, a book like Lewis Bayly's The Practice of Piety
went through twenty-five editions in the early part of the seventeenth
century. Another work frequently reprinted in that period was A Garden
of Spirituall Flowers. This was a little manual made up of brief plain
statements of doctrine and of practical directions for godly living,

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1. R. B. Perry, Puritanism and Democracy (New York: The Vanguard
Press, 1944), p. 241
2. Miller, op. cit., p. 44
culled and condensed from the writings of Richard Greenham, William Perkins and two less-known men. It told one how to act like a saint and so rest assured that one has grace. It included "A Short Direction for the daily Exercise of a Christian, both on the Sabbath day, and on the week days." 1 Richard Baxter, writing on "Christian Politics" in his Christian Directory, had lists of directions for lawyers, physicians, schoolmasters and soldiers; the volume also dealt with cases of conscience concerning contracts, buying and selling, borrowing and lending and usury. And Richard Steele, a contemporary of Flavel, published two works entitled The Husbandman's Calling and The Tradesman's Calling. In the latter he laid down six requisites for the proper managing of a trade or calling: prudence or discretion, diligence, justice, truth or veracity, contentedness and religiousness.

Turning to Flavel, two similar works were produced by him after his first ejectment from the pulpit in Dartmouth. The first, Navigation Spiritualized: or A New Compass for Seamen, consisting of thirty-two points of "pleasant observations, profitable applications and serious reflections," was published c. 1664. It was designed "to stir up all, especially seamen, to make conscience of using such choice helps for the making of them as dexterous in the art of spiritual navigation, as any of them are in the art of natural navigation." 2 For this purpose Flavel set forth "the principal things necessary to be known by a spiritual seaman, in order to the steering rightly and safely to the port of happiness." These were God, Christ, holiness and death. 3

1. Quoted by Haller, op. cit., p. 118
2. Flavel, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 212
In place of the images of wayfaring, we have those of the sea. This device was not new with Flavel. Haller has noted that the transference of the journey of the spirit from land to ocean, though not characteristic of the sermons of the earlier period, was not rare. But it was to become a convention shortly when seafaring became a more common experience. In Dartmouth seafaring was common experience from the first settling of the town.

Flavel is ingenious in illustrating doctrine from the sea. He begins with the launching of a ship, which plainly sets forth our state, for just as a ship is never at rest, so is the Christian tossed about on a sea of troubles from birth. The vast ocean, which "compasses the earth shadows forth the infinite and incomprehensible mercy of our God." The rocks, though in a tempestuous ocean, yet abide firm and immovable from age to age; so does the Church amidst all the metaphorical waves which roar and beat against her. Seamen do not dare venture far into the ocean without a compass. "What the compass and all other mathematical instruments are to the navigator, that and much more is the word of God to us in our course to heaven." To save a ship in distress the richest commodities are cast overboard: "and surely, it is every way as highly reasonable, that men should mortify, cast out, and cut off their dearest lusts, rather than their immortal souls should sink and perish in the storm of God's wrath." In great storms or when near dangerous shores the pilot's skill is displayed at

1. Haller, op. cit., p. 117
its best; likewise, "in the storms and afflictions of trouble, there are the most evident and full discoveries of the wisdom and power of our God." Like the joy that seamen have when they reach shore, "what a transcendent joy, yea, ravishing, will over-run the hearts of saints, when after so many conflicts, temptations and afflictions, they arrive in glory, and are harboured in heaven, where they shall rest for ever!"

A few years later Flavel published *Husbandry Spiritualised: or, The Heavenly Use of Earthly Things*. The motives which induced him to this second undertaking, as he put it, "were the Lord's owning with some success, my labours of a like nature." According to Flavel, "Notions are more easily conveyed to the understanding, by being first clothed in some apt similitude, and so represented to the sense." That is especially true of country people, who "either are not capable of understanding truth in another dialect, or at least are less affected with it." The method that Flavel adopts in this treatise, as in the first, is threefold: an observation of some aspect of husbandry, followed by an application and a reflection. Each chapter is introduced by a rhymed couplet. The following from the first part will suffice to show Flavel's general trend of thought:

Chap. 1 In the laborious Husbandman you see, what all true Christians are, or ought to be.

" 2 The hardest lab'ringers are the thriving men, If you'll have thriving souls, be active then.

" 3 The plowman sings, and whistle, though he sweat, Shall Christians droop, because their work is great.

