

The Fight for the Reformed Faith
John Owen
Bulwark against Arminianism
Part 3
HUNG ALL ROUND WITH MASSIVE
CALVINISTIC ARMOUR.

Within the hallowed precincts of Oxford University, during the years 1630 on to 1637, there was for the young John Owen, no escape from the theological pressures that were impressed upon those times. How could a young student of Divinity, at Oxford, avoid acute involvement, socially and spiritually, with all the measures superimposed by the Laudian party? Common it is nowadays, to exhort even mature Christians to ignore those very momentous issues that exercised Owen so deeply, and to turn instead to some kind of allegedly “humble pietism” at peace with all shades of doctrinal distinctions and divisions. Leave the matters of Predestination, the Sovereignty of God, the Will, and so on, we get told, one can be a godly Christian and hold to Arminian tenets as well as to Calvinistic ones.

To have proffered such advice to the young Owen at Oxford would have been like advising a front-line infantryman to ignore enemy bullets. In the front line he was, so to speak, and the air was thick with the “bullets” of the Jesuit-cum-Arminian-cum-Laudian enemies that besieged that stately University city. Like all “soldiers”, he would not have been immune to the enemy fusilades. The evidence indicates, that in this spiritual battle the young teen-age Owen found himself in the melee of a theological fight to the death, with no way of escape. He was wounded deeply in his spirit, confused, and brought to the point of spiritual death as the battle raged all around him. In those years, as he was coping with the terrors of the Lord convicting his restless soul, he had to grapple with the Jesuit driven Arminian polemics that were splattering the Church of England on all sides with a devastating spiritual shrapnel. There was nothing else for it, he had to study the issues raised, and, consonant with his very character and intense intellect, he took his studying “right down” to the bottom depths, as it were, of the issues under dispute. And from those awful years, we have today as a memorial of his labours, not only his exposition of Psalm 130, tracing out the dealings of God with his soul, but also, in the shape of his first theological treatise, we have the record of his battle with those forces which fain would have implanted in his soul a perverted, accursed

Arminian gospel, with a perverted concept of both God and the precious work of the Saviour. This battle must have cost the young Owen much inward anguish as he struggled with his studies, his convictions, his fears, and his confusions. Out of it was born the magnificent treatise, "*A Display of Arminianism*" first printed in 1642, written and finalised in the early months after he had found full assurance of faith in a true and lasting peace with God in Jesus Christ. It is at once, a treatise that, as Thomson observes, is "hung all round with massive Calvinistic armour".⁵⁰ It also evinces what Thomson called "that spirit which was so characteristic of the Puritans, and pre-eminently of Owen, and which gave such depth to their piety, the spirit which connected all events with God, and bent lowly and awe-struck before the Divine Sovereignty."⁵¹

The sheer solid worth of this precious treatise has been sadly underestimated in subsequent times. Indeed, one has to take serious issue with William H. Goold, the 19th century editor of the first complete edition of Owen's works. Whilst not wishing to denigrate Goold's service to the Church of God in bringing Owen into print again, it must needs be pointed out that Goold seems to evince that typical mitigating, middling, even muddling attitude that so characterised the diluted Calvinism (sic) so prevalent in the 19th century.⁵² In his 3-page "Prefatory Note" to this treatise, printed at the beginning of Owen's Works, Vol. X, Goold manifests a certain tendency to "pour cold water" on certain aspects of Owen's work therein.⁵³ After giving the reader a succinct though necessarily brief introduction to the history of Arminianism, and pointing out that it was the Jesuits with their "Pelagian leanings" that triumphed in the Council of Trent,⁵⁴ Goold yet fails to see the connection between the Jesuits and Arminianism, and even goes so far as to speak in eulogistic tones of the Arminian John Goodwin, who Owen was later to oppose so vehement-

⁵⁰ Thomson: Brief biography of Owen in **Owen: Works Vol I** p.xxxii.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* p.xxxii.

⁵² One notices this "diluted" 19th Cent. Calvinism characterising the works of such as Thomas Chalmers, C.H. Spurgeon, R.Murray McCheyne, R.L.Dabney, and many more. Dr. John Kennedy (Dingwall), and James Begg were however, distinctly different, and "old-fashioned" Calvinists.

⁵³ Goold: *Prefatory Note*, in **Owen Vol X** pp.2-4. Certain aspects of Goold's editing were not exactly helpful. Readers of previous issues of the British Reformed Journal will remember, how, in Issue No.11 (July-Aug. 1995) the question was raised, and validly, as to the worth of Goold's Prefatory Note to Owen's treatise on Church government (see Owen Works: Vol.16 p.2) where Goold rather uncritically dismisses the testimony that Owen was really at heart a Presbyterian, rather than an Independent. See also the continuing articles over this matter in BRJ issues 12-17, being the learned contributions of Dr. Francis Nigel Lee, and Dr. Stephen Westcott.

⁵⁴ The Council of Trent, the 19th council of the ecumenical councils recognized by the Roman church, was held from Dec. 13th 1545 to Dec. 4th 1563, at Trent (some 75 miles north-west of Venice). The deliberations of that Council issued forth in the "Counter-Reformation". Let it be known that via that Council, the Jesuits have triumphed not only within the pale of their own communion, but also now, 330 years later, they have largely, if not completely leavened Protestantism, and triumphed again. See Schaff-Herzog: in loc. for details of "Trent", and how it was the formative council for all subsequent Romanism.

ly in his treatise "The Death of Death" printed in 1647.⁵⁵ This "mitigating, ameliorating attitude" sets the stage for Goold, in his next paragraph to question "if Owen sufficiently discriminates the doctrine of Arminius from the full development which his system, after his death, received in the hands of his followers." And "sometimes", Goold goes on, "sometimes, moreover, opinions possessing the distinctive features of Pelagianism are confounded with Arminianism, strictly so called."⁵⁶ "His quotations" from Arminian authors, Goold continues, "seem to prove that his Display of it was not far from the truth (sic!!!), though, from the refinement of modern discrimination on some of the points, many an Arminian would hardly subscribe to some of the statements as a correct representation of his creed, and a Calvinistic author is under obvious temptation to run up Arminian views into what he may esteem their legitimate consequences in the extravagance of the Pelagian theory."⁵⁷ Indeed! So Owen is "*not far* from the truth" is he? So Owen has yielded to an "obvious temptation to run up Arminian views into what *he may esteem* their legitimate consequences....etc. has he?

The upshot of such comments as this, in their detached air of Victorian smugness, is if anything, to jaundice any putative reader against the treatise before he reads it. A discerning student however, will note that Goold can only speak in generalities here. He quotes no specifics that would establish his opinion about Owen's treatise, he can only pronounce in bald, presumptive tones.

Goold, on this evidence, seems not to have really understood Arminianism. Indeed I wonder if he properly understood Calvinism. Or if he even understood the Bible. But there is more, in a final, sweeping general statement, again without citing any evidence, he pronounces a judgment on Owen..... "it could be wished," he writes, "that (Owen) had risen superior to the vice of the age in such discussions, by manifesting less acerbity of temper and diction in the refutation of the views which he combats in this work."⁵⁸

Well! "acerbic" Owen certainly was. But was that wrong, as Goold evidently wants to con the reader into thinking? At this juncture it is useful to isolate a few of Owen's acerbities and compare them with someone else who is adept sans pareil in the art of acerbity....the Holy Ghost! We can find our first quote from Owen in his introductory epistle to the "Display of Arminianism", addressed to the "Lords and Gentlemen of the Committee for Religion"⁵⁹. Speaking of the necessity of

⁵⁵ Goold: in Owen: Works: vol. X p.4

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p.4. We shall see hereon how wide of the mark Goold was in these matters. Evident from his "Prefatory Note" is the impression that Goold was possibly trying to plaster over the gulf between Calvinism and Arminianism by distancing Arminianism from Pelagianism, and by holding open the door for the later Wesleyan Arminianism.

⁵⁷ *Ibid* p.4

⁵⁸ *Ibid* p.4. Goold himself hardly escapes the tenor of *his own*, Calvinism-diluting age.

