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COMMUNION WITH GOD AND COMFORTABLE
DEPENDENCE ON HIM:
ANNE DUTTON'S TRINITARIAN SPIRITUALITY

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APPROVAL SHEET

COMMUNION WITH GOD AND COMFORTABLE

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For my daughters, Yizhen and Bangjoo. May you walk with the Father, Son, and Spirit as
Anne Dutton walked and find your comfortable dependence on him.

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PREFACE

This dissertation is the fruit of my eight-year seminary education. The seed was planted two years ago by my current supervisor, Dr. Michael A. G. Haykin, when he recommended Anne Dutton to me. Since then it has been pruned by my professors and fellow doctoral students in the history department at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary through their instructions and discussions. Special thanks go to my former supervisor, Dr. David L. Puckett, for his willingness to listen and his wisdom to counsel, and to my current supervisor, Dr. Haykin, for the depth of his graciousness and his knowledge.

Next, this dissertation has been nourished by many of my friends and my family. Long-time friends back in China, in the mission field of Africa, and in Northern Virginia have all demonstrated Christian love to me and my family through their prayers and financial support. As for my family, I am indebted to my parents-in-law for their financial support, prayers, and visits, which have livened up our spirits from the loads of academics and ministry. Especially I want to thank my loved ones: to Yizhen for her sobering reminder that she would not like to see me still in the program by the time she goes to college, which are but two years away; to Bangjoo for being the prayer warrior for my dissertation every night; and to my husband, Youngjoo, whose passion for God has dragged me out of my comfort zone and whose faith has steadied me in many trials. Through him God has fulfilled his purpose for our marriage: “that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead” (Phil 3:10, 11).

In the end, however, it is God who grows the work and through it he grows me

too. I see his sovereign hand as he brought Dutton into my life at a point when I was struggling to understand my faith as a woman, a doctoral student at a conservative seminary, and a fledgling minister's wife. Just as Dutton defended her publication by likening it to her paying a visit to her readers' house for private conversations upon spiritual subjects, so she has blessed me with many of such visits by initiating me into sweet communion with the triune God and comfortable dependence on him. It is this communion and comfort I have gleaned from Dutton that I hope to communicate in the following pages.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

My chief design in publishing the present work is, that Anne Dutton may no longer remain a stranger to the church of God, but that her memory should be rescued from oblivion, as a Christian of the brightest experience and a faithful servant of Christ and his church. . . . This grieved us, but at the same time brought us to the conclusion to raise a memorial to her memory, in the form of publishing these letters, that her name and memory may once more yield forth to the church of God that sweet, fresh, and fragrant perfume it did in generations past.

—James Knight, preface to *Selections from Letters on Spiritual Subjects*

Anne Dutton (1692–1765) remains virtually “a stranger to the church of God” today after all the efforts of James Knight, her nineteenth century editor to rescue her from oblivion.¹ Admittedly, Dutton’s spiritual significance has not been entirely forgotten. In addition to the seven volumes of her works edited by JoAnn Ford Watson and published from 2003 to 2015, her theological and spiritual significance has been registered by a handful of articles and other writings.² But these hardly do justice to the rich legacies Dutton bequeathed to the church of God by her works. In the words of Watson, her modern-day editor, “Women theologians in the eighteenth century were a rarity” so that “were there no other reason, this alone could make the literary legacy of

¹James Knight, preface to *Selections from Letters on Spiritual Subjects Addressed to Relatives and Friends by Mrs. Anne Dutton*, in *Selected Spiritual Writings of Anne Dutton* [SSW], ed. JoAnn Ford Watson (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2003–2015), 1:86.

²Besides the handful of articles, other writings include, Joilynn Karega-Mason, “Anne Dutton: Eighteen-Century Calvinist Theologian” (M.A. thesis, University of Louisville, 2008); Michael D. Sciretti Jr., “‘Feed My Lambs’: The Spiritual Direction Ministry of Calvinistic British Baptist Anne Dutton During the Early Years of Evangelical Revival” (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 2009). In the introduction, Sciretti laments that “no scholarly work on Anne Dutton of any significant length has yet been attempted.” Sciretti, “‘Feed my Lambs,’” 5. Eight years after he made that observation, his dissertation remains the only one. Also David H. J. Gay, *The Spirituality of Anne Dutton* (Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017).

the Baptist Anne (Williams) Dutton significant.”³ Her femininity, however, was certainly not the sole reason for reclaiming her legacies.

The one legacy that this dissertation seeks to retrieve is Dutton’s Trinitarian spirituality. Despite the fluidity of the term spirituality,⁴ Christian spirituality is generally recognized as the lived faith experience of Christians or their experiencing of God, which yet cannot be conceived apart from their theological beliefs. In Alister E. McGrath’s words, it is “not something that is deduced totally from theological presuppositions, nor is it something which is inferred totally from our experience. It arises from a creative and dynamic synthesis of faith and life, forged in the crucible of the desire to live out the Christian faith authentically, responsibly, effectively, and fully.”⁵ In this respect, Dutton’s Trinitarian spirituality will be explored in the following not only from her experience of the Trinity, but also her theological beliefs of the Godhead.

Even though Dutton did not write any monographs of the Trinity as her contemporary Baptist minister John Gill (1697–1771) did,⁶ Trinitarianism dominates her published works. It is notable not only in its adherence to the classic doctrinal formulations of the Trinity, but also in its explorations of the practical significance of the Trinity in believers’ salvation experience, worship, and life. In respect of these aspects, it

³JoAnn Ford Watson, *SSW*, 1: dust jacket.

⁴For an example of the variations in the definition of spirituality and Christian spirituality, see Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 1–7.

⁵McGrath, *Christian Spirituality*, 9. This correlation between theology and spirituality is also contained in James M. Gordon’s definition of theology: “Christian spirituality is lived doctrine, the response of the human heart to divine initiative, the continuing consequences for spiritual life of Christian belief and experience.” James M. Gordon, *Evangelical Spirituality* (London: SPCK, 1991), 3–4. Sandra M. Schneider illustrates “the integral relationship” between theology and spirituality in the music analogy of symphony. Sandra M. Schneider, “Biblical Spirituality,” *Interpretation* 70, no. 4 (10/ 2016): 417–30.

⁶John Gill, *The Doctrine of Trinity, Stated and Vindicated. Being the Substance of several Discourses on the Important Subjects, Reduced into the Form of a Treatise* (London: Aaron Ward and H. Whitridge, 1731). As for a thorough study of the Trinitarian theology of Gill, see Steven T. Godet, “The Trinitarian Theology of John Gill: Context, Sources, and Controversy” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015).

satisfies the two criteria Brian Kay proposes for a model of biblical Trinitarian spirituality, “draw[ing] explicitly (and substantially) from the classic Trinitarian doctrine of the ancient formulations” and “mak[ing] use of the *historia salutis* as the lens through which the believer gazes upon and responds to such a Trinitarian God.”⁷ Together with her strong sense of assurance, Dutton’s Trinitarian spirituality aptly typifies the traditional Baptist understanding of the Trinity as “the foundation of all our communion with God and comfortable dependence upon him.”⁸ The sense of communion so permeates her Trinitarianism that the believers’ assurance, their dependence on the triune God, is no other than “comfortable” dependence.

Dutton’s Trinitarian spirituality with its focus on affectionate and assuring communion with the triune God will be examined primarily from her own writings and contextually from the Trinitarian controversies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of England. The latter provides the historical context of this dissertation. Whereas anti-Trinitarianism flared up both in the established church of England and among Dissenters, it was withstood by the Calvinistic Baptists, whose Trinitarian thoughts were reflected in Dutton’s works. As for her own writings, they will be considered comprehensively, ranging from her theological treatises to the more experiential writings of her spiritual autobiography, hymns and poetry, and letters on spiritual subjects. Except for the two manuscripts on the Lord’s Supper and baptism, the primary source of these works comes from the seven volumes Watson has edited,

⁷Brian Kay, *Trinitarian Spirituality: John Owen and the Doctrine of God in Western Devotion* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2007), 4. The organic unity of the doctrinal and practical facets of theology also conforms to Simon Chan’s proposal of “spiritual theology,” which seeks to show how our “understanding of God . . . affects our understanding of the nature and goal of the Christian life.” Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 19.

⁸*Second London Confession of Faith* (1689), 2:3. This experiential note on the doctrine of the Trinity was first added in the Congregationalists’ *Savoy Declaration* (1658) and later adopted by the Baptists. Compared with the doctrinal statement of the Trinity as laid out in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647), this adheres to the warm personal tradition of the *Heidelberg Catechism*.

Selected Spiritual Writings of Anne Dutton, which is referred to in this dissertations as *SSW*.⁹ These reprints by Watson have been reproduced “generally in the format and style of the original editions” with only a few “modernization of fonts and punctuation.”¹⁰ Compared with the dozen manuscripts available in the *Eighteenth Century Online Collection*, these modern reprints are highly faithful to the original published works.¹¹ For the sake of readability, the spelling, grammar, and typography of quotations from Watson’s edition will be further modernized except for the italics that Dutton used evidently for emphasis.¹² Covering a comprehensive range of Dutton’s writings, these seven volumes of Dutton’s works are sufficient proof of the communion and assurance emphases in her Trinitarian spirituality.

Finally, this dissertation is organized with a view to presenting Dutton as a woman and as a writer. For this purpose, her life as well as her writings will be examined in the historical context of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England. Following this introduction is a chapter of historical review of Dutton’s publications. Overall, it is a mix of appreciation and deprecation, but in the tendency of becoming more positive in recent decades. Chapter 3 presents a biographical sketch of Dutton, drawn primarily from her

⁹Watson seems to have arranged Dutton’s writings from a generic approach: vol.1: Letters; vol.2: Discourse, Poetry, Hymns, Memoir; vol.3: Autobiography; vol.4: Theological Works; vol.5: Miscellaneous Correspondence; vol.6: Various Works; and vol.7: Words of Grace. The two manuscripts provided by Michael A. G. Haykin are respectively her work on baptism, *Brief Hints Concerning Baptism: of the Subject, Mode, and End of this Solemn Ordinance* (London: J. Hart, 1746), and that on the Lord’s Supper, *Thoughts on the Lord’s Supper Relating to the Nature, Subjects, and Right Partaking of this Solemn Ordinance. Written at the Request of a Friend, and address’d by Letter to the tender Lambs of Christ. With a short Letter relating to it prefixed. By One who is Less than the Least of all Saints* (London: J. Hart, 1748).

¹⁰Watson, preface to *SSW*, 1: viii.

¹¹Occasionally there are transcribing errors, such as “wife,” which is “wise” in the original manuscript. See Dutton, *A Discourse Upon Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:18; cf. Dutton, *A Discourse upon Walking with God* (London, 1743), 40, *Eighteenth Century Online Collections*.

¹²Among other changes, this means decapitalization of many of the capitalized nouns and standardization of the past tense of verbs. Those that are capitalized for emphasis in the original works, such as the divine title of JEHOVAH, are italicized instead. For the sake of consistency, quotations from seventeenth or eighteenth-century writers will be likewise modernized.

spiritual autobiography and her letters, memoirs, and early biographies. The geographical mobility of her life correlates well with her spiritual development, which may be encapsulated in the four biblical images of the sinner, the sojourner, the servant of God, and the saint in her dying and death. Chapter 4 reviews the doctrine of the Trinity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in England, which constitute the historical context of this study. It reveals that this period not only saw the full eruption of anti-Trinitarianism in the established Church of England and among the Dissenters, but also witnessed ardent defense of the doctrine of the Trinity from some dissenting groups, such as the eighteenth-century Particular Baptists, to whom Dutton belonged.¹³

The next four chapters turn to Dutton's writings to examine her Trinitarian spirituality, which is her theology of the Trinity lived out in the believer's experience of God. Chapters 5 and 6 focus on Dutton's doctrinal Trinity, which is the theological ground of her experiential Trinity. Chapter 5 deals with "the immanent Trinity," the nature of the three persons of the Trinity, and Chapter 6 with "the economic Trinity," their distinctive and unified work in the economy of salvation. The essential divine nature of the three persons, their intra-Trinitarian communion, and their unalienable presence with/in the sinners are the foundations of their communion with God and dependence on him. The work of the Trinity follows largely the Reformed tradition of the tripartite division of the election of the Father, redemption of the Son, and particular application of

¹³In several of his articles, Michael A. G. Haykin argues for eighteenth-century England Particular Baptists' contribution to the doctrine of the Trinity. See Michael A. G. Haykin, "Glory to the Three Eternal,' Benjamin Beddome and the Teaching of Trinitarian Theology in the Eighteenth Century," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology (SBJT)*, 10, no.1 (Spring 2006): 72–84. Also, Michael A. G. Haykin, "Baptist Trinitarianism in the Long Eighteenth Century: Context and Issues with Particular Reference to the Thought of Andrew Fuller" (paper presented at the Alumni Academy of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, Fall, 2016). Besides Particular Baptists, Trinitarianism is also upheld among eighteenth-century Methodists as shown in the sermons and hymns by Charles Wesley. See Jason E. Vickers, *Invocation and Assent: The Making and Remaking of Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2008).

the Spirit with heightened sense of communion and assurance, especially in terms of the eternal covenant of redemption and the sealing of the Spirit.

After the doctrinal explications of the being and work of the Trinity come the two final chapters, which are devoted respectively to exploring believers' communion with God and their comfortable dependence on him. Chapter 7 presents Dutton's Trinitarian understanding of Christian communion with God from her work, *A Discourse Upon Walking with God*. It converges with the work of John Owen (1616–1683) on *Communion with the Triune God* in its Trinitarian and experiential emphases, but diverges from his in its practical orientations. The exclusive way of Christ they both recognized are applied to the sinner's salvation and spiritual growth in Dutton's *Discourse* and multiplied into the four ways of faith, providence, worship, and holiness, which are all derived from the way of Christ and common to Christian experience of God. Both the primary way of Christ and the four derivative ways will be illustrated from Dutton's spiritual autobiography and other pertinent works. Chapter 8 illustrates the practical use of comfortable dependence on the triune God in Dutton's epistolary counseling of the afflicted souls. Whether their afflictions spring from external life difficulties or internal spiritual trials, they are exhorted to rely on the sovereign grace and comfort of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

The concluding chapter summarizes Dutton's contributions to Trinitarian spirituality. Integrating doctrinal formulation of the Trinity with doxological invocation and practical experience, Dutton has above all salvaged the Trinity from the mayhem of theological controversies and restored it back to the heart of Christians' life as they commune with the Godhead and depend on him. Like Owen, Dutton's Trinitarian spirituality presents a viable and valuable example to weld the doctrine's importance for the Christian life with its theological formulations by fully exhibiting the vitality of the Trinity to the sinners' religious experience and assurance of salvation.

In the end, Dutton's contribution to the doctrine of the Trinity may be summarized by the tribute Jason E. Vickers pays to Charles Wesley (1707–1788) for his work:

It is true that Charles Wesley did not write a major work in systematic theology or even a technical treatise on the Trinity. But that does not mean that he did not help revive Trinitarian doctrine and piety in English Protestant theology. On the contrary, by engaging in theological reflection almost entirely in *sermons and hymns* [italics mine] Charles may have done more to preserve the Trinity than he could have by writing the technical kinds of treatises on the Trinity that were so common in his day. Indeed, Charles Wesley's contribution to modern theology may lie precisely in that he reminds us that theology's true home is in worship and prayer, its true task the work of praise and thanksgiving to God.¹⁴

Replace “sermons” with the more general term of “writings,” and the eulogy will fit Dutton to a tee.

¹⁴Vickers, *Invocation and Assent*, 189.

CHAPTER 2

ANNE DUTTON: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Oh, may the God of all grace in Christ accept it as a testimony born for him and his truth in the earth! May the Spirit of the Lord irradiate the minds of his people hereby, and bring much good to some souls; and may Jehovah's name have all the glory! . . . My dear brother, I beg the help of your prayers for a blessing upon this and all my poor books, which our gracious Father has brought forth in the exceeding riches of his kindness towards me through Christ Jesus.

—Anne Dutton, *Letters on Spiritual Subjects*

Before the Twentieth Century: Compliments

Admittedly, Dutton has not been entirely forgotten in history. Among her early admirers, George Keith published a posthumous collection of her letters in 1769 and wrote her earliest biography. In his *Memoirs of the Dealings of God with her, in her Last Sickness*, Keith praised Dutton for her competence “at both doctrinal, casuistic, and practical divinity” and noted that her conversion was “the most spiritual and profitable” according to his knowledge.¹⁵ Then, although not included in the first edition of *Memoirs of Eminently Pious Women* (1777) by Thomas Gibbons (1720–1785), Dutton made her way into this hall of fame in the second edition of 1804 by George Jerment. Its revised and enlarged edition of 1815 by Samuel Burder (1773–1837) recognized her as “a woman of considerable abilities and great attainments in the divine life.”¹⁶ In the fourth volume of *A History of English Baptists*, the evangelical Baptist pastor and historian

¹⁵George Keith, *Memoirs of the Dealings of God with her, in her Last Illness*, in Anne Dutton, *Letters on Spiritual Subjects, and Divers Occasions; Sent to Relations and Friends* (London, 1769). Keith's *Memoirs* was reproduced in *A Memoir of Mrs. Anne Dutton* by John Andrews Jones as “the account of ‘one who was an eye and ear witness of the whole’” in the last months of Dutton's life. John Andrews Jones, *A Memoir of Mrs. Anne Dutton*, in *SSW*, 2:79–109.

¹⁶For the various editions of this work, see Watson, introduction to *SSW*, 1: xi, n2.

Joseph Ivimey (1773–1834) also devoted several pages to Dutton, lauding her as “the celebrated Mrs. Anne Dutton” distinguished by “primitive piety and catholic charity.”¹⁷ Another admirer of Dutton was her early biographer and editor, John Andrews Jones (1779–1868). In both his preface and *A Memoir of Mrs. Anne Dutton*, he highly commended Dutton’s exuberant grace, “spiritual devotion and affection,” and called her “a great saint,” even “a true mother in Israel.”¹⁸

Notwithstanding some years of obscurity, this favorable view endured till the dawn of the twentieth century. The last positive evaluation before the century came from James Knight, the Southport Baptist minister. In 1884, when Dutton was nearly forgotten, Knight compiled and published her correspondences in *Selections from Letters on Spiritual Subjects Addressed to Relatives and Friends*. In the preface, he recommended Dutton as “an extraordinary woman, eminently taught of the Spirit, and possessing a depth of knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God far beyond what his children are generally favoured with.”¹⁹ Even though they recognized the literary crudeness of her poetry, these early biographers or editors of Dutton viewed her works rather favorably for their theological perspicuity and gospel piety.

Twentieth Century: Critiques

The twentieth century, however, witnessed some of the bitterest attacks on Dutton. In 1921, John Cudworth Whitebrook produced the definitive and yet “decidedly negative” portrayal of Dutton: *Anne Dutton: A Life and Bibliography*, though he

¹⁷Joseph Ivimey, *The Principal Events of the History of the Protestant Dissenters, During the Reign of George III. And of the Baptist Churches in London, with Notices of Many of the Principal Churches in the Country during the Same Period*, vol. 4 of *A History of the English Baptists* (London, 1830), 510.