Chap. 4 Corn land must neither be too fat, nor poor; The middle state suits best with Christians, sure.

5 Spent barren land you can restore, and nourish; Decayed Christians God can cause to flourish.

6 No skill can mend the miry ground; and sure Some souls the gospel leaves as past a cure.

7 The plowman guides his plow with care and skill; So doth the Spirit in sound conviction still.

8 The choicest wheat is still reserv'd for seed, But gracious principles are choice indeed.

9 By heaven’s influence corn and plants do spring, God’s show’rs of grace do make his valleys sing.

10 If God restrains the show’rs, you howl and cry: Shall saints not mourn when spiritual clouds are dry?

11 Seeds die and rot, and then must fresh appear; Saints’ bodies rise more orient than they were.

12 As wheat resembled is by viler tares; So vile hypocrisy like grace appears.

13 Fowls, weeds, and blastings do your corn annoy, Even so corruptions would your grace destroy.

14 Our husbandmen for harvest wait and stay: 0 let not any saint do less than they!

15 Corn, fully ripe, is reap’d, and gather’d in; So must yourselves, when ripe in grace, or sin.

16 Your winter store in summer you provide; To Christian prudence this must be applied.

17 When from tare-seeds you see choice wheat to grow, Then from your lusts may joy and comfort flow.

18 Great is the joy of harvest-men: yet less Than theirs whom God doth with his favour bless.

19 More solid grain with greater strength you thresh, The ablest Christians have the hardest task.

20 The fan doth cause light chaff to fly away; So shall th’ ungodly in God’s winnowing-day.

Of these couplets Joseph Caryll wrote in the dedicatory letter to the
treatise: "The husbandman who can but read, may quickly learn and
sing for his solace, instead of those vain ballads and corrupting rhymes,
which many of that rank are apt to buy and solace themselves withal,
without any benefit." The remaining two parts of the treatise consist
of moral and spiritual lessons drawn from the grafting of fruit trees
and the husbandman's care of his cattle. The whole is concluded with
a short collection of meditations upon birds, beasts, trees, flowers
and rivers.

Alongside of the spiritual counsel in these treatises Flavel also
offered what seems like some shrewd business advice. One writer has
pointed out that the attitude of English Puritanism towards private
property and the acquisition of wealth was not one of opposition. It
was held that the institution of private property had divine sanction,
seeing that part of the divinely promulgated decalogue presupposed the
existence of private property. Wealth as a mercenary means for the ser-
vice of the community might be used to God's glory; accordingly, wealth
and private property constituted no problem in itself. Flavel put it
this way: "Everyone cares for his own, provides for, and secures his
own. Property (even amongst creatures) is fundamental to our labour,
care, and watchfulness; they would not so much prize life, health, es-
tates, or children, if they were not their own." Moreover, Flavel
taught that the provident and careful Christian worked not only to sup-
ply his own necessities, but laid up for his posterity. He left to his

1. ibid., Vol. V, p. 10
2. E. B. Bebb, Nonconformity and Social and Economic Life, 1660-1800
children not only what his forebears had left him, but desired to leave it improved.\textsuperscript{1} The following poem by Flavel best illustrates one aspect of this mixing of religion and business:

\begin{verbatim}
Religion will make you leave 1
Twill make And therein
If there were Christ gives Should we not
For there's Shall others
Their strength Whilst we 0 that
Why are our When we How can we And yet the If this, then, Them both;
Some if 'Twould But if they As good Rouse up These to thy
0 strive, The pain they But yet Their rest, and
When advanc'd in pow'r, Husband every hour.
Men strive with all their might,
Find a sweet delight.
Nought besides that pay
To cheer us in our way;
Do the best we can?
No such reward from man.
Work, and not regard
To get a small reward?
Turn slugs, and liter thus?
Their meal might quicken us!
Hands, and feet so slow,
Unto our business go?
Then Christ's pay expect,
Christian's work reject,
Also that embrace
If not, we both disgrace.
They could these two divide,
Please them well, with Christ to side!
May not, then it were
Cease pleading, they'll not hear:
From sloth, my soul betake
Work, no cavils make.
And try! Saints say that even,
Take, hath much of heaven.
Their best wine's kept till last,
Ease comes all so fast.\textsuperscript{2}
\end{verbatim}