⁵⁹ It was this committee, which, having studied this treatise, were so impressed that they seconded Owen to the ministry at Fordham in 1642.

Truth and Peace, he says:

"An agreement without truth is no peace, but a covenant with death, a league with hell, a conspiracy against the Kingdom of Christ, a stout rebellion against the God of heaven; and without justice, great commonwealths are but great troops of robbers."⁶⁰

Compare with this now, the tone of Scripture, the Holy Ghost speaking through the prophet Jeremiah Ch.8 :

9 The wise [men] are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom [is] in them?

10 Therefore will I give their wives unto others, [and] their fields to them that shall inherit [them]; for every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.

11 For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when [there is] no peace.

13 ¶ I will surely consume them, saith the LORD: [there shall be] no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and [the things that] I have given them shall pass away from them

17 For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you, which [will] not [be] charmed, and they shall bite you, saith the LORD.

Again, we find Owen writing

"And I will add, in the close, an antidote against this poison, (i.e., Arminianism)....."⁶¹

Compare scripture :

Ps 140:3 They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison [is] under their lips. Selah.

Again, Owen:

"The sum of their (the Arminians) doctrine in this particular is laid down by one of ours (Mr. Hoard) in a tract entitled "God's Love to Mankind," etc.; a book full of palpable ignorance, gross sophistry, and abominable blasphemy, whose author seems to have proposed nothing unto himself but to rake the dunghills of a few of the most invective Arminians, and to collect the filthy scum and pollution of their railings to cast upon the truth of God; and, under I know not what self-coined pretences, belch out odious blasphemies against his holy name."⁶²

⁶⁰ Owen : Works Vol X p.5. Enough to make a Calvinist-Arminian compromiser shrivel up!

⁶¹ Owen op cit, p.19

⁶² Ibid, p.61 Not quite the sort of quote erstwhile Calvinists of today tend to trot out for publication in collections of "Quotations from the Puritans"!!!!!!

Compare again, the Holy Word of God:

Mal. 2:3 Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, [even] the dung of your solemn feasts; and [one] shall take you away with it.

2 Pet. 2:22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog [is] turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

Ezek. 24:6 Wherefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum [is] therein, and whose scum is not gone out of it! bring it out piece by piece; let no lot fall upon it.

Mt. 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

Mt. 12:34 O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Mt. 23:33 [Ye] serpents, [ye] generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

Lu. 3:7 Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

Rom. 3:13 Their throat [is] an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps [is] under their lips;

Enough! Sure, Owen was acerbic, he'd been educated in a good school! And is it right to be sweet and gentle when dealing with damning heresies? (See 2 Peter 2 : 1) And with inveterate, stubborn, damnable heretics (vipers, the Scriptures call them) that peddle such deleterious venom?

In all this then, we see how closely Owen tracked with Holy Scripture, and how God's Truth burned within him with a holy passion. By contrast, Goold's editing betrays less than passionate regard for Scripture Truth. He ought, also, to have done more thorough work in editing Owen's footnotes. Important references are left at the bottom of the page like: "Corv. ad Molin., p. 260."⁶³ Some of them, to this modern age, are all but meaningless and untraceable to any student not having access to the archives of some place like the Bodleian Library at Oxford University, and hence their value is minimized to the modern reader. What on earth is one supposed to make of "Corv. ad Molin." etc.? Or: "Rem. Apol."? And "Greg. Moral.", etc.?

But precisely at this juncture, the persevering student will observe that Owen's

⁶³ *Ibid.* in footnote 1 page 61. Many more examples abound, and as such are next to nothing useless to all but the tenacious and capable amongst students. Yet, locked up in such terse references are vital clues to what Owen was grappling with, and indications of the breadth of his studies in these matters. The ref. Corv. ad Molin. is particularly on the surface obscure, and to the student who researches it, particularly misleading too. Goold should have ironed out such matters in his editing.

footnoting is a salient indicator to all the material that he had been studying during those years of anguish at Oxford, 1630- 1637, and through those final years till he came to the assurance of his faith in 1641. A catalogue of these references will tell us a tale, indeed, of a powerful intellect who pursued his researches to the limits, leaving no stone unturned in his relentless onward pursuit of truth.

In his long preparations for this treatise, Owen took the trouble to study a tremendous array of materials. His references to Arminius indicate a detailed understanding of that heretic's major, if not complete works.⁶⁴ We find that he was extensively well read in the documents pertaining to the Synod of Dordt. It was at the time not twenty years since the deliberations of that Synod, and accordingly via his footnotes we can observe how Owen trawled through all the relevant literature on that epoch-making convocation. References abound to the Arminian "Declaratory Sentences to the Synod," *Episcopus*;⁶⁵ "Disputations on the Will of God;" "Questions and Responses" and "Private Disputations", the "Remonstrant Confession", the Remonstrant's "Scripta Synodica", the "Remonstrant Defence" as printed in the Acts of the Synod of Dordt, the "Remonstrant's Apologia", articles from Remonstrant Synods, and the Remonstrant's "Hague Collection". Owen also references Petrus Bertius, friend, colleague, and first biographer of Arminius, and who preached Arminius's funeral sermon, (and interestingly, later abjured his faith and joined the Roman church). One further finds reference to the Arminian Grevinchovius's writings against the English Puritan Ames, the Arminian "Examination of the Writings of Perkins", the Arminian "Epistle against Walaeus", the English Arminian Hoard's volume, "God's Love to all mankind", and of course the enigmatic "Corv. ad. Molin." This is a reference to a work of the Arminian Corvinus at Dordt, being a polemic against the French Reformed leader, Pierre du Moulin (latinized as Molinaeus).⁶⁶ This mass of material indicates that Owen had studied the full range of Arminian literature, and would have been well aware of any developments from Arminius to the Remonstrants. But Goold also claims Owen has confounded certain features of Pelagianism with Arminianism, and this too, we shall see is not substantiated. Owen's references go on to indicate how extensively he had studied Pelagianism. Familiarity is indicated with the vast mass of St.

⁶⁴ The complete works of Arminius were first published at Leyden in Holland, in 1629, and would of course, have been in Latin, with copies made available in Oxford University libraries virtually within months. Owen, fluent in Latin, would have had easy access to such. The English translation amounts to 3 volumes. Cf. *Schaff-Herzog: In loc.*

⁶⁵ *Episcopus 1583-1643*, was the principal spokesman for the Remonstrants, or Arminians at Dordt.

⁶⁶ This ref: Corv. ad. Molin. can be distinctly misleading because it happens that: (i) there was another Corvinus, the pious Lutheran pioneer reformer 1501 - 1553., who by no means was of the same ilk as the Arminian Corvinus. (ii) Also Molin. is an abbreviation for what? Molinaeus, the faithful Huguenot leader, not Ludovicus Molina, the Jesuit, 1535-1600, this latter who was, as we shall see, an important force in the development of Arminianism. Reference has already been made to him in part one of this series of articles, on page 17 of BRJ no. 16. But it is evident that the "Molin." we are dealing with in Owen here was Pierre du Moulin 1568-1658. Du Moulin was a staunch upholder of the Canons of Dordt in the French Reformed Churches, and held out against the Amyraldians.

Augustine's works, and such writings of Pelagius as were preserved in his works and those of other Latin writers like Prosper. The references indicate how Owen has traced the development up from Pelagianism through official Romanist semi-Pelagianism to the very development of Arminianism-Remonstrantism itself. Cardinal Bellarmine's treatise, "Of Grace and Free Will" is cited, so is Baronius, writer of a 12 volume history of the Roman church, Benedict is cited, Alvarez, Vorsti the Socinian, Tilenus the Huguenot deviant who ducked away from the implications of Dordt, and John Gest in the Arminian "Synod Confessions".

Backing up all this, Owen's references indicate his familiarity with the orthodox side of the dispute. Luther's "Bondage of the Will" is cited, Saint Augustine's vast tomes are cited, Pierre du Moulin is cited, Paraeus, who formatted Ursinus's notes into a commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism is cited, Jerome on Pelagius, the "De Scientia Dei" and "De Natura Dei" Jerome Zanchius, Dr. Twisse, and saliently, Samuel Rutherford's "Exercitationes de Gratia". Added to all this is a host of other scholarly references too many to enumerate here.