¹⁸Jones, preface to Anne Dutton, *A Narration of the Wonders of Grace*,” in *SSW*, 2:77–78, 109.

¹⁹James Knight, preface to Anne Dutton, *Selections from Letters on Spiritual Subjects: Addressed to Relatives and Friends*, in *SSW*, 1:86.

corrected her maiden name to be Williams.²⁰ This negative tone was established in the very first paragraph of Whitebrook's biography:

The value attaching either to the career or the productions of Mrs. Anne Dutton is almost entirely due to the material they afford for literary research, respecting her various correspondents. Even so, the most valuable portions of her letters are the addresses and the dates. Her works of mystic piety are curious productions: but their strangeness is more interesting to the psychologist than to the divine; and chiefly to the psychologist who is engaged in that limited field of research which extends from an emotion betwixt religious morbidity, despair, and exultation, towards a borderland of alienism never overtrodden by the object of investigation. To such a student, Mrs. Dutton's career, her fevers, nerve-convulsions, marriages, separations, and the variations of her style with years, form a very useful object-lesson. For such an one, and for the use of persons who have to combat the dangers of ill-regulated enthusiasm, it is hoped that the following short sketch and bibliography may have more worth than the nature of its items would seem to promise.²¹

Dutton's personality, her works, and even her portrait were mercilessly derided. She was denounced as a religious mystic with "ill regulated enthusiasm," a poor writer of "unqualified doggerel," a controversialist pamphleteer with a sectarian and "tattling" spirit, and a "determined, . . . almost an inexpugnable correspondent" with George Whitefield (1714–1770).²² As for her personality, Dutton was judged upon her polemical treatises as morbid, vain, ignorant, aggressive, and divisive.²³ Even her only extant portrait was not spared of Whitebrook's diatribe, dismissed as betraying the very unspiritual "airiness" that characterized its mistress's religious and marital experiences.²⁴

Whitebrook's negative portrayal of Dutton was picked up by several later writers. William Thomas Whitley (1861–1947) followed him to view Dutton as "a good

²⁰Michael D. Sciretti Jr., "'Feed My Lambs': The Spiritual Direction Ministry of Calvinistic British Baptist Anne Dutton During the Early Years of Evangelical Revival" (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 2009), 13.

²¹John Cudworth Whitebrook, *Ann Dutton: A Life and Bibliography* (London: A. W. Cannon, 1921), 1.

²²Whitebrook, *Ann Dutton: A Life and Bibliography*, 2, 9–10.

²³But Dutton could be justified by her own words: "Disputes in religion, to advance error and destroy truth, are abominable; but disputes in religion for truth's sake, to advance the truth against error, are commendable and profitable." Dutton, "Letter 33," in *SSW*, 1:165.

²⁴Whitebrook, *Ann Dutton*, 6.

example” of “the censorious spirit” that plagued eighteenth-century Particular Baptists and prevented them from active evangelism. Portraying Dutton as a pamphleteer with unwarranted ambition and censorious spirit, Whitley derided her for criticizing “publicly the teachings of Whitefield, Wesley, Cudworth, and other evangelists” and for “aspir[ing] to be the Countess of Huntingdon of the denomination.”²⁵ Baptist scholar H. Wheeler Robinson (1872–1945) agreed with this criticism of Dutton’s “censorious” spirit: “Anne regarded her writings as a divinely directed means of evangelism, yet her spirit and attitude towards the great evangelists of the century is not unfairly described as ‘censorious.’” He concluded that “we are conscious of the narrowness and provincialism of her outlook, her misuse of Scripture as a Delphic oracle to confirm her own desires, the unpleasant sentimentality of her use of Canticles, her conspicuous egoism.”²⁶ Even in later twentieth century, echoes of Whitebrook could still be heard. Peter Naylor, in his book on the history of English Particular Baptists, depicted Dutton as one who “aspired to be a matriarchal figure within her own denomination” after “becoming the pastor’s wife at Gransden in 1732” and “spent the next thirty years in discharging a flood of largely biographical and critical pamphlets.”²⁷ Even though Naylor recognizes Dutton’s love of “the doctrines of grace” and readiness to acclaim even “certain Anglicans” who preached them, he feels compelled to “question why she felt able to maintain ongoing contacts with those who served in the Church of England” and cites Whitebrook to demonstrate their reluctance to correspond with her and even downright ignoring of her letter.²⁸

²⁵William Thomas Whitley, *A History of British Baptists* (London: Kingsgate, 1932), 214–15.

²⁶H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Life and Faith of The Baptists* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1946), 60.

²⁷Peter Naylor, *Picking up a Pin for the Lord: English Particular Baptists from 1688 to the Early Nineteenth Century* (London: Grace Publications, 1992), 58.

²⁸Naylor has quoted Whitebrook to demonstrate Whitefield’s reluctance to correspond with Dutton and Hervey’s total ignoring of her letter. Naylor, *Picking up a Pin for the Lord*, 58.

Among criticisms of Dutton, one particular charge was her hyper-Calvinism.²⁹ Robinson considered Dutton a fine specimen of “the perils and weaknesses” of hyper-Calvinism and spiritual lethargy, which had plagued eighteenth-century English Baptists.³⁰ This charge persisted into the second half of the twentieth century. Peter Toon listed Dutton as one of those that “assisted in the propagation [*sic*] of Hyper-Calvinism.” Her chief literary work *A Narration of the Wonders of Grace*, “which went through at least six editions . . . reflected the supralapsarian Hyper-Calvinism of Hussey and Skepp.”³¹ Raymond Brown, for another, took Dutton to be a quarrelsome correspondent and an evangelism-prohibitive hyper-Calvinist. She was quarrelsome in her relationship not only with John Wesley, but also with George Whitefield, who “was treated to some adverse comments as well as her more obvious Arminian opponents.” As for her alleged hyper-Calvinism, she was thrown in with John Gill and John Brine as the “trio.”³² But in

The reference can be found in Whitebrook, *Ann Dutton: A Life and Bibliography*, 10, 14.

²⁹Hyper-Calvinism arose in eighteenth-century England as reaction against the rationalization of orthodox theology. It has earned its name because its doctrines of no offer of gospel grace and no duty of faith are well “above” the theology of Calvin and orthodox Reformed or Puritan divines. It is defined by Peter Toon as “a system of theology, or a system of the doctrines of God, man and grace, which was framed to exalt the honour and glory of God and did so at the expense of minimizing the moral and spiritual responsibility of sinners to God.” Specifically, it “placed excessive emphasis on the immanent acts of God—eternal justification, eternal adoption and the eternal covenant of grace. In practice, this meant that ‘Christ and Him crucified’, the central message of the apostles, was obscured. It also often made no distinction between the secret and the revealed will of God, and tried to deduce the duty of men from what it taught concerning the secret, eternal decrees of God. Excessive emphasis was also placed on the doctrine of irresistible grace with the tendency to state that an elect man is not only passive in regeneration but also in conversion as well. The absorbing interest in the eternal, immanent acts of God and in irresistible grace led to the notion that grace must only be offered to those for whom it was intended. Finally, a valid assurance of salvation was seen as consisting in an inner feeling and conviction of being eternally elected by God.” Consequently, hyper-Calvinism “led its adherents to hold that evangelism was not necessary and to place much emphasis on introspection in order to discover whether or not one was elect.” Peter Toon, *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity, 1689–1765* (London, England: Olive Tree, 1967), 144–45. Another useful reference of hyper-Calvinism in Baptist history is by Peter Naylor, *Picking up a Pin for the Lord: English Particular Baptists from 1688 to the Early Nineteenth Century* (London, England: Grace, 1992), 145–66.

³⁰Robinson, *The Life and Faith of The Baptists*, 60.

³¹Peter Toon, *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity, 1689–1765* (London, England: Olive Tree, 1967), 149.

³²Raymond Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1986), 79.

view of Dutton's evangelical zeal and her cordial correspondence with prominent evangelical leaders such as Whitefield and Howell Harris (1714–1773), these charges could not be further away from truth.

Later Twentieth Century to Present: Corrections and Critical Evaluations

Despite residual critiques of Dutton, this skewed presentation of Dutton has been significantly rectified in the latter part of the twentieth century. It started with Stephen Stein's 1975 article, "A Note on Anne Dutton, Eighteenth-Century Evangelical."³³ When Stein discovered that it was Dutton, instead of Whitefield, who had written the *Letter to the Negroes*, he proceeded to retrieve her significance in the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival. Given all the constraints on women at that time, Stein concluded that "Dutton's career is striking evidence that despite such conventions and controls, one woman managed to exert substantial influence within evangelicalism during its formative period."³⁴ The two lenses of gender and evangelism, by which Stein viewed Dutton, came to be assumed by later writers. Susan [Durden] O'Brien had a brief note on Dutton in her study of the complex transatlantic letter-writing network that functioned during the early years of the Evangelical Revival.³⁵ Barbara J. MacHaffie employed an unmistakably feminist approach when she lauded Dutton's courage to overstep the social and vocational boundaries of women: "her experience of God's grace gave her a confidence in her worth and destiny which society could not shake."³⁶ Another

³³Stephen J. Stein, "A Note on Anne Dutton: Eighteenth-Century Evangelical," *Church History* 44, no.4 (December 1975): 485–91.

³⁴ Stein, "Note on Anne Dutton," 491. Derivatively, Stein suggests the possibility of "other unnamed women . . . equally active behind the scenes" of historical religious movements.

³⁵Diane Susan Durden [O'Brien], "Transatlantic Communications and Literature in the Religious Revivals, 1735–1745" (Ph.D.diss., University of Hull, 1978), quoted in Sciretti, "Feed My Lambs," 14.

³⁶Barbara J. MacHaffie, *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 84–85.

brief note of Dutton was on the “autobiographical subject,” which emerged from her spiritual autobiography in the context of gender and ideology in the eighteenth century.³⁷ Thus, following the lead of Stein, these writers invariably called attention to Dutton’s significance as a woman and as an evangelical.

With the arrival of the twenty-first century, Dutton’s importance has been more widely recognized and critically examined. She is appreciated as a spiritual writer and Baptist theologian in the works of Michael A. G. Haykin, JoAnn Ford Watson, Bruce Hindmarsh, Michael Sciretti, and others. Watson is justly considered “the person most responsible for reintroducing Anne Dutton’s works to twenty-first century readers.”³⁸ From 2003 to 2015, she edited and published Dutton’s works in seven volumes. As a fellow woman theologian, Watson’s achievement may well have a personal significance in that it highlights “women’s contribution to the service of Christ and his church” *now* and then [italics mine].³⁹

When it comes to reintroducing Dutton to the Baptists, however, Haykin takes much the credit. Out of his committed attention to the obscured people in the Baptist history, he has written several articles about Dutton’s spirituality and established her reputation as a competent Calvinistic Baptist theologian, spiritual writer, and ardent evangelical.⁴⁰ Dutton’s view of the Lord’s Supper, for example, “clearly reveals

³⁷Nussbaum notes that “Anne William Dutton’s *A Brief Account of the Gracious Dealings of God* was among the many imitations of Bunyan’s autobiography.” Felicity A. Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 64.

³⁸Sciretti, “Feed My Lambs,” 15.

³⁹In her 1998 article, Watson dedicates this article to Dr. Jerry Flora “with deep gratitude and thanksgiving in honor of his affirmation of women in ministry.” He is appreciated for “his support of women’s contribution to the service of Christ and his church.” JoAnn Ford Watson, “Anne Dutton: An Eighteenth-Century British Evangelical Woman Writer,” *Ashland Theological Journal* 30 (1998): 51–56.

⁴⁰Michael A. G. Haykin, “The Celebrated Mrs. Anne Dutton,” *Evangelical Times* (April 2001). This article is essentially reprinted in Haykin’s book, *A Cloud of Witnesses: Calvinistic Baptists in the Eighteenth Century* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Times, 2006). Also his lecture notes on “Anne Dutton (1692–1765) on the Lord’s Supper” present a biographical sketch of Dutton and compare her spiritual view of the Lord’s Supper with the Zwinglian memorial view which came to predominate in Baptist circles in the later eighteenth

Calvinistic Baptist piety at its best, that is, Christocentric and crucicentric” in contrast with the Zwinglian memorialist view, which has lamentably come to predominate among the Baptists since the late eighteenth century.⁴¹ Haykin’s acclaim is justified in that Dutton’s *Thoughts on the Lord’s Supper* is taken as representative of eighteenth-century evangelicals’ view of the ordinance by a recent book on evangelical spirituality.⁴²

Moreover, Dutton’s spiritual autobiography and letters are explored for their spiritual and theological significance. Dutton’s role as the spiritual director has been extensively examined by Sciretti, based upon her letters on spiritual subjects.⁴³ Her letters endorsing Whitefield’s Calvinism against the Arminianism of the Wesleys also revealed her to be “an insightful theological writer,” on whom the “Great Itinerant” “came to depend . . . to help strengthen his interdenominational Calvinistic cohort.”⁴⁴ As for her spiritual autobiography, Hindmarsh attempted “the first major attempt to begin a critical analysis” of Dutton’s spiritual autobiography in *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*.⁴⁵ Situated in the historical context, her conversion narrative illustrated Particular Baptists’ continuity and discontinuity with their evangelical contemporaries and Puritan

century. See Michael A. G. Haykin, “Anne Dutton (1692–1765) on the Lord’s Supper” (lecture, The Southern Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, Winter, 2014). Dutton also counted as one of the eight women of faith in his most recent book. See Michael A. G. Haykin, “Anne Dutton and her Theological Works: ‘The Glory of God, and the Good of Souls,’” in *Eight Women of Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 53–66.

⁴¹Haykin, “Anne Dutton (1692–1765) on the Lord’s Supper,” 14.

⁴²Tom Schwanda, ed., *The Emergence of Evangelical Spirituality: The Age of Edwards, Newton, and Whitefield* (New York: Paulist Press, 2016), 154–59. One letter by Dutton to Mr. W—T is also included in the fifth section of the book about “Love for God,” 197–98.

⁴³Sciretti, “Feed My Lambs.” This has been summarized in his recent article on Dutton: “Anne Dutton (1692–1765): Contemplative Baptist Spiritual Director Ministry,” in *Witnesses to the Baptist Heritage: Thirty Baptists Every Christian Should Know*, ed. Michael E. Williams Sr. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2015), 24–30.

⁴⁴Thomas S. Kidd, *George Whitefield: America’s Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 143.

⁴⁵Sciretti, “Feed My Lambs,” 16; D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

predecessors. This dynamic is encapsulated in a latest anthology of *Religion in Enlightenment England*, which selected Dutton's spiritual autobiography and Bunyan's as the two exemplary autobiographies.⁴⁶ While Dutton's autobiography testifies to "the reach of the paradigm of Christian experience that *Grace Abounding* had established," it also goes beyond it in her emotional responses to hymns and verses, which "yields invaluable insight into the ways that eighteenth-century Christians not only sang hymns but felt and lived them."⁴⁷ On balance, these authors have highlighted the significance of Dutton's spirituality and theology in the historical contexts of Puritans, Particular Baptists, and eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival.

In recent decades Dutton's roles other than spiritual director and Baptist theologian have also emerged in the current tides to reclaim Christian women's historical contributions to the church. She has been noted as a hymnist. Despite the literary mediocrity of her hymns and poems,⁴⁸ they are appreciated for their theological savvy.⁴⁹ One such theological discernment is Dutton's worship of the Trinity. In terms of her exuberant praise of the Trinity and her orthodox presentation of his nature and work, Dutton far surpassed her contemporary hymnist Anne Steele (1717–1778), the "all-time

⁴⁶Jayne Elizabeth Lewis, ed., *Religion in Enlightenment England: An Anthology of Primary Sources* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017).

⁴⁷Lewis, *Religion in Enlightenment England*, 379–80.

⁴⁸One of Dutton's early editors and admirers, John Andrew Jones recognized the apparent "inharmoniousness of her verse," but granted her hymns a place in the evangelical history of hymns for the gospel truth "shining in every page." John Andrew Jones, preface to *A Narration of the Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:78. Cynthia Y. Aalders uses Dutton as the foil to Anne Steele, and concurs with Jones about the literary inferiority and the doctrinal nature of Dutton's hymns. In the hymn she picks from Dutton's collection, "The Mystery of the Trinity Revealed in Christ," she criticizes Dutton for incorporating "the theologically-weighty word, 'Co-equal,'" . . . as to have "sacrificed elements of her art." Still, Aalders concludes that "while Dutton's hymns do not reveal the full glory of the eighteenth-century hymns, they do highlight the significance of doctrine in the work of many eighteenth-century hymn-writers." Cynthia Y. Aalders, *To Express the Ineffable: The Hymns and Spirituality of Anne Steele* (Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster, 2008), 55–57.

⁴⁹Janet Wootton, *This Is Our Song: Women's Hymn-Writing* (London: Epworth Press, 2010), 48, 51–53. Wootton's focus is on the rich biblical allusions and Christo-centrism of Dutton's hymns, not their literary and poetic achievements.

champion Baptist hymn-writer of either sex,⁵⁰ whose hymns are so crucicentric as to obscure if not totally obliterate the worship of the triune God. In this respect, Dutton's hymns made up for what Robert Letham laments "a paucity of hymnology that is clearly Trinitarian" since "the great outbursts of Trinitarian theology in the fourth and fifth centuries that filtered through the Middle Ages."⁵¹

Dutton is also marked as a capable biblical interpreter. In *The Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters*, she is recognized as "employing primarily a non-literal exegetical approach to Scripture" to apply the biblical passages to her experiences.⁵² This is well attested by her interpretation of "the Seven Last Verses of the Fifth Chapter of Solomon's Song" as "Hints of the Glory of Christ."⁵³ Essentially, her exegetical method may be indebted to Puritan typology, "a way of applying the Bible stories to the lives and experiences of individual readers,"⁵⁴ and may be further traced back to the coagulation of the allegorical and moral senses in the Medieval four senses of biblical exegesis.⁵⁵

Dutton's significance continues to be explored. She is important for studies of Baptist women with her defense of women's right to publish.⁵⁶ Her correspondence with Whitefield helps illustrate the tension of "the love-hate relationship between some

⁵⁰Hoxie Neale Fairchild, *Religious Trends in English Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 2:111.

⁵¹Robert Letham, "The Trinity and Worship," in *The Essential Trinity: New Testament Foundations and Practical Relevance*, ed. Brandon D. Crowe and Carl R. Trueman (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2017), 279.

⁵²Marion Anne Taylor and Agnes Choi, eds., *Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters: A Historical and Biographical Guide* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 173.

⁵³Anne Dutton, *Hints of the Glory of Christ; As the Friend and Bridegroom of the Church: From the Seven Last Verses of the Fifth Chapter of Solomon's Songs: In a Letter to a Friend*, in *SSW*, 4:1-66.

⁵⁴W. R. Owens, "John Bunyan and the Bible," in *The Cambridge Companion to Bunyan*, ed. Anne Dunan-Page (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 45.

⁵⁵Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, trans. Mark Sebanc, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1998).

⁵⁶David W. Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries: A History of a Global People* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 157-76.