The world might be "a sinful, infecting, and unquiet place,"\textsuperscript{3} but industry and diligence is the way to thrive and grow rich in it.\textsuperscript{4} "When husbandmen have been at cost and pains about their husbandry, they expect fruit from it, answerable to their pains and expenses about it."\textsuperscript{5} To Flavel, Proverbs 10:4, The hand of the diligent maketh

\begin{verbatim}
1. ibid., Vol. V, p. 174
2. ibid., Vol. V, p. 31
3. ibid., Vol. I, p. 252
4. ibid., Vol. V, p. 32
5. ibid., Vol. III, p. 19
\end{verbatim}
rich, and Proverbs 10:22, The blessing of the Lord maketh rich, are not contradictory, but confirmatory: "one speaks of the principal, the other of the instrumental cause. Diligence without God's blessing will not do it; and that blessing cannot be expected without diligence." Only the atheist would deny or question that prosperity and success in trade are from the blessing of God. The devil himself acknowledged it. As to the wicked who managed to get rich, it was through God's permission. These ideas were spread by most puritan preachers in both old and new Englands in the seventeenth century.

Such counsel, however, has furnished Tawney with the argument that the Puritan gave the ancient maxim, Laborare est orare, a new and intenser significance. Labour is not simply a requirement imposed by nature, or a punishment for Adam's sin, but is itself a kind of ascetic discipline, more rigorous than that demanded of any order of mendicants—a discipline imposed by the will of God, and to be undergone, not in solitude, but in punctual discharge of secular duties. Tawney goes further to say that in Flavel, as in Steele, "the Chadband touch is unmistakable." According to Tawney, the characteristic of Steele's The Tradesman's Calling, which he links with Flavel's Husbandry Spiritualized, is not the relics of mediaeval doctrine which linger embalmed in its guileless pages, but the robust common sense, which carries the author lightly over traditional scruples on a tide of genial, if Philistine, optimism. For Steele's main thesis is a comfortable one—that there is no necessary conflict between religion and business. By

1. ibid., Vol. V, p. 32
2. Ibid., Vol. V, p. 271
3. Tawney, op. cit., pp. 260, 318
a fortunate dispensation, the virtues enjoined on Christians—diligence, moderation, sobriety, thrift—are the very qualities most conducive to commercial success.¹

The charge against Flavel is much too severe, and can not have been made from a close reading of his work. Except for the few bits of "professional edification" we have quoted above, Flavel's treatise is mainly concerned with spiritual edification. As Joseph Caryll pointed out in the preface: "There are three things wherein (as it hath been said long ago before my day) the exercise of godliness doth chiefly consist: Prayer, temptation, meditation: Meditation is the subject of the following manual."² Flavel himself made it a point to emphasize: "This is spiritual husbandry, which here is taught you." His purpose is revealed also in the prayer he uttered for his readers: "May you but learn that lesson which is the general scope and design of this book, viz. How to walk with God from day to day, and make the several objects you behold, wings and ladders to mount your souls nearer to him, who is the centre of all blessed spirits."³

As to the happy marriage between puritan virtues and commercial success, we must go back to Max Weber's essay, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. In this treatise Weber pointed out the close connection between the growth of Calvinism, in its English version, and of capitalism, and tried to analyze the relationship between the two. The spirit of capitalism Weber described as a sense of moral obligation for activity in one's calling combined with diligence in

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¹ ibid., pp. 243-244
² Flavel, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 3
³ ibid., Vol. V, p. 6
business for utilitarian ends and a tendency to ascetic self-discipline. The Protestant ethic was described as stemming from Calvin's doctrine of predestination with two branches: puritan asceticism and individualism. The desire for assurance of election led Puritans, e.g. Baxter, to combat doubts as temptations of the devil, and to engage strenuously in secular activity as a means of removing doubt and gaining certainty. The result of all this, Weber summed up in the following paragraph:

The religious valuation of restless, continuous, systematic work in a worldly calling, as the highest means to asceticism and at the same time the surest and most evident proof of rebirth and genuine faith, must have been the most powerful conceivable lever for the expansion of that attitude toward life which we have here called the spirit of capitalism. . . . As far as the influence of the Puritan outlook extended, under all circumstances—and this is, of course, much more important than the mere encouragement of capital accumulation—it favoured the development of a rational bourgeois economic life; it was the most important, and above all the only consistent influence in the development of that life. It stood at the cradle of the modern economic man.