Armed with all this knowledge, even then the brain of a genius would never come to the truth, but for the inner work of God's Spirit. We have seen the evidence that tells us of the deep and harrowing work of the Spirit within Owen's soul, and we cannot but bless God for His goodness whereby the deep change and rebirth was brought about in the young man. His will renewed, his mind now apprehending the mercy of God in Christ, all his learning at last made sense, and in this treatise, Owen demonstrates in his first paragraph, that almost as if with X-ray eyes, he has seen through Arminianism right to the core....a point that Goold has missed. For at the very heart of Arminianism Owen has discovered what is a logic engine, that acts as the driving force controlling and precipitating all the dogma of that heresy. And it is the *same* logic engine that powers Pelagianism! It is the same logic engine that powered Arminius and also his Remonstrant followers at Dordt, and his later followers in the 17th and 18th centuries, and that includes the so-called "Evangelical Arminianism" of the Wesleys. This logic engine, this vital principle, acts like the DNA in a biological cell....all the characteristics of the ultimate creature are contained within it, and unfold as the DNA replicates, driving the creature to maturity, with head, limbs, organs, cardio-vascular systems, etc all emerging from the original logic of the DNA structure.

Owen saw this replicating process emerging out of the "DNA" as it were, of the logic engine situated at the heart of Arminianism. Noting, in his first paragraph, how the soul of man is corrupted in its nature, darkened with the mist of ignorance, thereby disabled for comprehending divine truth, he points out that it is also armed with a prejudice and opposition against the vital parts of that divine revelation: "As a desire of self-sufficiency was the first cause of this infirmity, so a conceit thereof is that wherewith he still languisheth; nothing doth he (natural man) more contend for than an independency of any supreme power, which might either help, hinder, or control him in his actions. This is that bitter root from whence have sprung all those

heresies and wretched contentions which have troubled the church.....”⁶⁷ “All which wrangling disputes of carnal reason against the Word of God come at last to this head, Whether the first and chiefest part, in disposing of things in this world, ought to be ascribed to God or man? Men for the most part have vindicated this pre-eminence unto themselves, by exclamations that so it must be, or else God is unjust, and His ways unequal.”⁶⁸

“Never did any men” Owen goes on, “since the beginning of Christianity, more eagerly endeavour the erecting of this Babel than the Arminians, the modern blinded patrons of human self-sufficiency..”

Thus Owen exposes Arminianism’s hard-core logic. If one might continue the biological metaphor, one might, with the theological equivalent of electron microscopy, so to speak, penetrate even into this hard-core logic and comprehend, coiled up therein, the naked “DNA” principle, encapsulated in the old serpentine hiss from Eden, “ye shall be as gods”. (Gen. 3: 5) On this very point mankind, created originally in the image of God, was ontologically vulnerable, on this point he was tempted, and on this point, he failed and fell from the blessed state wherein he was created.

And as an unfolding, replicating DNA generates a new and total creature, so the unfolding, replicating logic engine of fallen human nature (“ye shall be as gods”) produces a fallen human theology. As the unfolding DNA, interacting with its gestative environment generates limbs, organs, faculties, and etc., so the unfolding “DNA” of human theology, as it reaches and interacts with the various spiritual features that characterize the theological realm, it too, generates, those “limbs”, “organs,” “faculties”, so to speak, which we apprehend as theological dogma. The dogmas of fallen man. The dogmas of a creature who is as much the prisoner of his theological “DNA” as he is of his physical fleshly DNA. All his being and character is determined by these fundamental logic engines.....right down to the colour of his eyes.....and the “colour” of his theology. Thus Owen saw what Goold failed to appreciate. There might well be some distinctions to be made between Arminius and the Remonstrants, and the later Wesleyans, and the Amyraldians, but fundamentally they are all sub-species of the same genus, all prisoners of the same fundamental theological “DNA”. All carriers of the same poison.

Owen had evidently examined the whole pedigree of this apostate genus. His researches took him right back to Pelagius and the conflict between that flighty spirit and St. Augustine. He had tracked the course of Pelagianism in the Roman church, where, through centuries of sophism and elaborate scholasticism the doctrines so ably articulated by St. Augustine were cleverly modified by a reinterpretation

⁶⁷ Owen: *Display of Arminianism in Works Vol X p.11*. The footnoting in Owen here references “Pelag. Semi.Peleg. Scholastic, St. Augustine, Luther’s *De Servo Arbitrio*.”

⁶⁸ Owen: *Op. cit.* p.11. with a footnote ref. to Luther’s “*Bondage of the Will*” (*De Servo Arbitrio*). An excellent English translation of this was published by James Clarke in 1957. It carries a useful 48 page historical and theological introduction by Dr. James Packer and O.R. Johnston.

tion from a Pelagian standpoint.⁶⁹ Men compromised. Semi-Pelagianism was hatched, the “DNA” in its yoke being the same old stuff... “Ye shall be as gods”. As the Reformation broke the hold this apostate dogma had gained on the church, the matter of God’s Sovereignty and the human will was taken up by Erasmus in his *Diatribes* in 1524. This was a deliberate blow aimed at the central core of Reformed doctrine, and was an attempt to blend it with Pelagianism. This “*Diatribes*” was well received by Pope Adrian VI (pope 1523-1534), which if anything, indicates the Roman church as the incubator of the whole Semi-Pelagian virus.⁷⁰ As the Reformation developed, Rome had to respond to the threat from the massive and burgeoning phalanx of Reformed Churches spread all across Europe from Scotland right through to Hungary and Romania. Rome tottered, and the Counter-Reformation was initiated to get the Roman church back on its feet again. This era was punctuated by the Roman Council of Trent 1545-1563 in which the Jesuits vociferously took up the cause of Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism once again, and triumphed. Then came a significant development in Jesuit Pelagianism. Ludovicus (Luis) Molina, 1535-1600, a Spanish Jesuit, caused a sensation with his work on the Freedom of the Will.⁷¹ This book was accepted “with ostentatious praise by the Jesuits” and covered the distinct differences between the views of St. Augustine and semi-Pelagianism with “bland and subtle words”.⁷² What is important here, however, is to note that Molina’s teaching in this book on the Divine knowledge and foreknowledge betrays a certain unique technical peculiarity which emerges, significantly, somewhere else, in someone else’s theological teaching. In Arminius, to be precise.⁷³ It’s there, like a fingerprint. A Jesuit fingerprint. A tell-

⁶⁹ For this development see *Spanheim’s “Ecclesiastical Annals”* pages 332-3, where he says: “From the above stock (the Pelagians) proceeded another sect called Semi-Pelagians, who steered a middle course between orthodoxy and heresy: they rose about AD430. The authors and abettors of this were **Cassian**, a disciple of Chrysostom, **Faustus**, **Honoratus** Bishop of Marseilles, and, some writers scruple not to say, **Hilary** of Arles. The points on which they assimilated with the Pelagians were.....free will, producing the beginning of goodness, faith, and conversion, on the co-operation of God and man, and of nature with grace.” (**Frederic Spanheim**, 1632-1741, Professor of Theology at **Heidelberg** 1655-1670, then at **Leyden** till his death in 1701. A stalwart fighter against Amyraldianism.)

⁷⁰ Cf. Historical and Theological introduction to **Luther’s “Bondage of the Will”** pages 35-38 (James Clarke edition, 1957.).

⁷¹ *Liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis, divina praescientia, providentia, praedestinatione, et reprobatione concordia*, Lisbon 1588. (Armada year!). The volume became popular amongst the Arminian Laudian faction in England, and we have already noted its presence in the library of the Oxford Arminian theologian Walter Browne at Corpus Christi in 1613. See **British Reformed Journal** Issue No. 16 p.17, citing Tyacke: Anti-Calvinists pp.65-66.