Particular Baptists and evangelicals within the Church of England” and the negative effect of hyper-Calvinism on pastoral counseling.⁵⁷ In her master thesis “Anne Dutton: Eighteenth-Century Calvinist Theologian,” Joilynn Karega-Mason explores Dutton’s role as a Christian woman writer from rhetorical history and theory.⁵⁸ Dutton’s *A Letter to the Negroes Lately Converted to Christ in America* sheds light upon the historical studies of slavery.⁵⁹ While she showed genuine love for the salvation of slaves,⁶⁰ she never made the leap to the abolition of slavery as constrained by her historical context. Thus, the present day has witnessed a more comprehensive and critical evaluation of Dutton after she had suffered obscurity and objectionable critique for a great portion of the twentieth century.

Still, Dutton remains under-explored. In the first volume of Dutton’s works, Watson has pointed out that they are relevant to “women studies, Baptist studies, eighteenth century history, or spirituality.”⁶¹ But eight years after Sciretti wrote his dissertation, no other major scholarly works on Dutton has yet been attempted. To follow his step, this dissertation aims to explore Dutton’s Trinitarian spirituality in the religious context of eighteenth-century England. It offsets the all-too-dismal portrayal of Trinitarian controversies in the eighteenth century and demonstrates the practical vitality

⁵⁷Peter Naylor, *Calvinism, Communion and the Baptists: A Study of English Calvinistic Baptists from the Late 1600s to the Early 1800s* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2003), 66–67; 80.

⁵⁸Joilynn Karega-Mason, “Anne Dutton: Eighteenth-Century Calvinist Theologian” (M.A. thesis, University of Louisville, 2008).

⁵⁹Mark M. Smith, *Slavery in North America: From the Colonial Period to Emancipation* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009), 1:231–47.

⁶⁰In her spiritual autobiography, Dutton recorded the writing process of this *Letter*. She was discouraged from writing it by Satan, but was prodded on by evangelical zeal since her “bowels yearned toward” writing to the “poor negroes that were yet in *unbelief*.” Dutton, *A Brief Account of the Gracious Dealings of God, with a Poor, Sinful, Unworthy Creature, in Three Parts*, in *SSW*, 3:198–99.

⁶¹Watson, introduction to *SSW*, 2: xliv.

of the doctrine for Baptists in their experience of communion with God and assurance in him.

CHAPTER 3

ANNE DUTTON: A BIOGRACAL SKETCH

By giving me frequent communion, and sweet fellowship with himself, in his three glorious persons; in the infinite, free, full, unchangeable and eternal love of the Three-One God, displayed in and through the man Christ Jesus; as that which gloriously encompassed me in one eternal round. Thus highly was I favoured for many years.

—Anne Dutton, *Walking with God*

Introduction

Much of what has been known about Dutton comes from her own pen. Her spiritual autobiography, *A Brief Account of the Gracious Dealings of God, with a Poor, Sinful, Unworthy Creature in Three Parts*, and her correspondences are the two main sources of her life. Additional information is supplied by the few memoirs and biographies after her death. Given that spiritual autobiographers often adduce biblical metaphors and typologies to make sense of their life,¹ Dutton's life may be screened successively through the four biblical images of the sinner, the sojourner, the servant, and the saint.

The Sinner: The Salvation of Dutton

The first portrait of Dutton is that of a sinner. Born Anne Williams in 1692 in Northampton to godly Congregational parents, she was instructed “into the doctrines and

¹For example, John D. Barbour recognizes Augustine to be “the first writer to comprehend so broad and deep a range of personal experience in terms of biblical events and images.” He points out three predominant biblical typologies in Augustine's self-depiction: “the Prodigal Son's profligacy, Israel's wandering in the wilderness, and Paul's captivity to the flesh.” In Bunyan's case, he explores analogies between Bunyan and David, Solomon, Peter, Judas, Paul, and probably most hauntingly, Esau. John D. Barbour, *Versions of Deconversion: Autobiography and the Loss of Faith* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 14, 20.

worship of the gospel” at a young age.² Dutifully she attended worship services, memorized scriptures, and developed an early liking for the Psalms and hymns. But as she reflected later, even the most pious religious education failed to convict sinners of their sins or convert them to Christ.³ Wrongly she took the superficial trappings of external religiosity for a genuine interest in salvation. Before the Spirit pricked her heart and conscience with the word of God, Dutton was so triumphantly ignorant as to take comfort in her moral righteousness and even superiority.

It was around Dutton’s thirteenth year that the Lord started working “savingly” upon her heart.⁴ As in many Puritan conversion narratives, this encompassed essentially the two stages of conviction of her miseries and conversion to Christ’s mercy, borne out of her encounter with the word of God under the power of the Spirit. Like John Bunyan (1628–1688), she underwent a series of “deconversions” from her self-righteousness, which were characterized by “intellectual doubt, moral criticism, emotional suffering and disaffiliation from a community.”⁵ She became awakened to “*the plague of [her] heart,*” suffered emotional anguish and “a very dangerous illness,” harbored doubts about her election, her “*own interest* in electing grace,” and concealed her trouble from Christian

²Anne Dutton, *A Brief Account of the Gracious Dealings of God, with a Poor, Sinful, Unworthy Creature, in Three Parts*, in *SSW*, 3:6. So, she is sometimes addressed as Anne Williams Dutton.

³Dutton wrote in one letter about the futility of pious education in respect of convictions of sin and conversion to Christ: “But the most pious education that ever any person was favoured with, as in and of itself, never did nor can give such a spiritual conviction of sin, of heat-sin, as to make the soul cry out in the views of the uncleanness of its nature, in the light of the law’s spirituality, and of its own inability to help or save itself, Woe is me, for I am undone! Nor yet did the most pious education, as in and of itself, ever make Christ precious as the only and all-sufficient Saviour unto may [*sic*] one soul.” Dutton, “Letter 67,” in *SSW*, 1:277.

⁴Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:8.

⁵In his introduction, Barbour uses the term *deconversion* to mean “a loss or deprivation of religious faith,” which encompasses “intellectual doubt, moral criticism, emotional suffering, and disaffiliation from a community.” Dutton experienced all these four basic characteristics of deconversion from her delusion about self-righteousness. Bunyan’s *Grace Abounding* is taken as a classic example of Christian deconversion in the sense of “reconversion,” the “intensification” of his religious experience and commitment. He “loses faith not in God or Christ but in his or her own salvation.” Barbour, *Versions of Deconversion*, 2, 16–22.

friends and her family for fear of turning herself out “a hypocrite.”⁶ But her extremity turned out to be God’s opportunity. The Holy Spirit led Dutton to the cross of Christ and convinced her of God’s promise of salvation in John 6:37.⁷ Thus, even as Dutton’s conversion followed the Puritan path from self-righteousness, sense of conviction to faith in Christ, her account of it accented the prodding of the Spirit and the unified work of the triune God in salvation.

Conversion, however, did not warrant assurance. After savoring the initial manifestations of God’s grace, Dutton found herself vacillate between fear and faith. Her enjoyment of the Lord would easily give way to spiritual distresses when she was assaulted by blasphemous thoughts,⁸ or when God seemed hidden from her.⁹ To some extent, the believers’ spiritual affliction has been exacerbated by the Reformation emphasis on faith, which, though theologically certain, does not necessarily amount to psychological certainty.¹⁰ It becomes even more intriguing when the psychological certainty is mistaken as the pledge of theological certainty as had happened to Dutton. Driven by the precisianist strain of Puritan spirituality, which dictated continual

⁶Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:8–15.

⁷Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:21, 27. Scripture played a vital role in the conversion of Puritans. Owen C. Watkins defines “the Puritan way” as the Puritans’ effort to develop a personal relationship with God by “us[ing] Scripture and their own experience to throw light on each other.” Owen C. Watkins, *The Puritan Experience: Studies in Spiritual Autobiography* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 15. Hindmarsh notes that Dutton made the breakthrough in her conversion by appropriating the promise of John 6:37, which “often recurred as a note of encouragement in Calvinist autobiography.” D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 297.

⁸Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:23–25.

⁹The concept of hidden God is prominent in Luther’s theology and may be “Luther’s most important contribution to the tradition of the Christian doctrine of God.” Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther’s Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 217.

¹⁰ Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought* (Malden, MA.; Blackwell Publishing, 1999), 129.

“reconversions” rather than “rest[ing] smugly on faith attained,”¹¹ Dutton often plummeted into spiritual doubts when she could not sense God’s presence or his favor.

Still, these spiritual trials served the crucibles to refine Dutton’s faith into assurance. This came about by the word of God and the sealing of the Spirit around 1707.¹² God’s word played the dual roles of revealing the nature of her struggles and relieving her from them by his promise. As revealed in Rom 7, Dutton’s affliction was by nature “the mystery of *sin* and *grace*” (Rom 7), which inhered in the struggle between the new and old natures within the sinner.¹³ It rooted in her misplaced trust in her sensible experience of God rather than in the sure promise of God. This led Dutton to distinguish between “a direct act of faith” and “the reflex act of faith,” which was essentially staking her faith “upon the infinite truth and faithfulness of Christ’s word” rather than her own feelings or sensible experiences.¹⁴ On the part of the Spirit, he sealed Dutton’s assurance, which had been experienced and expounded by many Bible-loving Puritans.¹⁵ As “the

¹¹Barbour, *Versions of Deconversion*, 21–23. For critique of Puritans’ over-scrupulous spirituality and its hazards, see Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

¹²Bebbington points out that one divergence of evangelicals from their Puritan predecessors was their robust sense of assurance. David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 43–47.

¹³Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:23. Paul’s narrative here pertains to the post-conversion struggle of the new converts. For different interpretations of Paul’s struggles in Rom 7, see David Curtis Steinmetz, “Calvin and the Divided Self of Romans 7,” in *Calvin in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 110–21.

¹⁴Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:29

¹⁵See Joel R. Beeke, and Mark Jones, “The Puritans on the Holy Spirit,” in *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 419–22. Also Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1946). About the Puritan divines who stressed the sealing of the Spirit, see Adam Embry, *Keeper of the Great Seal of Heaven: Sealing of the Spirit in the Life and Thought of John Flavel* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011). Embry compares Flavel’s view on the sealing of the Spirit with that of Thomas Goodwin (1600–1680) and John Owen. He concludes that Goodwin held the immediate view, Owen likewise rejected that the sealing of the Spirit was experienced after regeneration while Flavel developed in his later life toward the post-conversion view as against antinomian torrents then. Sciretti believes Thomas Goodwin was the main influence on Dutton in her view of the sealing of the Spirit. See Michael D. Sciretti Jr., “‘Feed My Lambs’: The Spiritual Direction Ministry of Calvinistic British Baptist Anne Dutton During the Early Years of Evangelical Revival” (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 2009), 134–43. But as from Dutton’s own writings, her view of the sealing of the Spirit aligned more with the post-conversion stand. The Puritans who influenced her thoughts on this might not be limited to Goodwin since Flavel and

Holy Spirit of promise,” he seals the salvation of the saint with the word of God.¹⁶

Characteristically Dutton set the sealing work of the Spirit within a Trinitarian framework as the Father having promised salvation by the grace in his Son, which is then sealed by the Spirit upon the souls of God’s elect.¹⁷ Thus, both her salvation and assurance were built upon the work of the Trinity.

The Sojourner: The Life Moves of Dutton

The second biblical image of Dutton is that of a sojourner, characterized by her constant mobility on earth and ultimate hope in heaven. Dutton’s moves were largely ecclesiastical,¹⁸ revolving around the four ministers God brought to her life successively: John Hunt (d.1725), John Moore (1662–1725/6), John Skepp (1675–1721) and William Grant (d.1770). Although they all played their part in Dutton’s spiritual and theological formation, their influence was filtered through the Bible. Neither the paedobaptism of Hunt nor the hyper-Calvinism of Skepp seemed to have left enduring impact upon Dutton since she came to advocate believers’ baptism and engage herself actively in the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival. She also learned spiritual lessons from her two marriages, albeit in a hard way. They not only tore her away from her favored minister at the time, but both ended in the husbands’ untimely death: Thomas Cattell in 1719 and Benjamin Dutton (1691–1747) in 1747. Even though Dutton’s spiritual autobiography seemed to have followed the pattern Hindmarsh observed of many women

other Puritans were also quoted in her writings.

¹⁶Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:43.

¹⁷As Dutton stated, “About this time also, the Lord was pleased mightily to impress upon my heart, the great duty of taking God at his word, in the declaration of his grace in his Son; and likewise of crediting the Holy Ghost’s testimony to my soul in the word of promise: by means of which, I was enabled to resist the temptations I met with to cast away my confidence.” Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:28.

¹⁸Dutton made it clear that “the providences [she] chiefly intend to take notice of, are such that relate to [her] being planted in the house of the Lord, in order to [her] flourishing in the courts of our God.” Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:46.

autobiographers in being “structured around the men in her life,”¹⁹ these men were by no means the center or end of her life. Dutton the sojourner’s home was not on the earth; nor was her hope in any earthly man. Under God’s providence, Dutton was bound for a better home and an incomparably better husband of Jesus Christ. Thus, through the moves and losses of her life, Dutton lived out the actual progress of Bunyan’s allegorical pilgrim to the Celestial City.

The first of the several momentous moves in Dutton’s life was her transition from Hunt’s church at Castle Hill to the one gathered at College Lane under the ministry of Moore. After her conversion, Dutton was received into her parents’ congregation under the ministry of Hunt. Remembered as “a paedobaptist and a keen controversialist,” Hunt was held “partially responsible for a very peculiar disciple,” namely, Dutton.²⁰ But this “peculiar disciple” remembered Hunt’s influence more positively. She acknowledged to have often been “laid to the breasts of consolation and fed with the milk of the word [as] was suited to [her] *present state* [italics mine],”²¹ even though her restricting his influence to the present indicated her later divergence from Hunt in baptism and very probably, in Christology as well.²²

¹⁹Hindmarsh, *Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 298.

²⁰According to Whitebrook, John Hunt was “son of a minister ejected in 1662 from Sutton, Cambs,” “minister of Castle Hill Meeting-house from 1698 to 1709. He was a paedobaptist, and a keen controversialist. He died at Tunstead, Norfolk, on 15, September 1725.” John Cudworth Whitebrook, *Ann Dutton: A Life and Bibliography* (London: A. W. Cannon, 1921), 5–6. Dutton was not baptized on profession of faith until she became a member of College Lane under the pastorate of John Moore, which confirmed the paedobaptist position of Hunt. See H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Life and Faith of The Baptists* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1946), 56.

²¹Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:41.

²²Apart from her conviction of believers’ baptism, another possible reason for Dutton’s terse acknowledgement of Hunt might have to do with the influence of the treatise by Joseph Hussey (1650–1726) on the glory of Christ, which was “occasion’d by diverse notorious errors in the writings of Mr. John Hunt of Northampton.” She wrote excitedly about Hussey’s treatise: “The providence of God cast Mr. Hussey’s book, *The Glory of Christ Unveiled*, into my hands, which was abundantly blessed for my further instruction, confirmation, and consolation. I may say, concerning the doctrines of the gospel, which are there opened in such a glorious light, as the Apostle did to the believing Thessalonians . . . By means of which I was made to drink deeper into the freeness, fullness, eternity, and unchangeableness of God’s love, under the Spirit’s witness of personal interest.” Dutton, preface to *A Narration of the Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:110. As for Hussey’s refutation of Hunt’s view on the glory of Christ, see Joseph Hussey, *The*

Sometime after Hunt's removal, Dutton became dissatisfied with his successor, Thomas Tingey. She contended with him for the sake of some precious truths, though what these were precisely was not known for certain. Her contention would be justifiable as she later wrote in a letter that religious disputes were "abominable" if they were "to advance error, and destroy the truth," but would be "commendable and profitable" for the sake of "advanc[ing] truth against rising error."²³ After her protest came to no avail, Dutton left the congregation with several others and joined the open-membership Baptist church at College Lane gathered under Moore. But she had already demonstrated her courage in challenging authority for the sake of the gospel, which would resurface in her polemical treatises against the Arminianism of John Wesley (1703–1791) or the Sabellian insinuations of William Romaine (1714–1795).

This first move to the ministry of Moore, however, turned out to be a blessing to Dutton in more than one way. As a learned, pious, disciplinarian, and Calvinistic Baptist minister, Moore presided over the Northampton church for over twenty-five years until he died in 1726. Of these years the first twenty saw numerical increase, but the last five decline due to baptismal and communion controversies.²⁴ Still, Moore was remembered as "the first great pastor of College Street," whose pastorate added 264

Glory of Christ Unveiled, or the Excellency of Christ Vindicated in his Person, Love, Righteousness, &c. Being an Explication of the Mystery which was kept secret since the World began: Wherein the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity is manifested in the Glory-Man, Jesus: and that Christ's bearing the Filth of our Sin in his own Sufferings, was a Part of the Atonement he made to God for the Elect; set forth against the Socinian and Neonomian Triumphs, and against some other Cowardly Profession. . . . Occasion'd by divers Notorious Errours in the Writings of Mr. John Hunt of Northampton, and many other Writers, Preachers and Professours of the Gospel on most sides (London: J. and D. Bridge, 1706).

²³Dutton, "Letter 27," in *SSW*, 7:275.

²⁴John Moore was remembered as "a learned and enlightened minister of the gospel favored with a sound education, including a good knowledge of Hebrew and Greek." He was also noted as "first of all methodical, next a disciplinarian, an able preacher and careful adviser" who "stamped his individuality on the church." John Taylor, *History of College Street Church, Northampton: With Biographies of Pastors, Missionaries, and Preachers; and Notes of Sunday Schools, Branch Churches and Workers* (Northampton, England: Taylor & Son, Dryden Press, 1897), 6–7.

members to the church and led to the building of a chapel in College Lane.²⁵ It was at Moore's church that Dutton was baptized on profession of faith in 1713.²⁶ As for his spiritual nourishment, Dutton remembered endearingly with imageries from the Psalms,

The Lord Jesus, my chief shepherd, led me, by the ministry of his servant, Mr. M[oo]re, into fat, green pastures. The doctrines of the gospel were clearly stated, and much insisted on in his ministry. The sanctuary-streams ran clearly; and the sun shone gloriously. I was *abundantly satisfied with the fatness of God's house; made to drink of the river of his pleasures, and in his light I saw light*, Psa. xxxvi. 8, 9.²⁷

Upon his death, Moore seemed to have bequeathed some of his valuable divinity books to Dutton because many of the books found at the Gransden library after her death bore his "autograph" and thus very probably had been his property formerly.²⁸ It was also very likely that Moore was instrumental in Dutton's crossing paths with her next two ministers. John Skepp, her third minister, was the tutor of John Brine (1703–1765), who married the youngest daughter of Moore, Anne, and would succeed Skepp as minister at Cripplegate after his death.²⁹ At Moore's funeral, it was no other than her fourth minister, William Grant, who preached the sermon for the deceased minister.³⁰

The second move of Dutton was necessitated by her first marriage, which brought her to London under the ministry of Skepp. At age 22, Dutton married a Thomas

²⁵Taylor, *History of College Street Church, Northampton*, 13. Also see Earnest A. Payne, *College Street Church, Northampton: 1697–1947* (London: The Kingsgate Press, 1947), 12.