Weber's thesis was elaborated by Ernst Troeltsch and R. H. Tawney, who drew particular attention to the way puritan asceticism—industry, diligence, thrift, prudence—furthered the growth of bourgeois capitalism. Troeltsch, however, showed how this development was also due to circumstances. On account of their nonconformity and freedom from the state, the Puritans were excluded from all official positions in the state and from its dignities. Thus they were thrust out of the ruling classes and obliged to join the bourgeois middle class, which further intensified the bourgeois capitalist element. Troeltsch pointed out that this puritan attitude towards business life was quite different

from that of primitive Calvinism. Tawney labored the point that "the
capitalistic spirit" was as old as history and was not the offspring
of Puritanism, but it found in certain aspects of later Puritanism a
stimulating tonic. He compared Puritanism to an enchanted mirror in
which the middle classes of the seventeenth century looked, and saw an
enhancement of their values.

There is a magic mirror in which each order and organ of
society, as the consciousness of its character and destiny dawns
upon it, looks for a moment, before the dust of conflict or the
glamour of success obscures its vision. In that enchanted glass,
it sees its own lineaments reflected with ravishing allurements;
for what it sees is not what it is, but what in the eyes of man-
kind and of its own heart it would be... For the middle classes
of the early seventeenth century, rising but not yet triumphant,
that enchanted mirror was Puritanism. What it showed was a picture
grave to sternness, godly generation, scorning delights, punctual
in labour, constant in prayer, thrifty and thriving, filled with
a decent pride in themselves and their galling, assured that
strenuous toil is acceptable to Heaven.2

It is generally conceded that the mole-hill of truth in the con-
nection between Calvinism and capitalism has been painted as a mountain.

As W. R. Forrester has pointed out:

'Capitalism' was not produced either by Catholicism or by
Protestantism. Both tried to suppress its earlier phases, and
both failed. But Protestantism could not withdraw from the con-
ict, as Romanism did, for Protestantism made modern industrialism
possible, while Romanism did not. It is a complete mistake to
maintain that Protestantism produced capitalism, changed the sin
of avarice into the virtue of consecrated industry, and then failed
to control or discipline the tremendous and ruthless power it had
itself produced, till that power became to a large extent anti-social
and anti-religious, and the legacy of the 'detestable Puritans' has
ruined us all, like the water released by the sorcerer's apprentice.3

注释
   812 ff., 988 ff.
2. Tawney, op. cit., pp. 210-211
3. W. R. Forrester, Christian Vocation (London: Lutterworth Press,
   1951), p. 161
Knappen asserts that the causal connection between the desire of assurance and worldly activity is not clearly proven by Weber's citations from Baxter. And in the two Puritan diaries that he studied, Knappen found no evidence that activity was any more highly esteemed than contemplation. The tendency was in the opposite direction. The concept of the calling played no great role in the documents. Presumably study and the communication of spiritual attitudes were the duties of the writers' callings, but these obligations were not emphasized as much as was the obligation to have profitable spiritual thoughts. And Perry Miller has made clear that though some Puritan doctrines may appear to us marvelously suited for the needs of adolescent capitalism, to Puritans they were all logically consistent with the cosmology. The practice of pious industry followed from the natures of things as Puritans conceived them; it grew from the premise, not that the combination of diligence in the world and deadness to its seductions would fill coffers, but that upon such terms must all men live.

One question that troubled Flavel's people was how to face death. Flavel referred to the question repeatedly in his sermons. Finally, he collected all his thoughts and published them in a treatise entitled *A Token for Lourners: or the Advice of Christ to a Distressed Mother, Bewailing the Death of her Dear and Only Son*. It was first written in 1674 for Mr. J.C. and Mrs. E.C. on the occasion of their son's death.

2. ibid., p. 15
3. Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 43
This treatise went through seven editions, two of which were in Gaelic; there were in addition four other editions printed in America.

The main point of Flavel's counsel is moderation. "To be above the stroke of passion, is a condition equal to angels: to be in a state of sorrow without the sense of sorrow, is a disposition beneath beasts: but duly to regulate our sorrows, and bound our passions under the rod, is the wisdom, duty, and excellency of a Christian." Sorrow becomes sinful and excessive when it causes us to slight other mercies and enjoyments and to forget the calamities of the church. It is also wrong when it diverts us from our duties and renders us unfit for service.