⁷² Cf. **Schaff-Herzog**: article in loc. “**Molina**”

⁷³ Cf. **Richard A.Muller: God, Creation, and Providence in the thought of Jacob Arminius**, (Publ. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids USA 1991), pages 163 ff. Muller points out that Molina taught a “*scientia media*” with respect to God’s foreknowledge, and Arminius in teaching the same marked “the decisive entry of this concept into Protestantism”. Muller goes on to show that the “Reformed Scholastics of the 17th century would find it necessary to argue at length against (this) doctrine, while the Remonstrant writers, Episcopius and Limborch, together with Grotius and Vorstius, would defend the

tale Jesuit fingerprint.

So! Behind the facade of being a “learned and able divine, of a meek, Christian spirit”, as Schaff-Herzog characterizes him, this man Arminius sowed Jesuit seeds. Shades of II Corinthians 11 verses 13 to 15 ! It is recorded in Schaff-Herzog that Arminius spent some time in Italy, from 1586 to 1587, at Rome and in Padua (modern Padova, a University city twenty miles west of Venice). At both Rome and Padua there were Romish theological faculties. What was Arminius doing down there we wonder? Sun-bathing? ⁷⁴ There appears to be a colossal cover-up over this matter, and ugly rumours abounded, one, that he even kissed the Pope’s toe. Whatever may be the truth, on his return to Holland he soon began to teach what was distinctly Molinist Jesuit doctrine, and that in the name of the Reformed Faith.⁷⁵

Arminius’s leaven leavened right through the whole lump, it was the “sovereign drug” as the Jesuits called it, that stupified the spirit of the Reformation churches, and implanted the fundamental principle of Pelagianism right into the house of the godly. This our John Owen detected. We can follow Owen, as with his X-ray perception he looks down through all the dogma of Arminianism right to its corrupt devilish heart. In the first of the 14 chapters of the “Display of Arminianism” he gives us an outline of his chapter by chapter analysis under two major headings.⁷⁶ The Arminian innovations, he stated, aimed at:

position. Ritschl (in the 19th Cent.) it should be noted, locates the concept in Grotius and Vorstius, but neither recognizes its rootage in the Roman Catholic debates of the era nor its appropriation by Arminius, nor its subsequent development in Remonstrant theology.” And in connection with all this Muller can tell us that the basic outline of **Arminius’s dogma on the “scientia media” is “Molinist”**, and that it is only by the device of this unique feature that Arminius “can argue a genuinely universal will to save...” That Molina’s “Scientia Media” was a new development in Semi-Pelagianism, and was unique to Molina, and the Jesuit influence bearing on Arminius. Molina’s fame was such that he and his “scientia media” merit a specific entry “**Scientia Media and Molinism**” in the 8 volume “**Encyclopaedia of Philosophy**” Vol. 7 p.338f.(New York & London: Collier-Macmillan and The Free Press, 1967). Molina’s work was first published in 1588, but his teaching and the debates that issued from it would have been well known throughout Roman theological circles well before that.

⁷⁴ Cf. Muller: **Op. Cit.** pp. 63ff. Arminius had studied at Geneva, from whence he left for Padua where he spent perhaps a year studying at this Romish University. How a student minister of the Dutch Reformed church could have survived the inquisition right within the enemy threshold is a question needing an answer. The question rises immediately, was he then a Jesuit recruit there in Padua? And was his trip to Rome itself indeed a pilgrimage to pay homage to the Pope, and kiss his toe in submission, as rumours stated? Pertinent in all this is the fact, too, that Arminius’s friend, colleague, and first biographer, Petrus Bertius, entered the Roman church after Arminius’s death. Unholy connections seem to abound in all the murk of these goings-on.

⁷⁵ There is a view posited in various quarters that Arminius on his return to Holland was still a Calvinist, and that he began to turn from this as a result of being called in to examine what was a proto-Arminian heresy being taught by a ministerial colleague named Dirck Coonhert. However, **Carl Bangs** in his biography of Arminius disputes this, as does Richard Muller (Cf. Muller: **Op. Cit.** pp.5-10). The affair over Coonhert looks to me suspiciously like a “set-up” to propel the already semi-Pelagianised Arminius and his views into a position of public prominence.

⁷⁶ **Owen: Op.Cit.** pp12-14. In these pages Owen gives an “over-view” of the whole treatise.

FIRST : “.....to free themselves from the supreme dominion of (God’s) all-ruling providence.....to have an absolute independent power in all their actions,” so that all things within their sphere of life would “have a considerable relation to nothing but chance, contingency, and their own wills;...”

SECOND : “.....to clear human nature from the heavy imputation of being sinful, corrupted, wise to do evil, but unable to do good, and so to vindicate unto themselves a power and ability of doing all that God can justly require to be done by them in the state wherein they are.....”

Under the first heading, we can follow Owen’s X-ray perception into a series of conceptual areas wherein the unfolding Arminian “DNA” or logic engine has generated dogma. The first area, which Owen examines in Chapter 2 is that of the “eternity and unchangeableness of God’s decrees”. Owen exposes how, as the Arminian principle interacts with this realm of thought and being, it generates a dogma that mutates all notions of a Sovereign, unchangeable God, positing instead a God who “willeth or determineth many things which he would not, did not some act of man’s will go before it”, to put it in Arminius’s own words.⁷⁷ Or, God’s actions are contingent in His decrees, because He makes His decrees as a consequence of fore-seeing what man will do. So all those whom He fore-sees will believe and persevere in their belief to the end, He decrees will be saved. This is, of course, to make God’s decrees temporal instead of eternal, and to make them dependent on man, instead of on the Most High Himself. God effectively follows man’s lead, and responds by arranging his decrees to suit. (“Ye shall be as gods”...said the old serpent). Again, the Arminian dogma goes on, and we find Welsingius propounding that “the elect may become rebrobates, and the rebrobates elect...”⁷⁸ Thus the existence of faith or unbelief conditions the decree, and the decree concerning an individual oscillates from reprobation to election and vice versa according to the spiritual state of the subject.

Owen now introduces his “antidote against this poison”⁷⁹ first by exposing how Arminianism makes God dance to man’s tune, so to speak, (“Ye shall be as gods....”), and then calling in a cascade of Scriptures that massacre the Arminian case. “The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so it shall come to pass; and as I have purposed, it shall stand....” “this is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth.....the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?” (Isa. 14: 24-27), “with him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning...” (James 1:17), “He has chosen us before the foundation of the world...” (Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9); “his purpose according to election” before we were born, must “stand” (Rom.9:11), and says Owen, “to the irreversibility of this act of His will he hath set to the seal of His infallible knowledge” as per 2 Tim. 2:19. Further, Owen notes how the decrees of God must be conformable to His nature. In His nature God

⁷⁷Arminius: *Antip.* p. 211 cited in Owen Op cit. p.15

⁷⁸ Welsingius cited in Owen op. cit. p. 17.

⁷⁹ Owen op cit. p.19

is immutable and eternal, therefore His decrees must carry eternity and immutability as their inseparable properties, otherwise changeableness would be logically necessary to the nature of the Almighty, and if such was so, what ground could one have then to trust in Him? What becomes of the "Rock" then? "If God's determination concerning any thing should have a temporal origin..." says Owen, "it must needs be either because he then perceived some goodness in it of which before he was ignorant, or else because some accident did affix a real goodness to some state of things which it had not from Him; neither of which, without abominable blasphemy, can be affirmed....." There is "power and might in His hand," (2 Chron.20:6) "that none is able to withstand Him" which "will not permit any of His purposes to be frustrate."⁸⁰ Thus, Almighty God, is "in heaven, and hath done whatsoever He pleased". (Ps. 115:3).