²⁶Robinson, *Life and Faith of the Baptists*, 56. To understand Dutton's mature thoughts upon baptism, see her treatise on baptism: *Brief Hints Concerning Baptism: of the Subject, Mode, and End of this Solemn Ordinance, in a Letter to a Friend, to Which Is Added, A Short Account, How the Author Was Brought to Follow the Lord in his Ordinance of Baptism* (London, 1746).

²⁷Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:47.

²⁸*The Christians Monthly Record* (1888), s.v. "John Moore (1662–1726)," in *Miscellanea Edintone: A Collection of Items on Nonconformity and Northamptonshire*, accessed on January 4, 2017, <http://www.edintone.com/baptists/john-moore/>.

²⁹Roger Hayden, *Continuity and Change: Evangelical Calvinism among Eighteenth-Century Baptist Ministers Trained at Bristol Academy* (Chipping Norton, UK: Nigel Lynn for Roger Hayden and the Baptist Historical Society, 2006), 188–89.

³⁰Taylor, *History of College Street Church*, 14.

Cattell. Except for his occasional business needs that tore her away from London and from Skepp's ministry, Dutton wrote scantily about him. He was "simply and vaguely described as 'a gentleman'."³¹ His death after five or six years into their marriage was noted in a similarly simple way as "being removed from her." But the brevity of her note did not mitigate the pain of her loss at the time. His death was "very trying" on her as if she were "smitten" by the Lord," leaving her "full of heaviness" with all things "look[ing] dark" around her.³²

Left a young and childless widow, Dutton was nevertheless not fruitless with respect to her spiritual nourishment under the ministry of Skepp. A staunch proponent of hyper-Calvinism, Skepp was considered as responsible for introducing it into Particular Baptist life, which drained the evangelical zeal of many eighteenth-century Particular Baptists before they were revived by the call of Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) for the free offer of the gospel.³³ But in view of Dutton's evangelical zeal, Skepp's hyper-Calvinism served to establish her in Calvinistic theology rather than to deny the free offer of the gospel.³⁴ In Dutton's own words, his influences consisted in his allegorical opening of

³¹Whitebrook was eager to point out that Dutton's autobiography "records no piety" of her first husband, writing off his life and death in a vague sense. Whitebrook, *Ann Dutton*, 6–7.

³²Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:63–64.

³³Skepp was said to be "the first Baptist minister to imbibe the new method of gospel preaching" so that he "would not persuade sinners to listen to the calls of the gospel, lest he should despoil God of the honor of their conversion." Peter Naylor, *Calvinism, Communion and the Baptists: A Study of English Calvinist Baptists from the Late 1600s to the early 1800s* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2003), 174–76. He had drunk hyper-Calvinism as a member at the Cambridge Congregationalist church of Joseph Hussey, who was seen as the Father of hyper-Calvinism. In his turn, Skepp influenced John Gill, who then converted John Brine to hyper-Calvinism. Roger Hayden also noted the origin and spiritual lineage of Skepp's hyper-Calvinism. He wrote that "it was through Skepp that Hussey's 'no offers of grace' theology entered Baptist thought." Among his disciples were John Brine and John Gill. The former was converted through Gill's preaching and succeeded Skepp as minister at Cripplegate after his death. As for Gill, Skepp co-ordained him with Noble on March 22, 1720. Gill became so close with Skepp that he "purchased most of Skepp's books when he died in 1721." Hayden, *Continuity and Change*, 188–89.

³⁴Or as Haykin comments, "If Anne did have hyper-Calvinist leanings, they were not so prominent as to prevent her from being deeply appreciative of what God was doing through men like Whitefield. Michael A. G. Haykin, "Anne Dutton and Calvinistic Spirituality in the Eighteenth Century," *The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth* 10, no. 6 (July /August 2002): 156. In one of Dutton's letters to John Wesley against his Arminianism, she contended that election did not inhibit evangelism: "The saints don't know who are elect, and who not, until electing

Scriptures, his powerful and affectionate preaching, and his full assurance of faith, which were all discernible in her writings.³⁵ In particular, the “efficacious operations of the Spirit of God” that Skepp emphasized in his *Divine Energy*, which was his only published work, were very much alive in Dutton’s conversion experience and writings.³⁶ In addition, Skepp’s impact resided in his correspondence with Dutton, which not only comforted and edified her during her absence, but also prepared her for a prolific epistolary ministry in the future.³⁷ Thus, Skepp’s positive spiritual influences on Dutton evidently outweighed any negative residuum that his hyper-Calvinism might have left upon her.

After the death of her first husband, Dutton returned to Northampton and resumed her communion with the church at Cripplegate. There she met Benjamin Dutton, an aspiring servant of God seeking tutorship from the minister. The two married about one year later.³⁸ The youngest son of a Baptist minister, Matthew Dutton (d. 1719), and

grace breaks up in the hearts of the vessels of mercy, converting them unto faith in Christ. And therefore they are to pray, for all men promiscuously: that God would send the gospel into all the dark corners of the earth, and convert all sorts of sinners unto faith in Christ.” Dutton, *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley in Vindication of the Doctrines of Absolute, Unconditional Election, Particular Redemption, Special Vocation, and Final Perseverance*, in *SSW*, 1:63.

³⁵Dutton compared Skepp’s preaching with Moore’s: “These two great servants of Christ, had different gifts by the same Spirit; And the ministry of both were greatly blest for my edification in the knowledge of Christ.” She marked out Mr. Skepp as “a man of deep judgment” who had “quickness of thought, aptness of expression, suitable affection, and a most agreeable delivery, every way suited to engage the attention of an auditory.” She also noted that Skepp “had a peculiar gift of *opening the Scriptures*, one text by another” and he “delighted to set forth heavenly things by earthly; his ministries abounded with similes.” Later when away from Skepp’s ministry, she remembered that he “was filled with *the Spirit of adoption*; and in full assurance of faith, he had freedom of access unto God in Christ.” Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:51, 55.

³⁶Jones deemed Skepp “a most excellent servant of Christ.” He especially commended Skepp’s only published work, *Divine Energy; or the Efficacious Operations of the Spirit of God upon the Soul of Man in Effectual Calling and Conversion* to be “a most blessed book” much needed by his time when the Spirit’s work in regeneration and conversion was much run down. Jones, *A Memoir of Mrs. Anne Dutton*, in *SSW*, 2:88n. For Skepp’s influence upon Dutton on the work of the Spirit in the sinner’s conversion, see Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:50–64.

³⁷Dutton’s spiritual autobiography included one of her letters in reply to Skepp’s letter, where she acknowledged its usefulness to her faith. Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:55–59.

³⁸In his spiritual autobiography, Benjamin Dutton recorded that he married Anne when he was 28, which made the year of their marriage either 1719 or 1720. Benjamin Dutton,

an apprentice to a clothier, Benjamin's conversion experience echoed Bunyan's from total depravity to total dependence upon God and eventually to total surrender to God's call to ministry.³⁹ But different from Bunyan, Benjamin had the benefits of theological education at several places, including the College of Glasgow.⁴⁰ Also whereas Bunyan was tormented by spiritual doubts, the main cause of Benjamin's spiritual afflictions was his chronic alcoholism. In the third part of his autobiography about his "trials and afflictions through the prevalence of sins and the temptations of Satan," he identified alcoholism as "the sin that had overtaken [him] and did most easily best [him]."⁴¹ In the end, the evil of chronic alcoholism was overcome by his theological conviction, his very trust in the Trinitarian Godhead, Jehovah the Father, Jehovah the Son, and Jehovah the Spirit:

In this Jehovah will I trust: in Jehovah the Father will I trust: as the God of love, the God of all grace, the Father of all mercies, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and my God and Father in and through him. In Jehovah the Son will I trust, who is the eternal son of the eternal God, of the same nature and essence with him; who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, even eternally so. . . . And in Jehovah the Holy Spirit will I trust: who is equally and eternally the same in his

The Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God's Free Grace, Towards the Chief of the Chief of Sinners: Shewn forth in the Lord's gracious Dealing with that Poor, Unworthy, Hell-deserving Worm, Benjamin Dutton: Minister of the Gospel, and Pastor of a Church of Christ, at Great Gransden, Huntingdonshire (London: J. Hart, 1743), 129.

³⁹As H. G. Tibbutt aptly observed, "both in title and content," Benjamin Dutton's spiritual autobiography "bears a strong resemblance to Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, though it is more generous with biographical details." H. G. Tibbutt, "Mrs. Dutton's Husband," *Bedfordshire Biographies* 38 (Autumn 1965): 65.

⁴⁰After he decided to leave the clothier trade for ministry, Benjamin first went to be tutored by Mr. Isaac Robinson, a Presbyterian minister at Chesham in Buckinghamshire and later continued his theological training at several other places. Dutton, *Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God's Free Grace*, 74–75. The effect of Benjamin Dutton's theological training was clearly shown in his autobiography when he wrote pointedly of the Trinitarian controversies in his time in the preface: "Natural religion, and carnal reason, the freedom of man's will, and the power of the creature are advanced. . . . Arianism, Socinianism, Sabellianism, Deism, and Pelagianism are much increased. . . . Old errors and heresies, are freshly brought up, in a more subtle, refined, and deceivable manner than ever." Dutton, *Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God's Free Grace*, iv. One minister that Benjamin indicted to have fallen prey to the old errors and heresies was none other than James Peirce (1674–1726), the man catalytic to the Salters' Hall controversy in 1719. Benjamin rightly observed that Peirce had shifted from being a Dissenter to a Baxterian and eventually to an Arian. Dutton, *Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God's Free Grace*, 26.

⁴¹Dutton, *Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God's Free Grace*, 80.

nature and essence, with the Father and the Son, and as to his personality, proceeding from both. In him I say, in Jehovah the Holy Spirit will I trust; as my sanctifier, guide and comforter forevermore. In this almighty Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit, as one God, and my God, will I trust: unto him be all glory for ever and ever, Amen.⁴²

His victory over alcoholism through trust in the Trinity was an apt illustration of what Anne would propose in her epistolary counseling for the afflicted souls: comfortable dependence on the triune God.

After their marriage, the next move Anne was considering was to Wellingborough. Her heart was drawn there because of William Grant, the fourth minister in her spiritual development who was by far “her favorite cleric and spiritual mentor.”⁴³ Grant labored at the Baptist church at Wellingborough for forty-seven years before he died in 1770. His ministry had been so effective that the meeting house was enlarged in 1726. He was a popular preacher. John Newton (1725–1807), the well-known Anglican minister at Olney, commented that “a more excellent sermon I have never heard” after he visited the Olney Baptist Church to hear Grant preach in 1763.⁴⁴ Anne was so attached to Grant that she prayed earnestly for him when he was critically ill, and corresponded frequently with him, where she often poured out her heart to him.⁴⁵

Much to her frustration, however, the Duttons’ move was delayed about one

⁴²Dutton, *Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God’s Free Grace*, 90–92. He also summarized the distinctive offices of the triune God: “The mighty Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit, the Father, with all his love, the Son with all his grace and fullness, the Spirit, with all his graces and comforts.” Dutton, *Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God’s Free Grace*, 126.

⁴³*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “Dutton, [née Williams] Anne” (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 422. This is supported by Dutton’s excessive anxiety over Grant’s illness and her frequent correspondence with him.

⁴⁴Baptist Union of Great Britain, Faith and Unity Executive Committee, and Council for Christian Unity, *Pushing at the Boundaries of Unity: Anglicans and Baptist at Conversation* (London: Church House, 2005), 14.

⁴⁵Whitebrook remarked that Dutton enjoyed spiritual friendship with Grant in addition to receiving spiritual benefits from him. Whitebrook, *Ann Dutton*, 7. As for some examples of Dutton’s correspondences with Grant, see Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:106–7. In one letter, she acknowledged his kindness to send her the letter, by which she was “refreshed.” In another letter, she expressed her gratitude for his spiritual friendship: “I thank you for your letter, I take it kindly, and look upon it as a part of Christian friendship, that you will hold this kind of communion.”

year at Northampton after the couple had already sold their house. When Anne finally made her home at Wellingborough, which was her “Promised Land,” they were compelled to follow Benjamin’s ministry call to Whittlesey,⁴⁶ which she deemed nothing less than an “exile” to the wilderness. For nearly two years, Benjamin ministered to the people at Wittlesea, who could afford the couple only half of their subsistence needs, and every two weeks he walked to serve those at Wisbich, which was twelve miles away, to make up the cost.⁴⁷ But the couple were obliged to return to Wellingborough because the air of that “fenny country” did not suit the wife’s weak constitution.⁴⁸ As she recorded, she suffered some of her acutest physical illness in addition to spiritual afflictions. They stayed in Wellingborough for another three years before Benjamin was called to pastor the Baptist church at Great Gransden. But before this final move, Anne’s life and faith as a sojourner had already been tested to the utmost during the two years of “exile” at Whittlesey with all her thwarted desires and physical difficulties.

Consequently, the move to Gransden seemed not too difficult. What Benjamin registered in this move was Anne’s commitment to serve the Gransden people, which was built upon her love for them and the promise she received from the Lord. Her heart was so “inclined” and “cleaved” to the poor people at Gransden that it was not moved by the generous pay offered to Benjamin by a people near London, which doubled that promised by the Gransden church.⁴⁹ This commitment was confirmed by Anne’s own words:

And as for myself, though I had for some time laid aside thoughts of removing; yet when the Lord renewed the call of providence and seemed about to call me to an actual resignation of what he had before made me willing to give up: I was, through his hand holding my heart, still of the same mind; *willing* to resign whatever *he* called for, and to go at his bidding. And as for the people, the Lord having put them

⁴⁶In Benjamin Dutton’s autobiography, it was spelled as “Wittlesea.” Dutton, *Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God’s Free Grace*, 130.

⁴⁷Dutton, *Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God’s Free Grace*, 130.

⁴⁸Dutton, *Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God’s Free Grace*, 130.

⁴⁹Dutton, *Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God’s Free Grace*, 132–33.

into my heart, I found bowels of compassion afresh working in me towards them. A desire to serve them, and a kind of natural care for their good, which made me *willing* to venture a remove, with my dear yoke-fellow, to dwell among them.⁵⁰

Her commitment was from the call of God and out of her volition. The couple moved to Gransden on June 27, 1731. The next year, they were received into the church communion and soon Benjamin's call was renewed, and he ordained.⁵¹

The Servant: The Publications of Dutton

Great Gransden proved a fruitful place not only in terms of Benjamin's ministry, but also the religious publications of Anne. Benjamin's ministry was blessed "to the edification of the Church," both winning new converts and strengthening old saints' faith.⁵² It guided the church to transition from the congregational polity to a strict Baptist one.⁵³ In a few years, the Lord so blessed his labors that the number of church members "were more than doubled."⁵⁴ It "numbered anywhere between 250 and 350," which led to the building of a new meeting house in 1734.⁵⁵

On Anne's part, it was at Great Gransden that she started to publish religious tracts, which was her calling to serve the Lord. Starting from 1734 when she published her religious poem, *Narration of the Wonders of Grace*, she would eventually go on to publish more than sixty works, which made her one of the most prolific, if not *the* most prolific woman writer of the eighteenth century.⁵⁶ Despite critiques of her and her works,

⁵⁰Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:146–47.

⁵¹Dutton, *Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God's Free Grace*, 133.

⁵²Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:153.

⁵³For a brief history of the development of the Baptist church in Gransden, see H. Goredon Tibbutt, "Pattern of Change," *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society* 20, no.5 (1965–1970): 170–73.

⁵⁴Dutton, *Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God's Free Grace*, 135.

⁵⁵Michael A. G. Haykin, "Anne Dutton (1692–1765) on the Lord's Supper," 12. Percy C. Tomson noted that in 1734 Benjamin undertook to build a new meeting house "for the use of the denomination of Protestant Dissenters known as Particular Baptists." Percy C. Tomson, "The Baptist Chapel," in *A History of Great Gransden*, ed. Arthur Jonathan Edmonds (St. Neote, England, 1892), chap. 15.

⁵⁶Haykin considers Dutton "clearly the most prolific female Baptist author of the

they have been greatly used by God in the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival. Many of her letters on spiritual subjects opened with her joyful gratitude for the usefulness her correspondents had found in her writings. In particular, the evangelical Methodists or Anglicans were blessed by her works.⁵⁷ Harris, for one, recognized that the Lord had entrusted Dutton “with a talent of writing for him,” so he encouraged and arranged the publication of her writings for the evangelical cause.⁵⁸ William Seward (1702–1740), the first Methodist martyr, wrote in one of his letters to Dutton about “providentially” reading one of her letters to him in May 1739, which was “full of such comforts and direct answers from what [he] had been writing that it filled [his] eyes with tears of joy.”⁵⁹ Even John Wesley read her works and replied to her letters, though they became irreconcilable concerning his doctrines of election and perfection.⁶⁰ With Whitefield the great Evangelist, Dutton enjoyed more cordial correspondence.⁶¹ Whitefield noted that

eighteenth century.” Haykin, “Anne Dutton (1692–1765) on the Lord’s Supper,” 13. Sciretti, eschewing the absolute tone, makes a similar observation about Dutton’s prolificacy: “At the time of her death, Anne Dutton had become one of the most prolific female writers in the eighteenth century, Baptist or otherwise.” Sciretti, “Anne Dutton (1692–1765),” 27. In the entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Anne Dutton was recognized as “perhaps the most theologically capable and influential Baptist woman of her day” even though she was at times “vain, pretentious, ambitious, and verbose” and her hymns were recognizably inferior in poetic sensibility and harmony. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “Dutton, [née Williams] Anne” (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 422–23.

⁵⁷Dutton wrote that the Lord has “opened a door for me to write many *letters to the Methodists*; and likewise *blest them to many souls*.” Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:167. Also see Arthur Wallington, “Wesley and Anne Dutton,” *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 11, no.2 (June 1917), 43–48.

⁵⁸Haykin, “Anne Dutton and Calvinistic Spirituality in the Eighteenth Century,” 157.

⁵⁹Wallington, “Wesley and Anne Dutton,” 47.

⁶⁰Wallington, “Wesley and Anne Dutton,” 43–48. Dutton was critical of Wesley’s Arminian theology and his theology of perfection, but she concurred with him on the pernicious effects of the Moravians’ doctrine of stillness. For Dutton’s refutations of Wesley’s theology, see Dutton, *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley in Vindication of the Doctrines of Absolute Election, Particular Redemption, Special Vocation, and Final Perseverance*, in *SSW*, 1:37–84; also Dutton, *Letters to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley Against Perfection*, in *SSW*, 3:5–36. As for Dutton’s treatise against the Moravians’ doctrine of stillness, see Dutton, *Thoughts on Some of the Mistakes of the Moravian Brethren*, in *SSW*, 6:207–28.