The one who has lost a relation should sit and ponder these three things:

First, That of all persons in the world, thou hast most reason to be tender over thy life and health, and careful to preserve it: for if thy troubles destroy thee, thou art eternally lost, undone forever.

Secondly, Own and admire the bounty and goodness of God manifested to thee in this affliction; that when death came into thy family to smite and carry off one, it had not fallen to thy lot to be the person.

Thirdly, This affliction for which thou mournest, may be the greatest mercy to thee that ever yet befall thee in this world. God hath now made thy heart soft by trouble, shewed thee the vanity of this world, and what a poor trifle it is which thou madest thy happiness.

The remainder of the treatise consists simply in variations on the theme that God is able to restore to the mourner all his lost comforts, but the latter must submit humbly to God's will and wait patiently under the rod.

Flavel also taught his people how to face their own deaths. Be-

1. Flavel, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 607
2. Ibid., Vol. V, pp. 616 ff.
3. Ibid., Vol. V, pp. 624-625
lievers should not be terrified at the idea; rather, the apprehensions and thoughts of death should have a "peculiar pleasantness" in their minds. "You have heard into what a blessed presence and communion death introduceth your souls; how it leads you out of a body of sin, a world of sorrows, the society of imperfect saints, to an innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, to that lovely mount Sion, to the heavenly sanctuary, to the blessed visions of the face of God." Only the souls who are to breathe out their last hope with their last breath need to tremble at the thought of death.

As to the sufferings of this life, the saints are to keep in mind that there is "a wise spirit sitting in all the wheels of motion, and governing the most excentrical creatures, and their most pernicious designs to blessed and happy issues." Some may be tempted to turn to philosophy for relief in their hour of need, "supposing a neat sentence of Seneca to be as good a remedy as a text of David or Paul." That will never do, Flavel asserts. In time of affliction, submission from necessity can never ease the mind as well as Christian resignation. Although God takes no delight in afflicting His people, He sometimes exposes them to grievous sufferings as a means of mortification. By these trials the sincerity of God's people is cleared, for "one sharp trial wherein God helps us to be faithful, will do more to satisfy our fears, and resolve our doubts, than all the sermons that ever we heard in our lives could do." Finally, these trials help to waken Christians to their duties, and to teach them the necessity of praying more frequently,

1. ibid., Vol. III, p. 96
2. ibid., Vol. IV, p. 343
3. ibid., Vol. VI, p. 94
spiritually and fervently. Thus Christian resignation and prayer are Flavel's solution to Ralph Cudworth's dilemma: "There are four alternatives: either God is able to remove evil but is not willing to do so; or He is not able, though willing; or He is neither able nor willing; or He is both able and willing; only the last is worthy of God, yet He does not remove it."

Since Flavel married four times we need no further proof that he was against the Roman doctrine of celibacy. Haller says that the Puritans married early and as often as mortality gave occasion, and they begot children without restraint. Like all other activities, marriage offered an opportunity for spiritual effort, something to be sanctified by the spirit. According to Flavel, securing a wife is under the special hand of God. "There is very much of providence seen in appointing the parties each for other. Thus it has been the practice of holy men to seek the Lord for direction and counsel when they have been upon the change of their condition." But God often "goes beyond our thoughts and projections" and "crosses men's desires and designs." Christians should realize that "not what they fancy, but what his infinite Wisdom judges best and most beneficial for them, takes place." God takes care of not only the union of the right partners, but also the harmony of their temperaments, "from whence a very great part of the tranquility and comforts of our lives result."²

The propagation of children seems to be the chief end in marriage

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1. ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 10-11
2. Haller, op. cit., p. 120
for, according to Flavel, the first duty of a husband to his wife is cohabitation with her. This is the duty on which all other duties depend; nothing can make it void, except a lawful divorce for adultery. The husband's second duty to his wife is "true and hearty love to soul and body."¹ Since the puritan conception of the family is patriarchal, according to Scriptures and custom, Flavel naturally lists five duties for the wife as contrasted with the husband's two. A wife ought to be in subjection to her husband, to reverence him in suitable words and actions, to be faithful and to "adorn her relations with meekness and quietness of spirit."²

Servants were still a necessary part of the household in Flavel's time, so he also had some practical advice for them. They are to be faithful in all things committed to their charge, to honour their masters in respectful words and actions and to bear patiently with rebukes. Masters, on their part, are to rule with gentleness. They are to pay their servants' wages in full, and without delay. Finally, they are to do their utmost to engage their servants in religious duties and godly lives.³