In Ch. 3 Owen traces out the dogma generated when the Arminian principle encounters the realms of the Divine foreknowledge. He notes first how theologians "for distinction's sake" ascribe unto God two kinds of knowledge, first intuitive knowledge, and second fore-knowledge. By the first (intuitive) God foreknows and sees all things that are possible, that is, that *can* be done by His almighty power, irrespective of whether they *shall* come to pass or not. Out of this infinitely vast territory of knowledge, God by His decrees "freely determineth what *shall* come to pass", and makes certain of those things that were but possibilities into future certainties. From this foundation the "prescience" of God, or His infallible knowledge of future events, His foreknowledge arises. "The measure of the first kind of knowledge (intuitive)" says Owen, "is God's omnipotency, what He *can* do..." and the measure of His foreknowledge is "what certainly He *will* do..." "With this prescience, then, God foreseeth all, and nothing but what He hath decreed shall come to pass."⁸¹ Also, Owen shows here how "secondary" or "contingent" causes are all parts of the Divine decrees. Fire burns, but only because God has so decreed that ordinarily it should. An arrow, fired from a bow, apparently to human eyes at random, slays a king according to the decree and foreknowledge of God. (1 Kings 22:34). So also a mass of apparently "free and contingent" actions concurred in the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the Lord Jesus,⁸² even down to seemingly minor events. Sure, as Owen says, God works "all things according to the coun-

⁸⁰ Ibid.:p.20. One for the "free offer" merchants to consider.

⁸¹ Ibid. pp 23-24

⁸² On this topic certain mathematicians have calculated the various probabilities involved of over 400 prophecies being fulfilled in Christ. The odds against them being fulfilled at all, let alone in the person of one man at one time are astronomic. For instance, in just using probability equations to assess the possibility of pure contingency in just only 8 of the Messianic prophecies concurring in one person is an astronomical 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. (For an idea of the size of this number, note that mathematicians calculate that that number of silver dollars would cover the whole state of Texas to a depth of two feet! And these odds are for just 8 out of 400 odd prophecies concerning Christ!) This so far down the road of improbability that one has to admit chance and contingency could have had no role whatsoever in it. No chance for chance! See the excellent review of these facts in: **Josh MacDowell: Evidence that Demands a Verdict** pp175ff.1972 Campus Crusade ! (Yes! a modern Arminian admitting it!).

sel of His own will" (Eph.1:11). No chance for chance!

These theological truths the Arminians must either overthrow or face ruin. It is precisely at this point that Molina's "scientia media" evolved out of debates amongst the Romish scholastics of the Jesuit order. Owen, investigating all this, has already smelt Jesuit blood and indicated so in his Ch.2, when he says: "How do they (the Arminians) and their fellows, the **Jesuits**, exclaim upon poor Calvin, for sometimes using the hard word compulsion, describing the effectual, powerful working of the providence of God in the actions of men..."⁸³ A perceptive comment this, as it shows that the young scholar knew of how the Jesuit attack against Calvin's theology had emerged strongly in 1556 through the Jesuit Fonseca, who thereon laid the foundations of the "scientia media" which Molina was to develop more fully,⁸⁴ and publish in his "Concordia" in 1588. This tome was to circulate widely amongst both Catholics, and Protestant Arminians. In it, the "scientia media" posited a "middle knowledge" in God, in between God's "intuitive" knowledge, and His decretal foreknowledge. Molina, building up from Fonseca, developed the idea that there is in God a "middle" kind of knowledge which, "rests entirely on the acts of creatures. No divine determination enters into the scientia media. Thus God is capable of foreknowing the way a given creature will act, given certain conditions- and capable, therefore, of acting upon future contingents by establishing these conditions accordingly."⁸⁵ Now, it happens that Molina's "Concordia" was on the shelves of Arminius's personal library, as were a large number of other, significant, Jesuit tomes. "Arminius's library also contained a substantial number of medieval scholastic and 16th cent. Roman Catholic works, including a significant number of the writings his adversaries accused him of recommending to his students..... Even more significant is the emphasis on Jesuit theology.....(including) Molina's Concordia.....The impact of these works, particularly those of Suarez and Molina, upon Arminius appears to have been considerable."⁸⁶ These Jesuit influences emerge in manifold places in Arminius's works, as when for instance he wrote against the English Puritan, Perkins.⁸⁷ But he was crafty enough never to reference

⁸³ Owen: op.cit. p.16

⁸⁴ Cf. Muller: Op. Cit. p.159 : "By 1565, Fonseca had provided a full description of the concept of a Divine scientia media, prior to the divine decrees and, therefore, having the character of a non-causal knowing....."

⁸⁵ Ibid.p.160. This is Muller's excellent summary of Molina's scientia media in a nutshell. Muller goes on to show that Arminius and the "scientia media" teaching has implications far beyond just the matters of human freedom in the work of salvation, implications that qualify seriously God's relationship to the whole created order, denying Him Lordship even over the material processes of the natural creation. Creation-nature in fact is held by them to run on outside of God in some way, and He responds to what happens in those realms. (Ibid. pp.165-6).

⁸⁶ Ibid. p.46 Muller gives a succinct overall view of Arminius's extensive theological library on pages 44-47 of this important work.

⁸⁷ Ibid. p.266. Muller says: "Indeed, what has been characteristic of Arminius's definition (of the scientia media) throughout his refutation (sic) of Perkins, has been the Molinist argument...."

his sources!⁸⁸ Thus the main-stream poison of Jesuitised Pelagianism was quietly and gently introduced into the Dutch Reformed Churches, and from thence into the Church of England, without so much as a mention as to its origins. But it is stamped, with the permanent impress of Jesuit fingerprints, so to speak, a fact that the diligent student will discern.⁸⁹ Was Arminius a Jesuit? What exactly went on in that year when he was in Italy? He need not of course, have been enrolled into the Jesuit priesthood, in order to be a Jesuit. He could have belonged secretly as a “secular co-adjutor” or Jesuit layman, a subaltern or confederate of the order who had not taken the monastic vow.⁹⁰ Truth is, he did the work of a Jesuit, and did it all too well.....millions of Protestants right down to this day have been duped by this man’s false gospel, even modern-day “Calvinists” have taken his ideas on board! Inigo Loyola himself could not have achieved more!

To return to Owen, in his third chapter he has sniffed out this Jesuitic “poison”, and launches into a first class polemic against it. First, he notes that Arminius teaches: “That God hath determined future contingent things unto either part (I mean such as issue from the free-will of the creature), I abominate, hate, and curse, as false, absurd, and leading us on to blasphemy.”⁹¹ Then Corvinus, writing against Du Moulin, “That God doth often intend what he doth not foresee will come to pass”⁹² and “We grant that there are in God desires that never are fulfilled”⁹³ and “God wisheth and desireth some good things, which yet come not to pass”⁹⁴. Again we find, “God willeth that all men should be saved.”⁹⁵ Owen massacres this false theology, he demolishes the *scientia media*, which effectively posits a creation which runs on under its own steam, so to speak, in which events and actions of individuals can be totally outside the Divine control, albeit they be small and seemingly insignificant contingencies. “So...” says Owen, “when wicked robbers had spoiled Job of all his substance, the holy man concludeth, ‘The Lord gave, and the

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p.161 where Muller says: “Arminius nowhere cites Driedo, Molina, Suarez, or Origen and nowhere notes the contemporary Roman Catholic debate over middle knowledge.(*scientia media*).”

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* where Muller in footnote 79 on page 161 can record that : “Vansteenberghe’s summary of Molina’s teaching parallels Arminius’s definition (of the *scientia media*) PERFECTLY.”(Emph. mine Ed.) Vansteenberghe’s summary is noted by Muller as found in “*Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique*” 10/2 col. 2119.

⁹⁰ See: “*Sketches of Protestantism in Italy*” by Robert Baird D.D., pages 175-176 (London: William Collins, 1847) for an outline of the Jesuit “machinery”.

⁹¹ Owen *Op.cit.* p.26

⁹² *Ibid.* p.27

⁹³ *Ibid.* p.25 citing Corv. ad. Molin. chap.5 sect.2. Shades of some modern-day so-called “Calvinists”!

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 25 citing the “*Remonstrant Confession*” chap.2 sect. 9.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 25 referencing Corvinus against Du Moulin again, and chap.31 sect.1. Of course, this too is a prominent dictum of modern day “Calvinism” a la John Murray, Stonehouse, and Van Til and partners....etc.,etc.,etc.