⁶¹The friendship between Whitefield and Dutton could be illustrated by the fact that upon the tragedy of Benjamin, it was none other than the great evangelist who broke the news to her. In a letter dated October 25, 1747, Whitefield wrote to Anne: “Mr. Dutton, I believe, is lost in his return to England. The ship floundered.” In Letter 36, Dutton quoted some of Whitefield’s words which illustrated his considerateness and sympathy for her: “I think he put in ‘probability’

her book of *Walking with God* “has been useful to [him] and blessed to others in South Carolina.”⁶² He advertised Dutton’s works in the evangelical paper, *The Weekly History*, where he also published her letters to Wesley in 1741–1742. After he visited Dutton at Gransden, Whitefield told Jonathan Barber at Bethesda that “her conversation is as weighty as her letters,”⁶³ a high praise of Dutton in its allusion to the power of Paul’s writings (2 Cor 10:10).

Now as to the sources that nurtured this theological competence in Anne, they were by no means certain. Still, some possibilities may be deduced from her writings, experience, and the historical context of her life. One such source was probably the religious education she had received at home and church. The pious education provided by her godly parents not only cultivated her knowledge of the Bible, but hymns and pious books. *The Penitential Cries* by Thomas Shepherd (1665–1739) and an anonymous book about “the happiness and glory of the saints in heaven” had been among the means of her conversion.⁶⁴ At the churches she attended, she remembered being nurtured in gospel faith by the preaching, teaching, and personal correspondence of her ministers. Sometimes she might even have benefited from the minister’s personal library. John Moore, for example, seemed to left some of his divinity books to Dutton after his death, which she would certainly have made a good use of since she was convinced that even though “the Bible . . . is indeed the book of books, and ought to be our chief study,” Christians should not “reject other books, or neglect the reading of those written by men,

to prevent my too great surprise at the first mention of it, as throughout his letter he writes to me as a widow, and says, ‘Your husband was the Lord’s servant; no doubt he is at rest. I heard him pray a little before he embarked. This is, indeed, a heavy stroke, but Omnipotence can enable you to bear it.’” Dutton, “Letter 36,” in *SSW*, 1:179–80.

⁶²Wallington, “Wesley and Anne Dutton,” 45.

⁶³Haykin, “Anne Dutton and Calvinistic Spirituality in the Eighteenth Century,” 157.

⁶⁴Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:16–18.

taught of God, and mighty in the Scriptures.”⁶⁵ Besides ministers, theological conversation with fellow believers at church might also have sharpened her theological acumen. The fact that Dutton left the first church with several other women, who shared her discontent with the minister over gospel truth implied the existence of believers’ fellowship, where theological and ecclesiological issues might well have been discussed and exchanged. This fellowship did not have to be formal or gender exclusive. Her husband Benjamin remembered to have been so deeply impressed by “her Christian discourse” the first time he was in her company with other friends that he believed “she would make a brave minister’s wife.”⁶⁶

It was probably Benjamin that constituted another source of Anne’s theological competence. The future minister had been well-trained in theology and seemed well-read in divinity books. Besides the religious education he received at home as the son of a Baptist minister, he also benefited from the religious society of his church. The young men’s society he joined when at the Presbyterian church of James Peirce (1674–1726) gathered every week to learn the Assembly’s *Shorter Catechism*, Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the five books of Moses, the book on prayer by Bishop John Wilken (1614–1672), and others.⁶⁷ When Benjamin finally decided to enter ministry, he was sent by his father to be trained for ministry with several ministers and at several non-Conformist academies.⁶⁸ At his father’s death, Benjamin was bequeathed in his will five pounds annually for the outspoken purpose of buying divinity “books” as well as

⁶⁵Dutton, “Letter 33,” in *SSW*, 7:291.

⁶⁶Dutton, *Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God’s Free Grace*, 129.

⁶⁷Benjamin Dutton was held off from James Peirce Presbyterian church by his conviction of believer’s baptism by immersion as well as by his dislike of Peirce “Baxterian” tendency and his preaching of morality, not Christ. But he joined the “Baxterian” church nevertheless mainly of the fellowship he enjoyed at this young men’s society of the church. Still, Benjamin demonstrated his theological integrity by asking to be baptized by immersion, to which Peirce consented. Dutton, *Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God’s Free Grace*, 69

⁶⁸Dutton, *Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God’s Free Grace*, 74–75.

clothes.⁶⁹ Considering the outpourings of Dutton’s religious treatises from Gransden, it would not be too far-fetched to presume that she had capitalized on the theological knowledge, ministry experience, and divinity books of her husband. In fact, several of his observations in the only treatise he published were reflected in Anne’s works, such as the decline of the doctrine of the Trinity, his sole concern for the glory of God, and his evangelical and edifying use of the treatise. One of his statements concerning the corruption of the doctrines of the Trinity and of Christ was even quoted verbatim by Anne: “And if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?”⁷⁰

Explicitly, Anne credited her writings and publications to the sovereign grace of God. It was the Lord who had “given [her] a heart, an opportunity, and outward call, and inward inclination, to write and publish many little tracts.”⁷¹ The God-given opportunity that opened ways for her publication included her friendship with such prominent evangelical leaders as Whitefield and Harris.⁷² Whereas Whitefield’s evangelical revivals and magazine provided the avenue for her publications, her writings were enlisted to “strengthen his interdenominational Calvinist cohort” against the Wesleys’ Arminianism.⁷³ In a more general sense, the opportunities to publish were linked to the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century, which gave women a degree of freedom and created demands for evangelical publications. Bebbington, for example,

⁶⁹Dutton, *Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God’s Free Grace*, 128.

⁷⁰ Dutton, *Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God’s Free Grace*, 4. This appeared in one of Anne’s letters, though she seemed to have mistakenly added a “t” to “can”: “And if the foundations (of three persons in one nature, in one God, and of two natures in one person, in the person of Christ), are thus destroyed, what *cant* [*sic*] the righteous do?” Dutton, “Letter 74,” in *SSW*, 1:302.

⁷¹Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:154.

⁷²For the influences of Whitefield and Harris in promoting Dutton’s works and their later reservations about her polemical writing as a woman, see Stephen J. Stein, “A Note on Anne Dutton: Eighteenth-Century Evangelical,” *Church History* 44, no.4 (December 1975), 488–91.

⁷³Thomas S. Kidd, *George Whitefield: America’s Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 143

notes a larger role had been granted to women by the Evangelical Revival before the Victorian concept of a “separate sphere” set in to confine them to the domestic role in the nineteenth century.⁷⁴ Or as Thomas Kidd remarked, “It should be kept in mind that while some observers have painted evangelicalism as misogynistic, most modern historians realize that even without access to formal pastorates, many women found revivalism spiritually and socially satisfying.”⁷⁵ To a great extent, God provided Dutton with what the Chinese wisdom has listed as the three main factors for success: favorable timing, geographical location, and human relations (天时地利人和). In light of Scripture, it testifies to the revealed truth that “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor 3:17).

Still, Dutton had to fight hard for the right to publish against all the external critiques against her as a woman Baptist and internal doubts. As recorded in many of her journal entries in the spiritual autobiography, Dutton wrestled constantly with her doubts about God’s approval of her writings and about their usefulness. She often took great pains to seek God’s will and would not rest until assured by his promise. At the same time, Dutton was confronted with external accusations for her publications, which apparently violated both the biblical strictures against woman teaching and the social decorum of eighteenth-century England, which “defined [women’s writing] as a threat to

⁷⁴Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries*, 65, 157–75.

⁷⁵Thomas S. Kidd, *George Whitefield: America’s Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 144–45. The social ban on women writings may have been lifted, though to a limited degree, when they proved useful for evangelism. Helen M. Jones, “A Spiritual Aristocracy: Female Patrons of Religion in Eighteenth-Century Britain,” in *The Rise of Laity in Evangelical Protestantism*, ed. Deryck W. Lovegrove (New York: Routledge, 2002), 86. Still another change brought about by the Evangelical Revival which was conducive to women publication was the development of the publication industry. As Susan O’Brien remarked, the 1740s, the years when Dutton made a name for herself as a religious writer coincided with the time that “marked the key transitional decade between an older informal face-to-face publishing world and a more integrated market with new trade strategies.” Susan O’Brien, “Eighteenth Century Publishing Networks in the First Years of Transatlantic Evangelicalism,” in *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700–1990*, ed. Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George A. Rawlyk (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 38–57.

the existing social order.”⁷⁶ Among others, the bulk of her opponents probably came from her fellow Particular Baptists, who held to a restrictive view of women’s role in ministry. John Gill, for example, interpreted biblical passages such as 1 Timothy 2:12 as prescribing that women “may teach in private, in their own houses and families,” but “not to teach in the church” or “feed the church with knowledge and understanding,” which “is to usurp an authority over the man.” In addition, many eighteenth-century Particular Baptists had so internalized hyper-Calvinism that their hostility toward her publications might well have been aggravated by her evangelical zeal and her association with the great evangelicals. This external opposition mounted when Benjamin died to the sea in 1747 on his way back to England since he had sailed to America to raise funds to pay off the debts accrued at the erecting of the new meeting house and at the same time, to promote his wife’s treatise there. Despite Dutton’s insistence on the former being his chief mission, it was taken as a “ludicrous” “pretext,” with which Mrs. Dutton “seems to be satisfied . . . to the day of her death.”⁷⁷ Now that “the money reached its destination in safety, but the poor minister was fated never to see Gransden again,”⁷⁸ Dutton found herself hard put to defend her writing ministry even as she was grieving over his death.

Defend she did. Dutton identified herself as God’s servant and publication as his calling. Despite the social stigma of infertility, she unabashedly called herself “the barren woman,” who was yet chosen “to *keep house*” for God and “be a joyful mother of

⁷⁶In the eighteenth century, women’s writing was “defined as a threat to the existing social order, figured at its most extreme as a loss of chastity, a transgression of the very basis of acceptable femininity” and hence thwarted. Vivien Jones, ed., *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 140.

⁷⁷Whitebrook declared confidently that Benjamin Dutton “had gone in 1743 to sell his wife’s tracts” and dismissed his other mission in America as the “ludicrous” pretext made by the wife. John Cudworth Whitebrook, *Ann Dutton: A Life and Bibliography* (London: A. W. Cannon, 1921), 12.

⁷⁸Tomson. “The Baptist Chapel,” chap. 15.

children,”⁷⁹ namely, the mother of her books.⁸⁰ Instead of detracting from her worth, her infertility revealed to her “divine kindness in that freedom from worldly encumbrances.”⁸¹ Whereas her writing might appear “unwomanly” and conceited in the eyes of the world, she was actually the humble servant of God, who considered her own name as “less than nothing and vanity,”⁸² his obedient servant, who accepted writing as “a divine vocation to which she was called,”⁸³ and his dutiful servant, whose sole end in publications was “*only* [italics mine] the glory of God, and the good of souls.”⁸⁴ Even her ill health was overcome by this desire for the “service to the cause of Christ.”⁸⁵

Even more memorably, Dutton defended her publications with the public and the private divide. She argued that her publications fulfilled the biblical mandate for

⁷⁹Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:194.

⁸⁰Dutton admitted that “long have I looked upon my poor *books* as my *children*, by which I hoped to serve and glorify God.” As regards all the travails she endured in order to publish her books, Dutton compared herself with the woman in birth pangs in the book of Revelation. Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:205. In her correspondence, she also underscored the private nature of publishing and justified its fulfillment for the Christians’ duty to edify one another: “No teaching or preaching Christ is forbidden to private Christians but that which peculiarly refers to the ministry of the Gospel, or the public ministration thereof in the church. All other ways of preaching Christ and his truths to all, are duties incumbent upon all believers. And printing, Sir, is a private way of the saints’ instructing, comforting, and edifying one another. Private it is with respect to the Church, although public with regard to the world.” Dutton, “Letter 16,” in *SSW*, 1:124.

⁸¹Robinson, *Life and Death of the Baptists*, 55.

⁸²Dutton, “Letter on the Vanity and Iniquity of Spiritual Pride,” in *SSW*, 1:219.

⁸³Dutton was convinced of her writing to be the divine calling so that “all of her writing was infused with a sense of wonder at the transformation God had carried out in her life and a sense of obligation to open this experience to others.” Barbara J. MacHaffie, *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 85.

⁸⁴Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:254. This was also the first justification she defended her publications to “such of the servants of Christ, who have any scruple about the lawfulness of printing anything written by a woman:” “First, I beg leave to assure you that my design in publishing what I have written, was only the glory of God, and the good of souls.” Dutton, *A Letter to Such of the Servants of Christ, Who may Have Any Scruples about the Lawfulness of Printing Anything Written by a Woman* (London: J. Hart and J. Lewis, 1743), in *SSW*, 3:254. This end of Dutton has been registered by Haykin in his chapter on Dutton, “Anne Dutton and her Theological Works: ‘The Glory of God, and the Good of Souls.’” Michael A. G Haykin, *Eight Women of Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 53–66.

⁸⁵Virginia Blain, Patricia Clements, and Isobel Grundy, *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English. Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 321.

Christian men and *women* to edify each other since they were meant for private use despite their public form.⁸⁶ The picture she envisioned for her books was at once personal and theological: personal as her paying a visit to her readers for private conversations and theological as God himself conversing with them through her:

Imagine then, my dear friend, when my *books* come to your *houses*, that I am come to give you a *visit*; (for indeed by them I do) and patiently attend to the lisplings of a *babe*: Who knows but the Lord may ordain *strength* out of the babe's mouth? And give you a visit *Himself*, by so weak a *worm*, to your strong consolation? It is all one to omnipotence, to work by worms, as by angels. And remember, that the more contemptible and weak the *instrument* is that the Lord *works* by, the more it commands the glory of his *grace*, and the excellency of his *power*.⁸⁷

Rather than violating the biblical injunction against women public preaching, she was obedient to God's calling and his command of private instruction, which "is the duty of *women* as well as men."⁸⁸

In the end, Dutton justified her publications upon the Christocentric and Trinitarian ground. She was capable of enjoying "sweet, soul satisfying, heart-melting fellowship" with the triune God when convinced "that *God in Christ* was *well-pleased* with [her] *person*, and *accepted* [her] *service*!"⁸⁹ When all had been said for her defense, Dutton turned away from her opponents to fixate upon God alone: "For as for me to live is Christ; so while I live in the flesh, it is my earnest desire, some way or other, to serve *him*, his *interest and people*: And when in any respect, or degree I can do it, I think myself *happy*."⁹⁰ Having committed herself to God's service and his glory, she refused to be bothered or budged by human judgments. As testified by the inscription upon the slab of her grave, she "spent her life in the cause of God."

⁸⁶Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:254–55.

⁸⁷Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:257.

⁸⁸Dutton, *Letter to Such of the Servants of Christ*, in *SSW*, 3:255.

⁸⁹Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:200.

⁹⁰Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:257.

The Saint: The Dying and Death of Dutton

Dutton died November 18, 1765. Her death was caused by a debilitating throat tumor, which was not common and “made such slow, sensible, and gradual approaches” that Dutton had been “greatly tried.”⁹¹ Yet she remained true to her faith in her dying and death. During her prolonged sufferings, Dutton still wrote replies to some correspondents, which exuded faith, love, and hope. For many of her eyewitnesses, her conversation was still “so cheerful, edifying, spiritual, and refreshing, as filled the hearts and eyes of many that visited her with wonder.”⁹²

One such witness was Robert Robinson (1735–1790). Even though “the radical reformer and controversial Baptist minister at St. Andrew’s Street Baptist Church in Cambridge from 1759–1790,”⁹³ he exclaimed at the time that he “had heard, that precious in the sight of the Lord was the *death* of his *saints* [italics mine], and now [he] saw [God] was true to his word, for he was present by his Spirit in the sickness and death of Mrs. Dutton.”⁹⁴ With earnest longing Robinson remembered her death:

She died on the Monday before without either sickness, or pain, her throat growing up so as she expressed it in her illness, her breath being stopped she was at once at her father’s house, and is now for ever with the Lord. The Lord give us grace to follow her who though she had always a pleasant countenance yet I never saw her look so pleasant before. She had indeed an *abundant* entrance, for as she had neither sickness, nor pain of body, so neither had she a *doubt* or cloud on her mind. Methinks I can’t help praying, let my dear friend, and me, die the death of Mrs. Dutton, let our last end be like hers. To that end let us try to copy her holy exemplary life, ever redeeming the time. The evil day is at hand.⁹⁵

⁹¹Jones commented that “Anne Dutton was a great saint; she had great grace; she was greatly tried; she glorified the Lord; she was satisfied with all the Lord’s procedure towards her; she rested the *whole*, for body and soul, for time and eternity, with *him*.” Jones, *Memoir of Mrs. Anne Dutton*, in *SSW*, 2:94–95.

⁹²Jones, *Memoir of Mrs. Anne Dutton*, in *SSW*, 2:105.

⁹³Timothy Whelan, “Six Letters of Robert Robinson,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 40, no.1 (January 2003): 347–59.

⁹⁴Whelan, “Six Letters of Robert Robinson,” 355–56.

⁹⁵Whelan, “Six Letters of Robert Robinson,” 355–56.

Considering his eventual deviation from Trinitarian orthodox into speculation and probably into Unitarianism, Robinson's prayer and his sense of imminent danger sounded almost self-fulfilling.

Dutton was buried in the cemetery of the Great Gransden Baptist Church. She endured to the end with faith and hope and proved herself "a great saint indeed."⁹⁶ Among the valuable materials she left behind were the land she conveyed at "Gt. Gransden, Over, Ellington and Bourn, for the use and benefit of the Baptist Ministers of this place,"⁹⁷ and a fine collection of books for the use of future ministers, "about 200 volumes, mostly old folios and quartos of Puritan Divinity."⁹⁸ One of her individual beneficiaries was the renowned hymnist Anne Steele, to whom Dutton seemed to have bequeathed her Bible.⁹⁹ But of even more enduring value was the spiritual heritages she bequeathed to the church of God through her writings. According to the epitaph on her tombstone, Dutton left a plethora of religious writings, 25 volumes of choice letters and 38 smaller works, which, among many things, speak forth her comfortable faith in the Trinity.

⁹⁶Jones concluded that "Anne Dutton was a great saint; she had great grace; she was greatly tried, she glorified the Lord, she was satisfied with all the Lord's procedures towards her; she rested the *whole*, for body and soul, for time and eternity, with *Him*." Jones, *Memoir of Mrs. Anne Dutton*, in *SSW*, 2:95.

⁹⁷Tomson, "A History of Great Gransden," chap. 15.

⁹⁸Tomson, "A History of Great Gransden," chap. 15. The amount of the books was noted as 212 in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* as well as by Whitebrook, but it could not be located as to what they were. Whitebrook, *Ann Dutton*, 13.

⁹⁹ According to Aalders, this connection has been suggested by a Bible, "which has been inscribed by first Dutton and then Steele." It is now in the Angus Library at Oxford. Aalders, *To Express the Ineffable*, 55.

CHAPTER 4

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY IN LATE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY AND EARLY EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

And if the foundations (of three persons in one nature, in one God, and of two natures in one person, in the person of Christ), are thus destroyed, what can [sic] the righteous do? . . . Alas! My dear friend, many are the errors which in all ages have troubled the church of God; and let us not think it strange that old errors are revived and new ones string up in this last time.