Children also are under the special providence of God. A small or declining family "is a sore stroke from the hand of God, and so to be acknowledged wherever it falls."⁴ For that reason parents are to be "so much the more strict and careful of relational duties." They are to educate them for God, and to restrain their sins by correction, with the rod when necessary. Besides providing for them, they are

¹. Flavel, op. cit., Vol. VI, p. 240
². ibid., Vol. VI, p. 241
³. ibid., Vol. VI, p. 242
⁴. ibid., Vol. VI, p. 91
also to pray daily for them, because a family can decline not only through death, but through the degeneracy of its offspring as well.\(^1\) "When piety, probity, and virtues of ancestors descend not with their lands to their posterity, here the true line of honour is cut off, and the glory of a family dies, though its children live."\(^2\) Children have their duties to perform. From them are due fear and reverence, love and obedience. They are never to slight their parents with irreverent references like "the old man or woman."\(^3\) They are to submit to discipline and rebukes, and to exercise faithfulness. Moreover, they must requite their parents' love and care. "Either bring testimonies of your godliness from your relations, or it may be well suspected to be no better than counterfeit," Flavel tells them.\(^4\)

Just as Christians are to shine as lights in their homes they are to do likewise in their neighborhoods. They should visit the poor and gather with the faithful for worship. "This is the way to prevent the decay and cooling of thy affections," Flavel counsels.\(^5\) As Dowden has observed, religious ideas and emotions, under puritan influence, are released in character, conduct and life. The gulf between sense and spirit is bridged not in marble or color, but in an ordered life, an ordered household, and an ordered commonwealth.\(^6\) Herein lay the strength of Puritanism.

The puritan doctrine of the Sabbath, according to Knappen, was so

\(^1\) ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 240-241
\(^2\) ibid., Vol. VI, p. 92
\(^3\) ibid., Vol. I, p. 388
\(^4\) ibid., Vol. I, pp. 386-387, 391
\(^5\) ibid., Vol. IV, p. 542
far advanced over that of their allies across the channel that it differed not only in degree but in kind. It represented a bit of English contribution to the development of Reformed theology in the first century of its history. It also constituted one of the first doctrinal differences between the contending factions in the English church.¹

By the time of Flavel's ministry, the Sabbatarian controversy had cooled, so his teaching was mainly that of the orthodox Puritans. Accordingly, the Sabbath was for the honour of God's name, for it was an emblem of the eternal Sabbath in heaven, in which God's people would be serving and praising Him without interruption. The first day of the week was to be observed rather than the seventh because the former commemorated Christ's resurrection. There was to be no deviation.

To the question, "But if a man scruple the change of the Sabbath, may he not keep both days weekly?", Flavel answered, "No; for then, by doing more than God requires he breaks a plain command, Six days shall thou labor." One can only guess what he would say to our forty-hour week or to the miner's eleven-day fortnight. Flavel took the view that the fourth commandment was moral and not ceremonial. Not only a part, but the whole day was to be observed; "it is as dangerous to halve it with God in point of time, as it was for Ananias and Sapphira to halve their dedicated goods, and bring in but a part." Contrary to present day habits on Sundays, Flavel directed his flock to rise "as early in the morning as their strength will permit, to prepare by private for public duties." The rest which God required on the Sabbath was not

¹ Knappen, Tudor Puritanism, p. 442
merely "a natural or civil, but an holy rest, resembling the rest in heaven, wherein the mind is most active and busy in the work of God, though the body be at rest, and the spirit not wearied with its work." All activities connected with civil callings were forbidden by Flavel. Recreations of the body, lawful on other days, were sinful on this day, and the only recreations of the mind permissible were those termed "spiritual and heavenly." However, works of necessity and works of mercy might be performed on the Sabbath. Christians were to spend the day in public worship, and in family and private "duties." All this was to be performed with "spiritual delight." Moreover, this was not a matter that concerned the individual alone. "If God hath put any under our authority, their profaning the Sabbath will become our sin, though we be never so strict in the observation of it ourselves."¹

Unlike many of his puritan contemporaries, Flavel said nothing against the fashions of his day. While others waxed hot against long hair, loose locks and fashionable clothes, he let them pass. He knew that no one was going to hell or heaven because of his haircut, although that haircut might be indicative of the road he was taking. Flavel counseled instead: "Above all other studies in the world, study your own hearts; waste not a minute more of your precious time about frivolous and sapless controversies."²

To Flavel, as to most Puritans, living was a serious business.