Lord hath taken away' (Job1:21). Now if the working of God's providence be so mighty and effectual, even in and over those actions wherein the devil and men do most maliciously offend,then certainly nothing in this world, in some respect or other, is independent of His all-disposing hand....But His works.....are known unto Him from the beginning, (Acts 15:18), for He worketh nothing by chance or accidentally, but all things determinately, according to his own decree, or 'the counsel of his own will'(Eph.1:11)." So also, says Owen, "He knoweth my thoughts long before" even they come into our minds, and the 'answer of the tongue'(Prov. 16:1) is from the Lord. Thus no arena of life is outside the Sovereign governing control of the Almighty.....there is no chance, no scientia media.

Owen concludes this section with a pearl of wisdom:

"Amidst all our afflictions and temptations, under whose pressure we should else faint and despair, it is no small comfort to be assured that we do nor can suffer nothing but what His hand and counsel guides unto us, what is open and naked before his eyes, and whose end and issue He knoweth long before; which is a strong motive to patience, a sure anchor of hope, a firm ground of consolation"⁹⁶

In Chapter 4 Owen refutes the Arminian dogma concerning the Providence of God. Firstly, while allowing that God sustains and conserves all creation, the Arminians, notes Owen, "affirm it to be very likely that this is nothing but a negative act of His will, whereby He determineth not to destroy the things by Him created."⁹⁷ Then, with respect to God concurring with inferior causes in all acts and working, Corvinus will grant only "a general influence, alike upon all and every one, which they may use or not use at their pleasure..."⁹⁸ Thirdly, with respect to God's determining the will of man to do this or that particular, Arminius says: "The Providence of God doth not determine the will of man to one part of the contradiction."⁹⁹ These three positions Owen then hammers flat, firstly, he notes how Scripture speaks of "all things being upheld by the word of His power"(Heb.1:3); "He is the Lord, there is none else. He formeth the light, and createth darkness: he maketh peace, and createth evil: He doeth all these things..."(Is. 45: 6-7). Secondly, he points out that Providence is not a mere general influence, but that it bears "rule in the counsels of men and their most secret resolutions" such that the Scriptures declare that "a man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps"(Jer.10:23) and "the preparations of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord," (Prov.16:1) such that even the "Kings heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water, He turneth it whithersoever He will."(Prov.21:1). And

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* p.29 And there speaks one, who, at the time of writing, had not long lost his University place, his private income, his public honour, his right to inherit his uncle's rich estate, and recently, even his low-paid job as tutor to Lord Lovelace's household.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.38-9 Owen is citing the "*Remonstrant's Apology*" Ch. 6 sect 1 :p.68.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* p.39 citing Corv. ad. Molin. Ch.3 sect 5.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* p.39 citing Arminius *Artic Perpen.*

finally, he demolishes Arminius's argument, proving that God does indeed control the wills of men, and that indeed, saints pray that God would so influence them for good, and that this is without any prejudice to their true and proper liberty, as David prayed: "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies..." (Ps.119:36). Another cascade of Scriptures Owen introduces throughout this chapter and sweeps away Arminianism's dogma as if by a flood.

Can the will of God be resisted? The will of God is itself a deep subject, and Owen faces the Arminian foe on this issue in his Ch. 5. He first goes into the theology of the Divine Will as taught through Scripture, then shows how the Arminians affirm that the will of God "may be resisted, that is that God may fail in His purposes, come short of what He earnestly intendeth, or be frustrated of His aim and end." At this juncture the reader of Owen could be excused for forgetting that Owen is dealing with the Arminians here, because he sounds as if he is firing his cannons at modern day Calvinists. "But we can resist God when he would convert us by His grace" said the Arminians, and they are "certain that God intendeth (salvation) for many which never obtain it" thus He is frustrated in His purpose.¹⁰⁰

"Here," says Owen, "methinks they place God in a most unhappy condition, by affirming that they are often damned whom He would have to be saved, though He desires their salvation with a most vehement desire and natural affection".¹⁰¹ Spare some tears, then, Owen exhorts, for the poor Arminian "god", who, "when he would have all and every man in the world to come to heaven, to escape the torments of hell, and that with a serious purpose and intention that it shall be so, a vehement affection and fervent natural desire that it should be so, yet, being not in himself alone able to save one, must be forced to lose his desire, lay down his affection, change his purpose, and see the greater part of them to perish everlastingly..... *yea notwithstanding that he had provided a sufficient means for them all to escape, with a purpose and intention that they should so do.*"¹⁰² Owen sweeps all this garbage away with his usual avalanche of Scripture texts, expanding on his expositions of the Secret and Revealed wills of God. He shows how whilst all too often men resist the revealed will of God, they can never resist His secret will. But it is by His revealed will men are held responsible, that is, by what they ought to do, not by what God has decreed they should do. "Our God is in the heavens" saith the Psalmist, "He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased." (Ps.115:3).

Beginning with ch. 6 Owen shows us how the whole Arminian logic engine goes to work now on the nature of Predestination, man's nature, his will, the fall, the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. pp.49-50 citing *Remonstrant Defence* before Synod of Dordt, and Grevinchovus.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.p.50. Shades of modern "calvinism", so-called! The reader can see at a glance how Owen's Calvinism is distinctly different to the modern breed, the latter being evidently an "Arminianized" form of Calvinism.

¹⁰² Ibid. pp.50-51, Owen references the *Remonstrant Apology* Ch. 7 fol. 86 and Corvinus here.

understanding, the state of man post-fall, and the knock on effects of these doctrines with respect to the conversion of sinners. In all these areas the Arminian dogma mutates the clear teaching of Scripture, and, as Owen says, aims "to clear human nature from the heavy imputation of being sinful, corrupted, wise to do evil but unable to do good; and so to vindicate unto themselves a power and ability of doing all that good which God can justly require to be done by them in the state wherein they are,-of making them differ from others who will not make so good use of the endowments of their natures; that so the first and chiefest part of the work of their salvation may be ascribed unto themselves; - a proud Luciferian endeavour!"¹⁰³ For truly, if God has not appointed us to salvation, it needs be that we appoint ourselves, and then it is necessary for us to have free wills in order to effectuate that self-appointment. Further, in order to have free wills, it must needs be that our post-fall nature cannot be totally depraved, and not really intrinsically any different to pre-fall Adam. To follow on, the Scripture doctrine whereby Christ pays the penalty for the sins of His people has to be tortured and twisted, since only the individual by generating faith can procure redemption for himself. Likewise, this knocks on to the plight of the "good heathen", who the Arminians maintain may be saved outside of Christ. Then they affirm a "common grace" fitting all men, such that if they will, they become "prepared" for saving grace. This whole farrago from hell follows logically each element from its fellows, and unfolds out of that fundamental logic engine that puts man on a par, at least, if not above, the Almighty. ("Ye shall be as gods....")

The corruption of the whole doctrine of predestination by the Arminians is analysed and refuted by Owen as he begins this section with Ch. 6. Having precisely isolated the Scripture meaning of "predestination" as being referent to all rational creatures, he expounds the nature of election as a predestinating decree made from all eternity with regard to human individuals. He then contrasts the Arminian travesty, thus: "Complete election regardeth none but him that is dying; for this peremptory election decreeth the whole accomplishment and consummation of salvation, and therefore requireth in the object the finished course of faith and obedience."¹⁰⁴ Owen ridicules this nonsense, referring to 2 Pet. 1:10, he expounds the verse in assumed Arminian terms, thus: "Believe, Peter, and continue in faith unto the end, and I will choose thee before the foundation of the world."!! What these Arminians have, says Owen, is a "predestination" in which nobody is predestinated, and an election in which none is elected.¹⁰⁵ Arminius is then quoted: "No such will (of predestination) can be ascribed to God, whereby he so willeth any one to be saved as that thence their salvation should be sure and infallible."¹⁰⁶ "We never-imagined before" responds Owen, sarcastically, "that Christ had been the mediator

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* p.13. Owen here adumbrates pp.13-14 his work in the chapters 6-14.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* p.55 citing *Grevinchovius ad. Ames* p.136