—Anne Dutton, *Letters on Spiritual Subjects*

Trinitarian Controversies in the Church of England

The Trinity has probably seen more controversies than any other Christian doctrines throughout church history. Notwithstanding its biblical origin, the doctrine was precipitated by “the necessity of combating radical views,” such as Marcionism, Modalism, and Arianism, and was not definitively formulated until the fourth century through the two pivotal ecumenical councils of the Council of Nicaea (325) and the Council of Constantinople (381).¹ But conciliar creeds of the Trinity neither resolved old controversies nor preempted future ones, such as that over the procession of the Spirit. After centuries of general subscription to the doctrine of the Trinity, the sixteenth century

¹Van A. Harvey, *A Handbook of Theological Terms* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 245. The heresies concerning the relationship of Christ the Son to God the Father consisted in either denial of the full deity of the Son, such as Adoptionism and Arianism, or in their confusion of the distinct persons and roles of the Triune God, such as Modalism or Sabellianism. Similarly, the erroneous views about Christology tended to err either on the side of separating the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ, such as Nestorianism, or on the side of confusing the two, such as Eutychism. In the long process of clarifying the Trinitarian faith, several early ecumenical councils proved pivotal. The Council of Nicaea (325) condemned Arianism and established the full deity of Jesus Christ and his co-equality with God the Father. Owing much to the Cappadocian Fathers, Basil in particular, the Council of Constantinople (381) affirmed the full deity of the Spirit, who is “to be worshipped together with the Father and the Son.” Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, trans. Stephen Hildebrand (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011).

not only saw the great Reformation, but also the revival of anti-Trinitarian thoughts with Michael Servetus (1511–1553) and Fausto Sozzini (1539–1604) as two notable examples.²

Still, full-fledged controversies over the doctrine of the Trinity did not erupt until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when human reason was prioritized, Scripture sufficiency narrowly prized, and tradition suspected or rejected in the Age of Enlightenment. Although many historians tend to leap over this period in mapping out the historical development of the doctrine,³ its significance has nevertheless been noted by a few with respect to both the decline of the doctrine and resilient defense of it. Among those who attend to the decline of the Trinity, William C. Placher concludes that “the battle had already been lost” in the seventeenth century and “anti-Trinitarianism and Deism became more prominent” in the eighteenth century.⁴ Philip Dixon, whose work represents the Trinitarian controversies in seventeenth-century Church of England, marks the seventeenth century as “*the* key time as far as the loss of Trinitarian vitality is concerned,” after which the doctrine of the Trinity “was displaced from the center of

²Ulrich L. Lehner, “The Trinity in the Early Modern Era (c.1550–1770),” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, ed. Emery Gilles and Mathew Levering (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 245. Among the anti-Trinitarian theologians during the sixteenth century were Michael Servetus, who was burned as a heretic in John Calvin’s Geneva, and Fausto Sozzini, whose thoughts would resurge in seventeenth-century England and become the seedbed of Socinianism and Unitarianism.

³Examples of this neglect include, but are not limited to Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972); Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004); Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).

⁴William C. Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence: How Modern Thinking about God Went Wrong* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 164–78. Also see John Redwood, *Reason, Ridicule and Religion: The Age of Enlightenment in England 1660–1750* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), especially chapter 7, “The Persons of the Trinity.”

theological endeavor” and “survived above all in Liturgy.”⁵ As for the positive defenses of the Trinity, they were found in both centuries and across denominations.⁶

Within the established Church of England, the anti-Trinitarian controversies took the form of pamphlet wars between detractors and defenders of the Trinity. As it happened, the latter often turned out to be not so competent in defending the doctrine as their adversaries in attacking it.⁷ Because of the intricate languages of the Trinity and the

⁵Philip Dixon, “*Nice and Hot Disputes*”: *The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: T & T Clark, 2003), 208–9.

⁶For attention to the positive defense of or contribution to the Trinity, see Carl R. Trueman, *The Claims of Truth: John Owen’s Trinitarian Theology* (Carlisle, England: Paternoster Press, 1998). Jason E. Vickers presents the hymns and sermons of Charles Wesley as exemplar of the orthodox Trinity in the tradition of invocation, which avoids the pitfall of reasonable assent in the Trinitarian controversies. See Jason E. Vickers, *Invocation and Assent: The Making and Remaking of Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: William E. Eerdmans, 2008). Michael A. G. Haykin argues for the Particular Baptists’ defense of and contribution to the doctrine of the Trinity, such as Benjamin Beddome and Andrew Fuller. See Michael A. G. Haykin, “Glory to the Three Eternal”: Benjamin Beddome and the Teaching of Trinitarian Theology in the Eighteenth Century,” *SBJT* 10, no.1 (Spring 2006). In another paper, Haykin points out that Gill’s systematic theology, *Body of Doctrinal Divinity* (1769) was the “major theological reference work” for most Baptist pastors then. Michael A. G. Haykin, “Baptist Trinitarianism in the Long Eighteenth Century: Context and Issues with Particular Reference to the Thought of Andrew Fuller” (paper presented at the Alumni Academy of The Southern Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, Fall, 2016), 6. For a comprehensive study of Gill’s Trinitarian theology, see Steven Tshombe Godet, “The Trinitarian Theology of John Gill: Context, Sources, and Controversy” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015).

⁷For a concise introduction of the pamphlet wars over the doctrine of the Trinity, see Lehner, “Trinity in the Early Modern Era,” 245–47. According to Lehner, major players in the controversies included George Bull (1634–1710) with his *Defence of the Nicene Faith* (1685); Stephen Nye with his *A Brief History of the Unitarians* (1687), which essentially started the war by alleging the doctrine of the Trinity to be an “unnecessary,” “irrational” dogma,” even harmful to the vitality of Christianity; William Sherlock (1641–1707) with his response in *Vindication of the Doctrine of the Holy and Ever Blessed Trinity* (1690), which, however, “started one of the biggest crises of modern theology” by describing the Trinity as three infinite minds or consciousness; and in the eighteenth century, Samuel Clarke (1675–1729) with his *The Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity* (1712). For a detailed description and analysis of Trinitarian controversies within the Church of England, see Dixon, “*Nice and Hot Disputes*,” and Jason E. Vickers, *Invocation and Assent: The Making and Remaking of Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008). Dixon identified three key periods in the Trinitarian controversies: 1640s, 1690s, and the early decades of the eighteenth century. The 1640s saw the first wave of “incontrovertible evidence of a systematic attack upon the doctrine” from John Biddle (1615–1662), often considered “the Father of English Unitarianism.” The second wave of controversies broke out in the 1690s, which exposed the terminological confusions to the uttermost. What started as a reasonable defense of the Trinity against Stephen Nye’s anonymous apologetic for Unitarianism, *A Brief History of the Unitarians*, elicited a terminological maelstrom around the individuation of the person of the Trinity, which led to internecine critique among Trinitarian writers to the ridicule of their opponents. The third crisis was precipitated by William Whiston (1667–1752) and Samuel Clarke, both well-acquainted with Isaac Newton (1642–1727) and presumably also his experimental philosophy. Insisting on the biblical principle of Christian doctrines, they rejected the orthodoxy of the Trinity and opted for a subordinationist schema built upon their take of biblical evidence. Compared with Dixon’s extensive historical presentation, Vickers’s penetrated to the root of the Trinitarian controversies

limits of human apprehension and articulation of divine matters, they were prone either to tritheism in their emphasis on the three persons of the Godhead, or to modalism and Socinianism in their stress on the unity. In effect, their arguments might well have betrayed all their good intentions and given them over to the anti-Trinitarian cause as Stephen Nye (1648–1719) wryly caricatured:

Dr. S—th’s explication is only an absurd Socinianism; or Unitarianism disguised in a metaphysical and logical cant. Dr. Wallis his explication is an ingenious Sabellianism; and in very deed differs from Unitarianism, no more than Dr. S—th’s. . . . Dr. Sherlock’s is such a flat Tritheism, that all the learned of his own party confess it to be so. Dr. Cudworth’s is a moderate Arianism. . . . Mr. Hooker’s is a Trinity, not of persons, but of contradictions. . . . What the mystical divines teach, cannot be called an explication; they deny all explications: we must say therefore ‘tis Samaritanism for . . . they worship they know not what.⁸

The scathing ridicule of Nye exempted, his remarks yet captured the difficulty, if not utter impossibility of justifying God’s being to man.

Moreover, Nye’s caricature of these Trinitarian theologians sheds light unto some of the critical causes for the decline of the doctrine. Apart from the external causes of the ascension of rational philosophy and historical criticism of the Bible,⁹ one was what Vickers perceived the shift in the rule of faith from creedal tradition to Scripture alone and correlatively a shift from devotional use of the Trinity to a primarily epistemological approach. It was not so much a matter of “worship[ping] they know not

as the shift in the rule of faith from the traditional Trinitarian confessions and creeds to Scripture for Protestants. This shift was precipitated by the sixteenth-century Reformers over the issue of ecclesial authority and culminated in the seventeenth-century England by such influential theologians as William Laud (1573–1645) and William Chillingworth (1602–1644). Although they did not deny the Trinity, their elevation of scriptural authority and human reason landed them into a position impossible to defend the Trinity against either the Catholics or the Socinians. The result was the Trinitarian controversy of 1690s. With all their scriptural principle, rationalism, and epistemological approach, William Sherlock, Robert South (1634–1716), John Wallis (1616–1703), and Edward Stillingfleet (1635–1699) all failed in their efforts to defend the Trinity. The outcome of the controversies was the English Protestants’ adoption of John Locke’s legacy of “the irenic Trinity”: to maintain the Trinity by silence and as non-essential to salvation.

⁸Quoted in Dixon, “*Nice and Hot Disputes*,” 129.

⁹For a summary of the corrosive force of rationalism and naturalism of the Trinity, see Philip Roberts, *Continuity and Change: London Calvinistic Baptists and the Evangelical Revival: 1760–1820* (Wheaton, IL: Richard Owen Roberts, 1989), 32–36; Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, 247–49; Lehner, “Trinity in the Early Modern Era,” 245–50; Dixon, “*Nice and Hot Disputes*,” 208–16.

what” as prioritizing knowing the Trinity over worshipping him. Then, there were the inherent difficulties in Trinitarian languages, which were exacerbated by the fluidity of the meaning of such essential concept as “person” over time. Nye’s complaint was piercing that “what the mystical divines teach cannot be called an explication; they deny all explications.” There was too much sound and fury in the disputes, but not much sense. Finally, Nye’s scathing caricatures of the Trinitarian defenders testified to what Dixon pointed out about “the corrosive power of ridicule.”¹⁰ It was “the age of ridicule which did far more harm to the Christian defences than did the onslaught of reason and nature.”¹¹

As a result, many retreated from the fray. They resorted to “the irenic Trinity,” the legacy of John Locke (1632–1704), to maintain the Trinity by silence and as non-essential to salvation.¹² This was confirmed by John Gill when he lamented that “the doctrine of the Trinity is often represented as a speculative point, of no great moment whether it is believed or no, too mysterious and curious to be pryed into, and that it had better be let alone than meddled with.”¹³

¹⁰Dixon points out several external and internal causes for the Trinitarian crisis, among which were “the fading of Trinitarian imagination, fear of practical pneumatology, problems connected with exegesis, the development of what could be labeled ‘over-familiarity’ in talk about God, and the corrosive power of ridicule. Dixon, “*Nice and Hot Disputes*,” 208–16. This corrosive power of ridicule of Christian faith and doctrines in general is summarized by Redwood: “That insidious growth was the incursion being made by irony, wit and ridicule. Far more serious in many ways than natural philosophers seeking to explain phenomena which previously had been regarded as supernatural or mysterious, far more serious than the discoveries concerning the formation of the earth in geological science questioning the historical creation described by Genesis, were the remarks of those deists and near-atheists who felt that the whole of theology was a cause for mirth and many of the biblical stories suitable only as the subjects of lampoons. This kind of social irresponsibility, apparent in many a playhouse jest or many a chance remark in a tavern, reflected the unguarded thoughts of later seventeenth-century gentleman who were willing in their hearts to doubt a God in order to savour a joke.” Redwood, *Reason, Ridicule and Religion*, 15.

¹¹Redwood, *Reason, Ridicule and Religion*, 15.

¹²Vickers, *Invocation and Assent*, 165–66.

¹³John Gill, *A Body of Doctrinal Divinity, or A System of Evangelical Truths Deduced from the Sacred Scriptures [BDD]* (London, 1767; repr., Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 2000), 1:138.

Trinitarian Controversies among the Dissenters

By no means were Trinitarian controversies limited to the Church of England. Given all his detailed depiction of the Trinitarian crisis and perceptive analysis of its causes in the Church of England, Dixon's portrayal of the seventeenth-century landscape yet remained incomplete by leaving the Dissenters out of the picture.¹⁴ While the doctrine of the Trinity fared along a similar trajectory with that of Christology, descending from general affirmation in the seventeenth century to breakouts of controversy in the eighteenth,¹⁵ some Dissenting groups, such as the Particular Baptists remained staunch defenders of the Trinity. True to the patristic spirit, their defense often underscored its vitality in Christian worship and life.

Unlike the Trinitarian turmoil in the established church, the doctrine in its classical formulation was generally upheld by Dissenters in the seventeenth century through individual theologians and denominational confessions. John Owen, for example, was a prominent Trinitarian theologian, who combated Socinianism of his time.¹⁶ As will

¹⁴Although he does not completely ignore Dissenters' contribution, such as John Owen's defense of the Trinity, Dixon's primary focus is on the Church of England. It is justifiable by his methodological focus on the dynamics around the terminology of "person" in the Trinitarian talk in that the university-educated Anglican divines might well be better qualified for the formidable task of "person" disputes than their Dissenting brethren, who were denied access to university education as the price paid to their non-conformity.

¹⁵Sell helpfully traces the development and decline of Christology in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which will be followed out for the historical examination of the Trinity. As Sell sees it, the seventeenth century was characterized by "classical affirmation and alternative stances," which was rather rare, whereas the eighteenth century saw the emergence and breakouts of "nonconformist Christology," and nonconformist Trinitarianism as well when considering the central place of Christology in the doctrine of the Trinity. Alan P. F. Sell, *Christ and Controversy: The Person of Christ in Nonconformist Thought and Ecclesial Experience, 1600–2000* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 1–57.

¹⁶For Owen's defense of the doctrine of the Trinity, see John Owen, *A Brief Declaration and Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity: As also of the Person and Sanctification of Christ. Accommodated to the Capacity and use of such as may be in danger to be seduced, and the establishment of the Truth* (London: R. W., 1669); Owen, *Communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007); and Owen, *Pneumatology: or A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit. Wherein an Account Is Given of His Name, Nature, Personality, Dispensation, Operations, and Effects* (Coventry: M. Luckman, 1792). For a historical study of Owen's Trinitarianism, see Carl R. Trueman, *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology* (Carlisle, England: Paternoster Press, 1998); Brian Kay, *Trinitarian Spirituality: John Owen and the Doctrine of God in Western Devotion* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2007).

be demonstrated in Chapter 7, Owen's *Communion with the Triune God* left clear traces upon Dutton's Trinitarian spirituality, not the least his emphasis on the triunity of the Godhead and on the doxological use of the doctrine in the believer's faithful life. Defense also came from less well-known ones. Isaac Marlow, a Particular Baptist layman who opposed Benjamin Keach (1640–1704) in the seventeenth-century controversies over congregational singing, defended the unity of God and the plurality in the Godhead to be biblical truth in *A Treatise on the Holy Trininity [sic]* (1690).¹⁷ Anticipating eighteenth-century Particular Baptists' defense of the doctrine of the Trinity, Marlow's *Treatise* highlighted its features of being a scriptural doctrine, the "chiefest" doctrine of Christian faith, and a divine mystery essential to Christian worship of and communion with God. His work "illustrated the persistence of Trinitarian orthodoxy among Particular Baptists."¹⁸

As for the collective efforts by the Dissenting groups at defending the doctrine of the Trinity, they could be glanced observed from the three main Dissenters' confessions of faith in the seventeenth century. As shown below, the early Presbyterians' *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647) became the basis of Congregationalists' *Savoy Declaration* (1658) and the *Second London Confession* (1677/1688) of the Baptists,¹⁹ though not without further edifications and amplifications in the latter two. In respect of the doctrine of the Trinity, both the Congregationalists' *Savoy Declaration* and the

¹⁷Isaac Marlow, *A Treatise of the Holy Trininity [sic]. In Two Parts. The First, Asserting the Deity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, in the Unity of Essence with God the Father. The Second, in Defence of the Former, Containeth Answers to the Chiefest Objections Made against This Doctrine* (London: Richard Baldwin, 1690).

¹⁸Curtis W. Freeman, "God in Three Persons: Baptist Unitarianism and the Trinity," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 33 (Fall 2006): 332–33.

¹⁹*The Second London Confession* (1677) was drafted by the Particular Baptists of London and vicinity to show "their agreement with Presbyterians and Congregationalists by making *The Westminster Confession* the basis of a new confession of their own." As such it also borrowed materials from the *Savoy Declaration*. Thus, it demonstrated great fidelity to *The Westminster Confession*, though not without its own distinctive variations, especially with respect to ecclesiology. William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. Bill J. Leonard (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2011), 216–22.

Particular Baptists' *Second London Confession* followed the arrangement of *Westminster Confession of Faith* in placing it after the doctrine of Scripture. But *Savoy Declaration* added the experiential emphasis of the doctrine of the Trinity as being "the foundation of all our communion with God and comfortable dependence upon him," which was adopted by the Baptists' *Second London Confession*. In addition, as it customarily expanded its explications beyond its two precedents, the Baptists' *Second London Confession* emphasized the co-deity, "the whole" and "undivided" divine essence of the Father, Son, and Spirit, and elaborated on their distinction "by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations." What it added about the Godhead "resonated with the Nicene orthodoxy," which anticipated their "subscri[ption] to a Trinitarian rule of faith" at Salters' Hall and reflected the Baptists' biblical emphasis in designating the triune God as "the Lord" and the Son as "the Word."²⁰ Thus, Sell's observation about the Dissenters' fidelity to the doctrine of Christology in the seventeenth century could well be extended to their position on the doctrine of the Trinity: "Up to the end of the seventeenth century the main lines of the Dissenters' Christology, as expounded in their major formal declarations of faith and propounded by some of their major theologians, were consistent with classical orthodox thought on the person of Christ, albeit that thought was now processed by Puritan minds."²¹

²⁰Freeman, "God in Three Persons," 331.

²¹Sell, *Christ and Controversies*, 10.

Table 1. Comparison of the Doctrine of the Trinity in Three Dissenters' Confessions

<i>Westminster</i>	<i>Savoy</i>	<i>London Baptist</i>
<p>3. In the unity of the Godhead there be three Persons of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.</p>	<p>3. In the unity of the God-head there be three Persons, of one substance, power and eternity. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son. Which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence upon him.</p>	<p>3. In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son; all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on him.</p>

Source: A Tabular Comparison of the 1646 *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the 1658 *Savoy Declaration of Faith*, the 1677/1689 *London Baptist Confession of Faith*, and the 1742 *Philadelphia Confession of Faith*, accessed September 20, 2017, http://www.proginosko.com/docs/wcf_sdfo_lbcf.html.