¹ Flavel, op. cit., Vol. VI, pp. 232 ff.
² ibid., Vol. V, p. 121
To the pilgrim starting on his journey he put these questions:

Wilt thou forsake all thy pleasures, merry company, and sensible comforts, to live a sad, retired, pensive life? Wilt thou beggar and undo thyself, let go all thy comforts in hand, for an hope of that which thine eyes never saw, nor hast thou any certainty that it is any more than a fancy? Wilt thou that hast lived in reputation and credit all thy life, now become the scorn and contempt of the world? Thinkest thou thyself able to live such a strict, severe, mortified, and self-denying life, as the word of God requires?  

Flavel did not look for or promise a "good time." He believed that those who took life gaily here would have to answer for it in the hereafter. This might seem dour and gloomy, but it is to be remembered that the times required a witness to the spirit of soberness and simplicity, earnestness and restraint. What made the pilgrim's journey worth while was not the amusements along the way, but the joy of a mysterious communion with God, which the most humble could experience. "O let God be exalted for ever for the mercy! that how defective soever I am in common gifts, though I have a dull understanding, a leaking memory, a stammering tongue; yet I have felt, and do feel the power of the gospel upon my heart."  

This communion, however, had to be preserved by diligent obedience to divine commands and a patient waiting upon God. "We look for happiness, as long as God is in heaven; and he expects constancy, as long as we are on earth."  

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1. ibid., Vol. II, p. 79  
2. ibid., Vol. V, p. 58  
3. ibid., Vol. VI, p. 569
CHAPTER VII APPRECIATION

It has been observed by Haller that those Puritans who took part in launching New England have been accorded much attention by American historians. What has not been so clearly told is the manner by which the Puritans in England advanced their cause in the pulpit and the press. The preachers, according to Haller, were the true authors of that advance, and among the preachers those were far from being the least influential who mainly devoted themselves to setting forth the puritan way of life by precept, image and example rather than to agitation. Though taking a longer and larger view, Professor Herbert Butterfield seems to share that opinion, for he asserts that if people would turn from politico-ecclesiastical history to the intimate life of the church throughout the ages, and the spiritual work done by humble men, they would find it the most moving spectacle that history presents, and would see how the spread of piety does mean a growth in charity. And in his latest book Professor Butterfield writes: "Those who preach the Gospel, nurse the pieties, spread New Testament Love, and affirm the spiritual nature of man are guarding the very foundation, dealing with the problems of civilization at its source, and keeping open the spring from which new things will still arise."

1. Haller, op. cit., p. 52
2. Ibid., p. 18
To that class of humble preachers who spent their lives spreading New Testament love Flavel belonged. He started with no special advantages of birth or wealth. He gained no academic honours. He won the patronage of no great man. He gave counsel to no leader of church or state. He was never invited to preach before Parliament or Cromwell; he was never in the pulpit of St. Paul's. Except for the first six years of his ministry and the years of ejectment, Flavel's life and work were wholly devoted to nursing the souls in Dartmouth.

Nevertheless, Flavel's influence was far reaching both in time and place. His books were still being published on both sides of the Atlantic more than a hundred years after his death. His whole works, collected in six volumes, went through eight editions, the last of which appeared in 1820. His Divine Conduct was printed twelve times, and A Saint Indeed had ten printings. Increase Mather, one of the puritan ministers who emigrated to America, testified that Flavel's works "made his name precious in both Englands." 1 Thomas M'Crie, writing in 1872, said: "In Scotland Flavel was so popular that, till of late years, hardly a cottage could be found without a copy of his works in folio." 2 And Thomas Kepler, who, in 1946 published an anthology of Christian devotional literature from the first to the twentieth centuries, saw fit to include a selection from Flavel's A Saint Indeed. 3

As noted earlier, we have Anthony Wood's word that Flavel "obtained ... more disciples than even John Owen the Independent or Richard Baxter the Presbyterian." Bogue and Bennett, with some extra-

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1. Flavel, op. cit., Vol. VI, p. 140
vagance, referred to him as "the most eminent of the nonconformist pastors." Daniel Neal included him in a list of "learned and useful men serviceable to the societies for reformation of manners, and eminent confessors in the cause of liberty and scriptural religion." Finally, John Galpine, a contemporary of Flavel, wrote of him: "He was in Labours more abundant; he did spend himself, and was spent in the Work of God. ... A second thing I observed in this Worthy Minister, was a longing desire after the Conversion of Souls."  