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* pp.56-57.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* p.58 citing *Arminius Antip.* p.583

of an uncertain covenant, because there are no certain persons covenanted withal but such as may or may not fulfil the condition,” and that “He was ordained to be a King when it was altogether uncertain whether he should ever have any subjects...” There follows a masterly exposition of Scripture doctrine on election and predestination, rooting our election in the purpose and counsel of God, “When God and man stand in competition (as to) who shall be accounted the cause of an eternal good, we may be sure the Scripture will pass the verdict on the part of the Most High.”¹⁰⁷ “God (fore)sees no faith, no obedience, perseverance, nothing but sin and wickedness, in any man, but what Himself intendeth graciously and freely to bestow upon him.....the effects of election, infallibly flowing from it, cannot be the causes of election, certainly preceding it....If predestination be for faith foreseen, these three things, with diverse such absurdities will necessarily follow, *First* that election is not of ‘Him that calleth’ as the apostle speaks (Rom. 9:11)-that is, of the good pleasure of God, who calleth us with a holy calling,- but of him that is called; for, depending on faith, it must be his whose faith is, that doth believe. *Secondly* God cannot have mercy on whom He will have mercy, for the very purpose of it is thus tied to the qualities of faith and obedience, so that He must have mercy only on believers antecedently to His decree. Which, *thirdly* hinders Him from being an absolute free agent, and doing of what He will with His own,- of having such a power over us as the potter hath over his clay, for He finds us of different matter, one clay, another gold, when He comes to appoint us to different uses and ends.”¹⁰⁸ The conclusion is inescapable, Arminianism effectively dethrones the Almighty, and in another avalanche of Scripture testimony Owen shows how the Holy Ghost teaches the opposite..... the elect having been “predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ...” Eph. 1:5 etc.

Original sin and the corruption of human nature, a thoroughly Scriptural dogma, cannot be allowed by the Arminian. If man is to be the decisive factor in salvation, man must be allowed some intrinsic powers that will make him the decisive factor. Calvinism will allow him nothing at this point, on Scriptural grounds. Thus, as Owen shows in his subsequent chapters 7 and 8, the Arminians deny the fall of Adam into Total Depravity, and furthermore, they deny that the pre-fall Adam was particularly much different in terms of moral faculties and abilities to the post-fall Adam. “There was an inclination in man to sin before the fall, though not altogether so vehement and inordinate as it is now” says Arminius.¹⁰⁹ “In the spiritual death of sin there are no spiritual gifts properly wanting in the will, because they were never there.”¹¹⁰ “....it is absurd, that by one man’s disobedience many should be made actually disobedient..” says Corvinus,¹¹¹ in flat opposition to the plain text of

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p.63

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. pp.63-65.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p.84 citing Arminius *ad. Artic. Respon.*

¹¹⁰ Ibid. p.84 citing the *Remonstrant Hague Collection* p. 250.

¹¹¹ Ibid. p.73 citing Corv. ad Molin. Ch. 7 sect.8.

Romans 5:19. "For it is against equity, that one should be accounted guilty for a sin that is not his own..."¹¹² Here Owen observes: ".....behold plain Pelagianism obtruded on us without either welt or guard.....it seems a hard case, that (if) having no obliquity or sin in our nature to deserve it, nor no interest in his disobedience whose obedience had been the means of conveying so much happiness to us, we should yet be involved in so great a punishment as we are;.....the Scripture is clear that the sin of Adam is the sin of us all, not only by propagation and communicationbut also by imputation of his actual transgression unto us all, his singular disobedience being by this means made ours."¹¹³ And thus also, we receive justification by the obedience of another, namely Christ, being imputed to us in like manner. So again, Romans 5:19.

Owen notes that the Arminians insist that none were ever damned for original sin, only for actual sin. Hence the infants of heathen dying in infancy are saved outwith the gospel. This follows from their dogma on original sin, and involves them in the anomaly that by their system believers who struggle for a lifetime in the faith, can yet fall away and be damned, whilst infidel infants, totally outwith the Covenant of Grace, must be admitted into heaven for their innocence. "...not much to the honour" says Owen sarcastically, "of the blessed Trinity, that Heaven should be replenished with them whom the Father never elected, the Son never redeemed, nor the Holy Ghost ever sanctified."¹¹⁴

As to the corruption of human nature by original sin, Owen tells us: "Nothing doth more manifest the deviation of our nature from its first institution, and declare the corruption wherewith we are polluted, than that propensity which is in us to everything that is evil; that lust and concupiscence which fomenteth, conceiveth, hatcheth, bringeth forth, and nourisheth sin;..." Noting that both Scripture and nature and experience tell us of this truth, Owen observes how the Arminians were prone to extenuate this depravity, and try to affirm that "it is no great matter, no more than Adam was subject to in the age of innocency." Thus we find Corvinus asserting the blasphemy that Adam came forth from his Creator's hand with "an affectation to what was forbidden by the law....." and that "man had not been fit to have had a law given unto him, had he not been endued with a propension and natural affection to that which was forbidden by the law."¹¹⁵ Owen wipes the floor with this blaspheming nonsense, by comparing these wild notions with Scripture. Indeed one wonders if the Arminians ever read much Scripture, (they seem to have been too busy reading the Jesuits to have had much time left to study God's Word).

Anyway, Owen wants to know how such Arminian nonsense can fit with the Scriptures that tell us Adam was created in the image of God. (Gen. 1:26ff; Eph.

¹¹² *Ibid.* p. 72 citing the *Remonstrant Apology*: Ch. 7 p.84.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* pp.72-75.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* p.78 The application is made, too, not only to infidel infants, but also to infidel adults who live lives as much as possible in accordance with such light as they have.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* pp.83-84 and citing Corv. ad. Molin. Ch. 10 sect.15. The mind boggles!

4:24; Col. 3:10). Does "in the image of God" mean having a propensity to break God's law? Of course, the Arminians go smack on their faces on this issue, but they can't but assert their damnable heresy, the false principle of their theological DNA working out at this juncture rams them headlong into this logical, doctrinal, moral, and ontological blaspheming mess. Owen kills them dead, with his usual amazing avalanche of Scriptures.....

In Ch. 9 Owen treats of the Death of Christ, and of the efficacy of its merits. Noting the Arminian argument as expressed by Corvinus that the Death of Christ is but a "potential, conditionate reconciliation, not actual and absolute", and as expressed by Arminius as "not an actual ablation of sin from men, not an actual remission of iniquities, justification and redemption of any soul....." but "an impetration or obtaining of reconciliation with God.....that thereby God hath the power, his justice being satisfied,to grant remission of sins to sinful men on what condition he would."¹¹⁶ And the "what condition he would" of course is the exercise of faith and repentance, which the individual is responsible to generate within himself, with of course, the help of common grace! Owen rightly observes that they make the work of Christ do nothing to save man,¹¹⁷ rather they make it liberate God from the obligations of the law and enable Him to pardon sin on the terms He chooses to lay down, which terms man may accept or reject as he wills.

The chapter contains a neat and succinct outline of the Atonement, indicating, from a Scriptural foundation, what is its nature, purpose, and efficacy. In expounding these glorious truths Owen shows how the Priestly nature of Christ's work is one integral whole....Christ is the offering as well as the Priest, Christ is the mediator as well as the victim. "So that whatsoever Christ impetrated, merited, or obtained by His death and passion, must be infallibly applied unto and bestowed upon them for whom he intended to obtain it; or else His intercession is vain, He is not heard in the prayers of His mediatorship.....and an actual reconciliation with God, and communication of grace and glory, must needs betide them" that are His. "He is an advocate for everyone for whose sins his blood was a propitiation.....He was not a mediator for them that perish.....therefore the benefit of His death also must be restrained to them who are finally partakers of both."¹¹⁸ Contra the Arminians, Christ did not die for all men, head for head, for "I cannot conceive an intention in God that Christ should satisfy His justice for the sins of them that were in hell some thousands of years before, and yet be still resolved to continue their punishment on them to all eternity.....No, doubtless, Christ giveth life to everyone for whom He gave His life; He loseth not one of them whom He purchased with His blood....."