Still, anti-Trinitarianism was brewing in the Dissenting groups. Among the General Baptists, the *Standard Confession* they issued in 1660 was ambiguous in respect of the Trinity. As Curtis W. Freeman points out, it stated faith in the triune God in three separate articles (I, III, VII) without providing any hint “as to how the three persons are

related as one Godhead.” In Article XI, it “permitted baptism either ‘in the name of the Father, Son, and holy Spirit, or in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.’”²² Individually, the General Baptist minister Matthew Caffyn (1628–1714) was a notable precursor of anti-Trinitarian views. One of the few university-trained General Baptist ministers, Caffyn was attracted first to the Eutychian view of Christology by Melchoior Hoffmann (1495–1543) and then adopted the Socinian view to deny the deity of Christ. He was indicted several times, but the compromise reached at the 1693 General Assembly, which condemned the heresy but acquitted the heretic, confirmed the theological ambiguity pervading the English General Baptists and anticipated the days when they would be “constantly subjected to theological controversy and inevitable fragmentation.”²³

Then, the eighteenth century saw what might be deemed the watershed of the Trinitarian orthodoxy in the Dissenters’ camp: the Salters’ Hall subscription controversy in the early months of 1719.²⁴ This erupted as a regional dispute in Exeter between the Presbyterian elders and one of their famous ministers, James Peirce, who propagated

²²Coupled with their insistence on men’s free liberty of conscience in matters of religion spelled out in Articles XXIV, this Trinitarian ambiguity would soon give way to anti-Trinitarian thoughts. Freeman, “God in Three Persons,” 325.

²³For a detailed analysis of Caffyn’s unorthodox views about Christology and Trinity, their origins, development, and consequences, see Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 298–300; also Sell, *Christ and Controversy*, 10–18; Raymond Brown, *The English Baptists of the 18th Century* (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1986), 21; Freeman, “God in Three Persons,” 324–28.

²⁴For a detailed history of the Exeter disputes, see Allan Brockett, *Nonconformity in Exeter: 1650–1875* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1962). Also Duncan Coomer, *English Dissent Under the Early Hanoverians* (London: The Epworth Press, 1946), 69–79. Primary sources include *A Plain and Faithful Narrative of the Differences Among the Dissenters at Exeter Relating to the Doctrine of the Ever Blessed Trinity so far as gave Concern to some London Ministers* (London: John Clark, 1719). This treatise recounted all the Trinitarian controversies among Dissenters at Exeter, which led up to the Salters’ Hall controversy in 1719. Another primary source came from John Shute Barrington, *An Account of the Late Proceedings of the Dissenting Ministers at Salters Hall, Occasioned by the Difference among their Brethren in the Country: with some Thoughts concerning the Imposition of human Forms for Articles of Faith. In a Letter to the Reverend Dr. Gale* (London: J. Roberts, 1719). As these works revealed, the key figure in the controversy turned out to be the very minister that was much sought after by Exeter in 1713, James Peirce (1674?–1726). Through a series of meetings by the Exeter Assembly and later at Salters’ Hall, Peirce and Joseph Hallett (1656–1722), the two ministers persisting in their unorthodox views about the Trinity were ejected, but they formed their own congregation with some 300 followers.

unorthodox views about the Trinity: “we cannot be so certain that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God.”²⁵ Peirce was educated at the universities of Utrecht and Leiden and had been in close contact with Whiston during his time at a Cambridge church, which explained the muddled water he imbibed.²⁶ He proved to be an eloquent and formidable adversary. Not only did he make much of the “sending” language in the Bible to opt for a subordinationism of the Son and the Spirit to the Father, he also accused the Trinitarian Dissenters of committing the very sin that had forced them out of the Church of England by imposing their opinions upon those who dissented from them instead of subscribing to the explicit revelations of the Bible.²⁷ It was no mere coincidence that Benjamin Dutton noted in his spiritual autobiography about Peirce descending from “a Baxterian,” who was yet “clear in the doctrine of the Trinity” to “an Arian” at Exeter.²⁸

This regional dispute evolved into a major controversy at Salters’ Hall when Peirce appealed to the Dissenting ministers of London. On February 19 and 24, the London ministers met in Salters’ Hall, who then split into two groups at the third meeting on March 3: the Subscribers in favor of accompanying their advice to Exeter with a subscription to the Trinitarian articles in the *Thirty-Nine Articles* or in the *Westminster Catechism*, and the Non-Subscribers against it.²⁹ Instead of resolving the Trinitarian

²⁵Quoted in Freeman, “God in Three Persons,” 328.

²⁶Coomer, *English Dissent Under the Early Hanoverians*, 69. As for Whiston and Clarke’s influence upon Peirce, see John T. Wilkinson, *1662–And After: Three Centuries of English Nonconformity* (London: The Epworth Press, 1962), 114–15.

²⁷James Peirce, *A Letter to a Dissenter in Exeter, Occasion’d by the Late Heats in those Parts: Upon some Difference of Sentiments among the Brethren*, 2nd ed. (London: John Noon, 1719). Even after the Salters’ Hall meetings, Peirce held unto his subordinationist view and proposed twenty propositions to refute the Trinitarian theology of his adversaries, denouncing their “person” language as unscriptural and unintelligible. See also Peirce, *The Case of the Ministers Ejected at Exeter. By James Peirce, One of Them*, 4th ed. London: John Clark, 1719; Peirce, *Propositions Relating to Controversies Among the Dissenters in the West. Concerning the Trinity in a Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Enty* (London: T. Bickerton and A. Dodd, 1720).

²⁸Benjamin Dutton, *Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God’s Free-Grace* (London: J. Hart, 1743), 26.

²⁹Brockett, *Nonconformity in Exeter*, 91; Coomer, *English Dissent Under the Early*

disputes at Exeter, the debate at Salters' Hall created its own rift between the Subscribers and Non-Subscribers, the latter with a narrow majority by fifty-seven to fifty-three.

To their credit, at that point the majority of Non-Subscribers rejected the motion for subscription out of reservations about imposing human creeds upon believers rather than embracing unorthodox Trinitarian theology.³⁰ It was a difference between subscribing to a Trinitarian confession or to the sufficiency of Scripture as the rule of faith. But their resistance to subscription often turned out to be “the prelude to heterodoxy.”³¹ This was borne out by the fact that in two generations nearly all the Presbyterian churches had gone over to Arian and Socinian teachings.³² General Baptists, in their turn, added Arianism to their error of Arminianism.³³ In this respect, Salters' Hall

Hanoverians, 77–78.

³⁰This was eloquently argued in *A Letter to Mr. Robinson. Wherein the Consistency of his late Conduct at Salters-Hall with a former Declaration of his own is consider'd. With a Postscript Concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity Stated and Defended by Mr. Tong, Mr. Robinson, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Reynolds* (London: T. Warner, 1719). The anonymous author accused Robinson of being inconsistent in dissenting to the imposition of prayer and liturgy by the Church of England and consenting to the subscription to doctrine of Trinity as inscribed by the Thirty-Eight Articles and *Westminster Catechism*. To his credit, he rightly noted that the Non-Subscribers were not deniers per se of the doctrine, but rather Dissenters on the principles of the perspicuity of Scripture as the rule of faith, and their liberty of conscience to adhere to nothing but Scripture. This is observed by Sell that the Non-Subscribers were driven primarily by “their appeal to the sufficiency of Scripture and their perceived obligation to bring reason to bear upon their belief system.” Sell, *Christ and Controversy*, 30.

³¹Brown, *English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century*, 23.

³²Historians have speculated on the causes of Presbyterians' defection. It could spring from their intellectual cultivation since they were “on the whole likely to be a somewhat more intellectually developed and less evangelically simple person than the Independent or the Baptist, . . . and formed among Dissenters an intellectual aristocracy comparable with the philanthropic aristocracy of the Quakers.” Erik Routley, *English Religious Dissent* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 142. Or it could reside in their Arminianism, “which proved to be a halfway house between Calvinism and Arianism.” Watts, *Dissenters*, 1:376.

³³As Brown notes about the General Baptists, the Salters' Hall controversy exposed the unorthodox Trinitarian theology among their majority, who alleged the origin of the doctrine of the Trinity to be more creedal than biblical in nature. Those who seemed to merely hesitate to subscribe to orthodox Christology and Trinitarianism eventually were carried over to the Unitarian camp, which proved that “resistance to subscription became the prelude to heterodoxy.” Brown, *English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century*, 23. Watts attributes the backslide of the General Baptists into unorthodox Trinitarianism to their biblical literalism and neo-Arminianism, which “predisposed them to look more favorably than their Calvinistic brethren on liberal trends in theology.” Watts, *Dissenters*, 1:376.

debates indeed “proved to be a ‘seismic forecast,’ not only of the fault lines of Nonconformist unity, but of the future state of Trinitarian theology.”³⁴

As for the causes of the Dissenters’ conflict over the Trinity, added to the common causes of rationalism and naturalism were their naïve Biblicism, their cherished heritages of nonconformity and the liberty of private judgment. Just as what had happened in the Christological controversies, the Trinitarian debate was embroiled with the validity and usefulness of *subscription to a doctrinal confession of the Trinity* [italics mine] rather than to the doctrine *per se*.³⁵ This was well observed by Benjamin Wallin (1711–1782), the Particular Baptist minister at Maze Pond of Southwark when he reflected decades later on the reasons of the Non-Subscribers in 1719 and the danger to which they exposed their generation and subsequent ones:

Their plea was not because they did not believe this doctrine, as laid down in the prescribed form of words, . . . [but] they apprehended that all declarations of this nature sapped the foundation of Protestantism of [Scripture alone]. They pleaded the first principle of Protestantism: the liberty of private judgment, which they thought infringed by subscription set on foot. . . . From that time, in zeal against tests of this kind, catechism, creeds and confessions of faith have been decried as injurious to liberty, this falling in with a taste for pleasure, and an aversion to discipline, has greatly obstructed a religious education among us, insomuch that the present rising generation, through ignorance, are exposed to the subtlety of every deceiver.³⁶

For all its worth, this dissenting heritage unwisely jettisoned the traditional creeds that safeguarded the Trinitarian orthodox.

Particular Baptists’ Defense of the Trinity

Still, not all Dissenters lost ground on the doctrine of the Trinity. As already emerged in the Salters’ Hall controversy, one group that overwhelmingly subscribed to the classical formulation of the Trinity were the Particular Baptists, to whom Dutton

³⁴Watts, *Dissenters*, 375–77; Freeman, “God in Three Persons,” 330.

³⁵Roberts, *Continuity and Change*, 33.

³⁶Benjamin Wallin, preface to *The Scripture Doctrine of Christ’s Sonship, Being Sermons on the Divine Filiation of Jesus, the only Begotten of the Father, to which are subjoined Three short Discourses on Psalm II. 12* (London: Keith, 1771), x–xii.

belonged.³⁷ Their efforts at Trinitarian defense were maintained by other Particular Baptist ministers in the long eighteenth century. Through monographs, treatises, hymns, and sermons, they continued to hold the Trinity at the center of Baptist faith and life.

Two important Baptist ministers in this period were John Gill and Andrew Fuller.³⁸ Gill wrote what “was probably the major Baptist defense of the doctrine of the Trinity against Socinianism in the first half of the eighteenth century,” *The Doctrine of the Trinity Stated and Vindicated* (1731).³⁹ Trinitarianism so dominated his theological conceptions that he included the Spirit in the eternal covenant of grace, which was often conceived as being transacted between the Father and the Son.⁴⁰ Fuller, at the end of eighteenth century, combated Socinianism as represented in the writings of Joseph Priestley (1733–1804). Not only did he expose the Socinians’ theological errors, but he also pointed out the moral jeopardy therein.⁴¹

Between Gill and Fuller, the Trinitarian defense was sustained by less well-known but no less capable Particular Baptist ministers, such as Benjamin Beddome

³⁷In the Salters’ Hall subscription controversy, whereas only one of the fifteen General Baptists was a Subscriber, all but two of the sixteenth Particular Baptists voted for subscription to a Trinitarian confession of faith. The Particular Baptist Subscribers included Thomas Harrison, John Skepp, William Curtis, David Rees, John Noble, Edward Wallin, Thomas Dewhurst, Mark Key, Edward Ridgway, John Sharpe, Richard Pain, William Benson, John Toms, Richard Glover, and Joseph Matthews. The lone General Baptist Subscriber was Abraham Mulliner of the White’s Alley Church. Freeman, “God in Three Persons,” 330.

³⁸Gill and Fuller were also recognized as the two most significant Particular Baptist theologians in defending orthodox Christology, especially the eternal generation of Christ. Sell writes that Gill “is especially concerned to defend the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son” and Fuller “similarly excluded both pre-existarianism and adoptionism when he writes that ‘Christ is called the Son of God antecedently to his miraculous conception, and consequently he did not become such by it.’” Sell, *Christ and Controversy*, 22–23.

³⁹Haykin, “Glory to the Three Eternal,” 4.

⁴⁰Richard Muller, “The Spirit and the Covenant: John Gill’s Critique of the *Pactum Salutis*,” *Foundations*, NS., 24 (1981): 4–14. Gill’s conception of the whole soteriology from the point view of eternity as the conjoined work of the three persons was actually preceded by Dutton, though in a less grand and systematic scale as his.

⁴¹Andrew Fuller, *The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Explained and Compared, as to Their Moral Tendency*, in *The Complete Works of Rev. Andrew Fuller*, rev. Joseph Belcher (Philadelphia, 1845; repr., Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 2:108–234. As for Fuller’s defense of the Trinity, see Fuller, “Letter IX: The Trinity,” *Works* 1:707–11; also Fuller, “The Deity of Christ,” *Works* 3:695–708.

(1717–1795) and Benjamin Wallin, two close contemporaries of Dutton. Wallin contended eloquently for the scriptural nature of the doctrine of the Trinity and paid special attention to the eternal sonship of Jesus.⁴² Beddome’s hymns were as replete with Trinitarianism as Dutton’s.⁴³ These Particular Baptist ministers’ publications on the Trinity was representative of the denominational defense of the classical doctrine, which provided immediate theological and historical contexts for Dutton’s Trinitarianism.

Confronted with such formidable foes as rationalism, Socinianism, and Deism, these Particular Baptists’ Trinitarianism exhibited several common features. First, they all elevated the doctrine of the Trinity to the center of Christian faith and life. Gill underscored its crucial importance as “the foundation of revelation, and of the economy of man’s salvation,” and as the epistemological and hermeneutical prisms of the gospel.⁴⁴ It permeates Christian doctrine and experience, “enter[ing] into the whole of our salvation, and all the parts of it; into all the doctrines of the gospel, and into all the experience of the saints.”⁴⁵ Likewise, Wallin lauded the doctrine of the Trinity as “the

⁴²For the purpose of introduction, Wallin’s Trinitarianism will be examined primarily from two of his works, *The eternal Existence of the Lord Jesus Christ considered and improved. A Sermon, the Substance of which was lately Delivered at a Monthly Association, in Graston-Street, near the Seven-Dials* (London: J. Buckland, 1766), and *The Scripture-Doctrine of Christ’s Sonship* (London: Keith, 1771).

⁴³Beddome was remembered as “an extraordinary person” on many accounts, primarily “a preacher” and “a religious poet” who composed hymns to be sung by his congregation to illustrate the truth he preached. Richard Hall, preface to *Hymns Adapted to Public Worship, or Family Devotion* (London, 1818), v–viii. The Trinitarianism of Beddome’s hymns can be clearly seen in this hymnal. It began with the perfections of God, covering such divine attributes as sovereignty, omniscience, immutability, wisdom and grace of the triune God. It was followed by the chapter on God’s providence, which traditionally was often ascribed to the Father. Chapters 3 and 4 were on Christ, “Life, Death, and Exaltation of Christ” and “Characters and Figurative Representations of Christ,” followed by one chapter on the “Influences of the Holy Spirit.” Then the doctrine of the Trinity was the first and foremost doctrine he explored in the chapter on “Scripture Doctrines” and continued to pervade other chapters on worship, and baptism. The hymnal ended with eight doxologies of the Trinitarian Godhead (hymns 823–30).

⁴⁴John Gill, *A Collection of Sermons and Tracts in Two Volumes, Containing Vol. I: I. Annual Sermons. II. Occasional Sermons. III. Funeral Sermons. Vol. II: I. Ordination Sermons. II. Polemical Tracts. III. Dissertations, Several of which Were Never Printed* (London: George Keith, 1773), 2:53. According to Gill, the doctrine of the Trinity is “what enters into every truth of the gospel, and without which no truth can be truly understood, nor rightly explained.”

⁴⁵Gill, *BDD*, 1:138.

first and grand principle of revealed truth and the gospel,”⁴⁶ by which Christian faith was distinguished from natural religions.⁴⁷ Beddome demonstrated the central importance of the Trinity in his hymns devoted to the triune God and to the three distinct persons in the Godhead.⁴⁸ These Particular Baptists’ elevation of the doctrine of the Trinity was shared by Dutton. In one letter, she explicitly regarded the doctrine of the Trinity, “three persons in one nature, in one God” and the two natures in the person of Christ as foundational to the church.⁴⁹ Thus, if only for polemic purpose, these Particular Baptists aligned themselves with the patristic fathers in restoring the doctrine of the Trinity to the center of Christian faith and worship.⁵⁰

Then, the Particular Baptists’ Trinitarianism was Christocentric. This might have to do not only with the central significance of Christ’s work in salvation, but also with the reality that the person of the Son was often at the center of Trinitarian disputes.⁵¹

⁴⁶Wallin, *Eternal Existence of the Lord Jesus Christ*, iv–v.

⁴⁷Wallin claimed that the doctrine of the Trinity “lies at the foundation of our holy religion, by which alone it can be explained, or distinguished from what is styled the religion of nature.” Wallin, *Scripture-Doctrine of Christ’s Sonship*, vi–vii.

⁴⁸The hymnal opened with the perfections of God, which pertained to the Trinitarian Godhead, and God’s providence, an activity usually ascribed to the Father. These were followed by two sections on Christ and one on the influences of the Holy Spirit. In the section on “Scriptural Doctrines,” the doctrine of the Trinity was the first that he explored from hymns 255 to 329. In this section, hymns 255–57 are explicitly about the Trinity. In “Hymn 270,” which is under the subhead of the wonderful love of God, Beddome described it as the Father’s love in not sparing the Son and sending the Spirit. He concluded that “For love so great, I now to thee, / The Three in one and One in three.” The hymnal ended with eight Trinitarian doxologies from hymns 823–30. Although the organization and emphasis may reflect the Trinitarian concern of the editor more than the hymn writer, Beddome’s Trinitarian focus was also highlighted in that he had such hymns to contribute. Benjamin Beddoome, *Hymns Adapted to Public Worship, or Family Devotion* (London, 1818).

⁴⁹Dutton, “Letter 74,” in *SSW*, 1:302.

⁵⁰The centrality of the Trinity in the patristic Christianity has been registered by several authors. John P. Whalen and Joroslav Pelikan, for example, deemed the doctrine of the Trinity as “the most important theological achievement in the first five centuries of the church,” and “provided the conceptual framework and the vocabulary for the other major development of that period, the dogma of the person of Christ.” Whalen and Pelikan, foreword to Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), xiii.