One person in America acknowledged, when nearly a hundred years of age, that he had received "saving impressions" from a sermon which he had heard Flavel preach when accidentally visiting Dartmouth on a voyage home. No doubt such testimonials of Flavel's fruitful and beneficent ministry could be multiplied indefinitely. But of all the seeds Flavel sowed, probably that which yielded the most fruit was the one that found its way into the heart of Archibald Alexander (1772-1851). In a period of doubt in his early years he was led to read Flavel. We shall let Alexander tell his own story, as recorded by his son:  

On one of these Sabbath evenings, I was requested to read out of Flavel. The part on which I had been regularly engaged was the 'Method of Grace;' but now, by some means, I was led to select one of the sermons on Revelation 3:20. ... The discourse was upon the patience, forbearance and kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ to impenitent sinners. As I proceeded to read aloud, the truth took effect on my feelings, and every word I read seemed applicable to my own case. Before I finished the discourse, these emotions became too strong for restraint, and my voice began to falter. I laid down the book, rose hastily, and went out with a full heart, and hastened to my place of retirement. No
sooner had I reached the spot than I dropped upon my knees, and attempted to pour out my feelings in prayer; but I had not continued many minutes in this exercise before I was overwhelmed with a flood of joy. It was transport such as I had never known before, and seldom since.¹

Alexander continued to read more of Flavel's works, and "began to emerge somewhat from his former ignorance, and to comprehend the cardinal doctrines of Christianity." He later professed that "To John Flavel I certainly owed more than to any uninspired author."²

It was this Alexander who became the first professor of Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton New Jersey, which today is one of the foremost theological colleges in the United States.

As we have seen, Flavel's preaching, theology and piety, like that of the Puritans in general, were no new things under the sun. They were supposed to be a resurrection of primitive Christianity, and in fact were closely related to medieval Christianity, as the studies of G. G. Coulton and G. R. Owst have shown. Likewise, the style of Flavel's writings, so repellent to us today, was patterned according to established customs. But through the fog of headings, divisions, subdivisions, questions and answers, objections and replies, and "uses" for various purposes, Flavel's spiritual character shines forth. He had not the logic of Owen, the comprehensiveness of Baxter, the imagination of Bunyan, nor the sublimity of Hilton. But his love and devotion, his earnestness and enthusiasm burned just as brightly as in any of those...

² Ibid., p. 45
puritan giants. "A head well instructed is much to be desired; but a sanctified heart is absolutely necessary . . . . For what will it profit, to be learned and damned?"¹ This counsel Flavel never tired of repeating. What he would cultivate in others he always tried to cultivate in himself. "Believe it brethren, it is easier to declaim, like an orator, against a thousand sins of others, than it is to mortify one sin, like Christians, in ourselves; to be more industrious in our pulpits, than in our closets; to preach twenty sermons to our people, than one to our own hearts."² His personal holiness and the charm of his friendship were felt by all. If he had any private ambitions he laid them all aside, and followed his Master by taking up the cross for his convictions. Even when called to more influential and lucrative churches in London, he turned down the offers, and returned to his people in Dartmouth.

In one of his sermons Flavel gave this rule to judge ministers:

"Certainly that is the highest commendation of a minister, to be an able minister of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the Spirit. He is the best artist, that can most lively and powerfully display Jesus Christ before the people, evidently setting him forth as crucified among them."³ We have found Flavel to be one of the best artists among the seventeenth century English Puritans, because he displayed Christ not only in words but in deeds as well. Undoubtedly he is also one of the least known. Hence, a study of his life and work has

¹. Flavel, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 15
². ibid., Vol. VI, p. 568
³. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 38
been long due. For what John Tulloch said about English Puritanism and its leaders a hundred years ago still holds good today: the details of puritan dogma and ethics may cease to excite interest; but the fire and life of Christian enthusiasm which made English Puritanism what it was can never cease to stir the heart, and awaken the admiration of all who appreciate the self which is willing to spend and be spent in the service of God. 1

1. Tulloch, op. cit., p. 386
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