He died "for them whom God gave unto Him to be saved: 'thine they were, and

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* p.94 citing Corv. ad. Molin. Ch.28 sect 11 and Armin *Antip.* p.76.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* p.95 quoting *Grevinchovius against Ames.* p.415

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* pp.90-91

thou gavest them me' (John 17:6).¹¹⁹

How do men obtain faith? On this matter the unfolding Arminian DNA must locate the ontological origins of faith as being within man. In his Ch. 10 Owen demolishes their case, noting how they ridicule the Scriptural teaching that faith is the gift of God, thus: "Faith and conversion cannot be our obedience, if they are wrought in us by God", and "that it is a most absurd thing to affirm that God either effects by His power, or procureth by His wisdom, that the elect should do those things that He requireth of them."¹²⁰ So, if God demands of us faith, it must be within the power of every man to exercise faith. And this of course would follow from the Arminian view of the nature of fallen man..... "it's not so bad!" Owen destroys these notions with an exposition of the Scriptures showing how God commands, then supplies His elect with what is commanded, and this on the grounds of the merit obtained for them in the Atonement by Christ. The Divine taunt "make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will you die, O house of Israel?" of Ezek. 18:31 is fulfilled by God Himself in the hearts of His elect, as per Ezek. 36:26-27 "a new heart will I give you...." etc. This Scriptural juxtaposition Owen unfolds succinctly, indicating how natural man, dead in his sin, is totally incapable of performing the duties laid on him by God. But herein the Divine mercy is manifested, that for Christ's sake God works those duties in the hearts of the elect.

In ch. 11 Owen examines the Arminian corollary that salvation can be obtained outside of Christ, in that good (sic) heathens who have faithfully followed such light as they have will be received into glory. "Thus," says Owen, "they lay men in Abraham's bosom who never believed on the Son of Abraham; make them overcome the serpent who never heard of the Seed of the woman; bring goats into heaven, who never were of the flock of Christ, never entered Him by the door; make men please God without faith, and obtain the remission of sins without the sprinkling of the blood of the Lamb; -to be saved without a Saviour, redeemed without a Redeemer, become the Sons of God, and never know their elder Brother..." "If," says Owen, "If we look upon the several branches of this novel doctrine, extenuating the precious worth and necessity of faith in Christ, we shall find them hewed off by the two-edged sword of God's Word." Owen then expounds how the Old Testament saints were "in Christ" and thus demolishes the Arminian contention that the salvation of the Old Testament people of God is an example of salvation outwith Christ. From this their position regarding the heathen is axiomatically disposed of.

"Now we come," says Owen, introducing his Ch. 12, "to take a view of the idol himself, of this great deity of free-will." Here is Owen's "electron-microscopy" as it were, of the Arminian DNA! "We had well hoped" he says, "the idol himself had been so deeply buried (after the labours of the Reformed forefathers) that his head should never more have been exalted, to the trouble of the Church of God, until not long since some curious wits, whose weak stomachs were clogged with manna and

¹¹⁹ Ibid. pp.90-92.

¹²⁰ Ibid. p. 104 citing the *Remonstrant's Hague Collection*, p. 196, and *Episcopius*.

loathed the sincere milk of the Word, raking all dunghills for novelties, lighted unhappily on this idol,..." "And that the idol may be free from ruin, to which in himself they have found by experience that he is subject, they have matched him to contingency, a new goddess of their own creation....."¹²¹ And, sarcastically, "what a stout idol is this, whom neither the Holy Spirit, the grace and counsel of God, the calling of the gospel, the knocking at the door of the heart, can move at all, or in the least measure prevail against him!"¹²²

Owen launches into an analysis of the will, and the bounds of its freedom, finally defining it as Prosper did, as a "spontaneous appetite of what seemeth good unto it" that is free from all compulsion, but nevertheless subservient to the Providence of God. He then notes that the Arminians claim that the will has "unbounded indifference whereby, all things requisite being pre-supposed, it should remain absolutely in our power to will or not to will".....thus plainly asserting that our wills are not subject to the rule of the Most High, and function independently of Him. Right at this point, Owen has opened up the serpentine DNA right at the heart of Arminianism. "Ye shall be as gods.." For as Owen says: "everything that is independent of any else in operation is purely active, and so consequently a god; for nothing but a divine will can be a pure act, possessing such a liberty by virtue of its own essence."¹²³ That phrase: "purely active" is dynamite....only God Almighty Himself can be "pure act" in His Will, that is to say, for God to will something, is the same as for God to act to bring that something to be, for His will can never be frustrated. For Arminians to assert therefore that the human will is "independent" of God, is to claim ground for man that belongs to God alone. Thus Owen has exposed for us the DNA core of Arminianism.....it is the seed of the serpent, from hell itself.... "ye shall be as gods". From the old serpent it first came in Eden, within his apostate heart, uplifted in pride, it first entered, when in the Heavens, as Lucifer, he was lifted up in his pride, and sought to usurp the Almighty.

In his final chapters 13 and 14 Owen dismantles the Arminian application of "free-will" to conversion. Laughable is the quote from Grevinchovius "I make myself differ from another when I do not resist God and his divine predetermination; which I could have resisted. And why may I not boast of this as of mine own? That I could is of God's mercy"¹²⁴ !!!! Did Grevinchovius *never* read St. Paul, we wonder? The Arminians do allow here, let it be said, for a certain measure of grace, acting upon the soul, and with its co-operation fitting it to be worthy to receive the

¹²¹ *Ibid.* pp.115-116.

¹²² *Ibid.* pp.117-118. As often as not, Owen cites Arminius and his later followers. He would be well aware therefore of any significant developmental changes. This contra Goold in *ibid.* p.4.

¹²³ *Ibid.* pp.119-120.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* p.125 citing *Grevinchovius against Ames*...p.253. That this Arminian prominent at Dordt could have written such guff to Ames, above all people! Like a schoolboy cheekily thinking he can subdue a champion heavyweight boxer!

gospel, that “preparation and disposition to believe, which men attain by the law and virtuous education”, that something within sinners, that though they are not justified thereby, nevertheless they are made worthy of justification.¹²⁵ “Made worthy of justification” !!!! Some theology this! But “conversion and performance of good works” is for the Arminians “a condition pre-required to justification”. Thus said the Remonstrants, in the document “Sons of Arminius”. Owen calls it “more Pelagianism than Pelagius himself would ever justify”!

We have no power, says Owen, to prepare ourselves for salvation. Our new birth is a “resurrection from death” wrought by the greatness of God’s power. He denies the “common grace” of the Arminians here, but then adumbrates another form of “common grace” himself. But despite this flirting with dangerous Arminian terminology, Owen distances himself from their concept of common grace when he describes it as being really the first actings of God’s grace toward us, when in grace He arranges His providences to bring us under the sound of the Gospel, and to stir us out of our sleep of death in sin. But nowhere here does he intimate that this “common grace” is an internal action of the Holy Ghost on the soul prior to, and outwith from, the Spirit’s regenerating work. Nothing of this “common grace” does “enable us to concur, by any vital operation, with that powerful, blessed, renewing grace of regeneration whereby we become the sons of God.”¹²⁶

And so, on conversion, Owen can Scripturally expound how “the operation of grace is resisted by no hard heart; because it mollifies the heart itself. It doth not so much take away a power of resisting as give a will of obeying, whereby the powerful impotency of resistance is removed.” “Shall not that power, which should overcome hell, and loose the bonds of death, (Eph. 1:19-20), be effectual for the raising of a sinner from the death of sin, when by God’s intention it is appointed unto that work?It is ‘his divine power which giveth unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness’ (2 Pet. 1:3), all this being a world away from the Arminian view that conversion is effected by “moral persuasion”.¹²⁷

Thus then, Arminianism displayed ! Stripped right down to its Satanic DNA ! Exposed, refuted, shamed and condemned! And hung!

Sure, this treatise is “hung all round with massive Calvinistic armour” !

All spiritual acts well-pleasing to God , as faith, repentance, obedience, are supernatural; flesh and blood revealeth not these things....(Cf. John 1:13).....Now, to the performance of any supernatural act it is required that the productive power thereof be also supernatural; for nothing hath an activity in causing above its own sphere.

John Owen: Works Vol, X page 122

¹²⁵ Ibid. p.125 citing Remonstrant Act. Synod.

¹²⁶ Ibid. pp.126-128

¹²⁷ Ibid. Ch. 14 passim.