⁵¹From the seventeenth century on to the end of the nineteenth century, the person of Christ and his eternal generation in particular, has been the focal point of doctrinal controversies and denominational divide. See Sell, *Christ and Controversy*, 3.

So when Wallin commended the doctrine of the Trinity to be “the first and grand principle of revealed truth and the gospel,” he underscored the eternal existence and deity of Christ to be “of the utmost moment” and “essential to the doctrine.”⁵² Gill likewise set a great store by orthodox Christology. Out of the nine chapters in his treatise on *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, God the Father and God the Spirit were each treated in one chapter, but four chapters were devoted to exploring the Son, covering the character and deity of the Word, his sonship and personality to the near exhaustion of biblical revelations of the Son.⁵³ This imbalance was justifiable by the centrality of Christ in the redemptive schema and in the theological conception of the Trinity since the deity of the Spirit would be denied whenever the deity of the Son was not properly maintained.⁵⁴ As for Beddome, his Christocentrism was visible in the numerical preeminence of his hymns about Christ over those on the Father or the Spirit.⁵⁵ The equality of “the sacred Three” in wisdom, grace, and power and their co-operation in the economy of salvation did not prevent the person and work of Christ from receiving the most attention since it was crucial not only in the salvation of sinners, but in revealing the truth and love of the Godhead.

Fuller’s Trinitarianism was also Christological. Fuller wrote that “there is a greater importance in the doctrine of the Trinity than commonly appears on a superficial

⁵²Wallin, *Eternal Existence of the Lord Jesus Christ*, iv–v.

⁵³The four chapters from V to VIII treating the deity and personality of the Son were sandwiched between two chapters concerning respectively the personality and deity of the Father and the Spirit. Gill, *The Doctrine of Trinity, Stated and Vindicated Being the Substance of several Discourses on the Important Subjects, Reduced into the Form of a Treatise* (London: Aaron Ward and H. Whitridge, 1731).

⁵⁴Gill pointed out that the deity of the Spirit was denied “by the Macedonians of old, and by the Socinians of late; and generally, by all such who oppose the proper divinity of the Son.” Gill, *Doctrine of the Trinity*, 197.

⁵⁵In his first posthumously published hymnal, Sections III and IV were specifically about Christ and totaled about 88 hymns. If the first two sections of perfections of God and providence were attributable to the Father, then hymns about the Father added up to about 42 and the 15 hymns in Section V were about the Holy Spirit.

inspection of it; chiefly, perhaps, on account of its affecting our views of the doctrine of the person and work of Christ; which doctrine, being the foundation on which the church is built, cannot be removed without the utmost danger to the building.”⁵⁶ This was necessitated by the central role of Christ in the redemptive schema: “the person of Christ is the foundation-stone on which the church is built,” his deity determinative to the efficacy of his atonement and essential to the calling upon his name and trusting him for salvation.⁵⁷ Considering the central importance of Christology, Dutton’s defense of the eternal Sonship of Christ against William Romaine’s exclusive economic lens of the names of the triune God did not sound fastidious at all.⁵⁸ Christology and the doctrine of the Trinity are so inextricably linked that they stand or stumble together.

Next, the Trinitarianism of these Particular Baptists was biblical. This might seem all too natural in view of the Baptists’ emphasis on the Bible.⁵⁹ But it would not necessarily be so when reckoning with the bogus dichotomy set up between Scripture and the doctrine of the Trinity by its opponents. Fuller dismissed this dichotomy as false and contended for the congruence of the Trinitarian languages with “the *sense* of biblical revelations,” if not with “the *signs*” [italics mine].⁶⁰ The doctrine of the Trinity is

⁵⁶Fuller, “Letter IX: The Trinity,” 1:708.

⁵⁷Fuller, “The Deity of Christ,” 3:695–97.

⁵⁸In her *A Letter on the Divine Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ*, Dutton accused William Romaine of “giving great countenance to the Sabellian error” when he alleged that the scriptural names of Father, Son, and Spirit consisted in the offices of the Trinitarian Godhead rather than the manner of their existence and internal relationship. Dutton, *A Letter on the Divine Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ. . . . By One Who Has Tasted That the Lord Is Gracious*, in *SSW*, 5:1–40.

⁵⁹For an example of the Baptists’ emphasis on the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible, see L. Russ Bush and Thomas J. Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1999).

⁶⁰In his *Doctrine of the Trinity Stated and Vindicated*, Gill defended the use of non-scriptural languages of the Trinity and persons, first, by distinguishing the sign from the sense: even though the words could not be found in the Bible, the sense was there nevertheless. Then he argued from the inherent relationship between words and doctrine in that “he that coins new word coins new doctrines” and thus it would be “a difficult thing to change words, in such an important article as this, without altering the sense of it.” Gill, *Doctrine of the Trinity*, 57. In his *Body of Doctrinal Divinity*, he added one more justification for the use of non-scriptural language in the doctrine of the Trinity: it is necessary to differentiate different positions underneath their apparent

revealed by Scripture and can be supported by scriptural evidence. One consistent biblical argument these Baptist ministers wielded was the biblical divine name, “Jehovah,” which addressed the Godhead both collectively and person-distinctively. Beddome specified the Godhead as Jehovah in his catechism and hymns.⁶¹ Wallin defended the eternal existence and deity of the Son right from this divine appellation, Jehovah or “I AM,” which Jesus appropriated for his self-address in John 5:58; he also identified the Spirit as Jehovah the Spirit.⁶² This divine appellation of Jehovah was adopted by Benjamin Dutton when he expressed his trust in the triune God to overcome the evil of his chronic alcoholism.⁶³ Likewise, Anne Dutton did not hesitate to address the Godhead as Jehovah: “God the Father, as eternally begetting his only Son, was, is, and ever will be, Jehovah; God the Son, as eternally begotten of the Father, was, is, and ever will be, Jehovah; and God the Spirit, as eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son, was, is, and ever will be Jehovah.”⁶⁴

Besides the divine name of Jehovah, Particular Baptists also demonstrated their biblical fidelity by the very titles of their theological treatises and their use of the names

allegiance to the biblical language. Gill, *BDD*, xl.

⁶¹For hymns, see Beddome, “Glory to the Three Eternal.” For his use of Jehovah in the catechism, see Question IX: “Is the Son called Jehovah? Is the Spirit called Jehovah?” The biblical evidence Beddome adduced for the Son being Jehovah was Jer 23:6 and for the Spirit, Exod 17:7.

⁶²Wallin argued that Jesus’ self-address, “I AM” (John 8:58) clearly referred back to God’s revelation of his eternal and unchangeable nature under the name of Jehovah: “We have seen that God made choice of these words I AM to express his own eternity, and that in our text they can signify nothing, if they do not convey an idea of eternal existence; it is therefore unreasonable not to allow them the same sense when applied to our Savior.” Wallin, *Eternal Existence of the Lord Jesus Christ*, 17–21. He also addressed the Spirit as “that uncreated divine Spirit who bears record in heaven, even Jehovah the Spirit, who is a real distinct divine person, equal in perfection and glory with the Father and the Son.” Benjamin Wallin, *An Exhortation Against Quenching the Spirit. A Sermon Preached to a Society of Young Men* (London: J. Ward, 1748), 5.

⁶³Dutton, *Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God’s Free Grace*, 90–92. He summarized the distinctive offices of the triune God as “the mighty Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit, the Father, with all his love, the Son with all his grace and fullness, the Spirit, with all his graces and comforts.” Dutton, *Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God’s Free Grace*, 126.

⁶⁴Dutton, *Divine Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ*, in *SSW*, 5:4.

of Father, Son, and Spirit. Beddome titled his catechism *The Scriptural Exposition of the Baptist Catechism* and Wallin his treatise on the sonship of Christ *The Scripture-doctrine of Christ's Sonship*. Rather than delving into philosophical explanations of the individuations of the “persons” of the Godhead, they rested content with the biblical names of “Father,” “Son,” and the “Spirit” to identify the three persons of the Godhead. Gill wrote that there is “but one God; that there is plurality in the Godhead; that there are divine persons in it; that the Father is God, the Son God, and the Holy Spirit God; that these are distinct in personality, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.”⁶⁵ This was echoed in Beddome’s *A Scriptural Exposition of the Baptist Catechism*, which in its turn was a faithful reproduction of the catechism of Keach: “There are three Persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one, the same in essence, equal in power and glory.”⁶⁶

In addition, the Particular Baptists’ Trinitarianism was replete with worship of the triune God. In Gill’s definition of the Trinity above, he expressed his reverence at the “power and glory” of the Godhead. Likewise, Beddome characterized the three persons of the Trinity as “equal in power and glory” as well as “one in essence.”⁶⁷ The being of the Trinity induces worship. In the same biblical and worshipful vein, Dutton adored the Godhead as “the glorious Three-in-One” or “the glorious One-in-Three,” distinct yet united in divinity and glory. The distinction of the persons in the Trinity is “not to be fancied, but believed,”⁶⁸ and even more precisely, to be worshiped. This well attested to

⁶⁵Gill, *Doctrine of the Trinity*, 166–67.

⁶⁶Beddome, *A Scriptural Exposition of the Baptist Catechism by Way of Question and Answer*, 2nd ed. (Bristol: W. Pine, 1776), 23.

⁶⁷Beddome, *Scriptural Exposition of the Baptist Catechism*, 23.

⁶⁸Reginald Kirby, *The Threefold Bond: Of Communion with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost* (London: Marshall, Morgan, & Scott, 1936), 104.

the truth that “the Trinitarian discussions find their origins in the realm of the church’s doxology.”⁶⁹

This emphasis on worship was related with the Particular Baptists’ recognition of the divine mystery of the triune God. Gill understood “the doctrine of a Trinity of persons in the unity of the divine essence” to be “a great mystery of godliness,” which could not be fully apprehended or articulated by finite humanity.⁷⁰ His humility was shared by Wallin when he considered it “a vain and presumptuous enquiry” to pry into “the mode of the Son’s generation;” instead he called for believing the deity and Sonship of Christ “as the scriptures expressly declare him.”⁷¹ Just as the Bible is the base of the knowledge of God, so it circumscribes its borderline. Likewise, Beddome taught that the nature of the Son and his relationship with the Father was mystery. Question XXIV about the redeemer asked: “Is the Son of the same nature with the Father? Yes. And equal to him? Yes. Is this a mystery which we cannot understand?” The answer was a conclusive affirmative: “Yes” as if to rein in any vain attempt at uttering more.⁷² Fuller recognized the necessity of humility before the mystery of the Godhead when he confessed the doctrine to be “a subject so great and so much above our comprehension as this is requires to be treated with trembling.”⁷³ Accordingly he admonished the Socinians to “modestly consider the weakness of the human understanding” with respect to the person of the triune God and challenged them retorted that “if it be too much for us to say with exactness to what degree the distinction reaches, is it not also too much for them to

⁶⁹Carl R. Trueman, *The Creedal Imperative* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 145.

⁷⁰Gill, *Doctrine of the Trinity*, 1. Actually, Gill noted that one of Satan’s two stratagems to undermine the doctrine was to exalt human reason and human free will to the slighting of divine revelation.

⁷¹Wallin, *Scripture-Doctrine of Christ’s Sonship*, xv.

⁷²Beddome, *Scriptural Exposition of the Baptist Catechism*, 44.

⁷³Fuller, “Letter IX: The Trinity,” 1:707.

decide upon the precise kind and degree of union which is necessary to denominate the great Creator of the world—the *one God*?”⁷⁴ This sense of mystery was registered with Dutton. In one of her hymns, she highlighted “the mystery of the Trinity” and its implications for human understanding:

The Father, Son, and Spirit be
One God most high, yet one in three;
The Godhead’s glory jointly share,
Because that they co-equal are.

This is a mystery too bright,
To be beheld by nature’s light;
From men of reason it’s concealed,
Though in the gospel it’s revealed.⁷⁵

The doctrine of the Trinity ought to be received with fearful reverence, not by faithless reasoning. In respect of the centrality and the mystery of the triune God, these Baptists had achieved what Dixon aspired to recover in his own Catholic confessional tradition that “the mystery of the most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life.”⁷⁶

Finally, these Particular Baptists explored the practical implication of the doctrine of the Trinity. As their *London Confession* stated in the words of the *Savoy Declaration*, the doctrine is the “foundation of all [believers’] communion with God and comfortable dependence on Him.” Much in the spirit of the patristic fathers, Gill contended for “a Trinity of persons in the Godhead, from the worship and duties of religion enjoined of good men, and performed by them,” such as the baptismal formula.⁷⁷ In defending the eternal Sonship of Jesus, Wallin made it clear that it was not seeking knowledge for knowledge’s own sake, but rather for deepening our apprehension and

⁷⁴Fuller, “The Doctrine of the Trinity,” *Works* 2:707.

⁷⁵Dutton, “Hymn 1: The Mystery of the Trinity Revealed in Christ,” in *SSW*, 2:176.

⁷⁶Dixon, “*Nice and Hot Disputes*,” xiii.

⁷⁷Gill, *BDD*, 1:140. For the devotional use of the doctrine in the early church, see Carl R. Trueman, *The Creedal Imperative* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 141

appreciation of God's love in sacrificing "his own Son . . . for us all," which "may suffice for our eternal contemplation, with wonder, gratitude, and joy, in a world of glory."⁷⁸ Beddome defined the act of prayer in Trinitarian terms as "an offering up of our desires to God, by the assistance of his Holy Spirit, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, believing, with confessions of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies."⁷⁹ Fuller underlined "the importance of the doctrine to the existence and progress of vital godliness" because it is "not a subject of mere speculation, but one on which depends all the communications of grace and peace to sinful men."⁸⁰ To a certain extent, these Particular Baptists had already illuminated the practical dimension of the doctrine of the Trinity in the sinners' communion with God and their comfort in him, which was prominent in Dutton's Trinitarianism.

It was in this immediate Particular Baptists' defense of the doctrine of the Trinity as well as the broad historical context of its decline that Dutton formulated her thoughts and worship of the triune God. As a faithful Particular Baptist, she made her own contribution to the defense of the doctrine by adopting all the biblical, Christocentric, devotional, and practical approaches to it. With her robust sense of assurance and rich experiential spirituality, she presented herself as an exemplar case study for Trinitarian spirituality in a Baptist context.

⁷⁸Wallin, *Scripture-Doctrine of Christ's Sonship*, xvii.

⁷⁹Beddome, *Scriptural Exposition of the Baptist Catechism*, Question CV.

⁸⁰Fuller, "Letter IX: The Trinity," *Works* 1:708.

CHAPTER 5

THE BEING OF THE TRINITY

The doctrine, Madam, of the three distinct subsistences, or three divine persons, in the one, undivided, infinite essence of the eternal Jehovah is of vast moment to faith.

—Anne Dutton, *A Few Scriptures on the 53 Chapter of the Prophecy of Isaiah*

Introduction

The being of the Trinity refers to the internal nature and life of the Godhead, especially the nature of the Son and Spirit and their relationships with the Father. Compared with the economic Trinity of God’s relatedness to the world in creation and redemption, it is sometimes dismissed as insignificant or even irrelevant to the doctrine of the Trinity with all its transcendental profundity.¹ But however intellectually tantalizing, the Trinity is the identity of the Christian God as revealed by his word, which cannot be jettisoned without imperiling the very foundation of Christian faith. In the words of Karl Barth (1886–1968): “It is the business of the doctrine of the Trinity to answer” “the question who God is” and to distinguish “the Christian doctrine of God as Christian, and therefore what already distinguishes the Christian concept of revelation as Christian, in contrast to all other possible doctrines of God or concepts of revelation.”² This is all the more needed in our age of religious pluralism when “the question of God’s identity

¹Fred Sanders, for example, points out the modern tendency of “Recentring Trinitarianism on the Economy of Salvation,” which is following Karl Rahner’s lead. Fred Sanders, “The Trinity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, ed. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 39–42.

²Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, vol. 1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, pt. 1, trans. G. W. Bromiley (New York: T & T Clark International, 2004), 301.

recovers its natural primacy.”³ The immanent Trinity is foundational to Christian faith and to the economic Trinity in that it is “a conceptual foregrounding of the entire matrix of economic revelation.”⁴ The two “can be distinguished from each other but cannot be separated, for they are not two but one.”⁵ The God of infinite being, the Father, Son, and Spirit is the same God who saves.

Dutton was unequivocal about the indispensability of the being of the Trinity. She deemed the nature of the Trinity and the person of Christ as “the foundations” of the church. Pointedly she asked: “if the foundations (of three persons in one nature, in one God and of two natures in one person, in the person of Christ), are thus destroyed, what cant [*sic*] the righteous do?”⁶ Certainly they would be pressed to rectify errors and reinstate the Trinitarian foundation of their faith.⁷ Both tasks Dutton undertook in her theological treatises, religious poetry, and letters on the spiritual subjects.

Given that Dutton’s arguments for the being of the Trinity were scattered in her works, this chapter will attempt a thematic approach to the doctrine. It will first present how she names the triune God. Dutton identified the Godhead by the triune name revealed in the Bible: Father, Son, and Spirit. Then, it will deal with the being of the three persons and how they relate to one another. The Father, Son, and Spirit are equal and united in divine essence, love and glory. The chapter concludes with the ultimate mystery of the immanent Trinity. After all her negative and positive arguments, Dutton

³Robert W. Jenson, *The Triune Identity: God According to the Gospel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), xi.

⁴Sanders, “Trinity,” 48.

⁵Roderick T. Leupp, *Knowing the Name of God: A Trinitarian Tapestry of Grace, Faith & Community* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 44.

⁶Dutton, “Letter 74,” in *SSW*, 1:302.

⁷Dutton, “Letter 74,” in *SSW*, 1:302.

understood the immanent Trinity to be godly mystery, which is to be believed *in* rather than reasoned *out*.

Naming the Triune God: Father, Son, and Spirit

What is in a name? May the triune God be called by names other than the Father, Son, and Spirit and still be the God revealed in the Bible? Are these names impersonal terms merely for illustrating the redemptive work of the Trinity or pregnant with ontological significance for the Trinity? These were some of the questions Christians have wrestled with since the early church. Athanasius, for example, registered the bearing of the biblical naming of Father, Son, and Spirit upon the immanent Trinity when he refuted Arians' appellation of the divine as the "Unoriginate": "Those who name God 'Unoriginate' name him only from his external works. . . . ; but those who name God 'Father' immediately signify in him also the Son. . . . , naming him from the intimate issue of his own being."⁸ In *A Letter on the Divine Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ*, which she wrote to refute the Sabellian insinuations of William Romaine, Dutton contended for the triune name of Father, Son, and Spirit to be biblical revelation of the identity of the Trinity.⁹ The biblical naming of Father, Son, and Spirit not only demonstrates the distinctive modes of generation of the three persons, but even more significantly, identifies the triune God.

In his *A Discourse upon the Self-existence of Jesus Christ*, Romaine asserted that the Scripture-names of the Father, Son, and Spirit were terms descriptive of the offices of the Godhead, but not of the manner of divine existence.¹⁰ Considered one of

⁸Quoted in Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 17–18.

⁹Dutton, *A Letter on the Divine Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ . . . By One Who Has Tasted That the Lord Is Gracious*, in *SSW*, 5:1–40.

¹⁰Dutton, *Divine Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ*, in *SSW*, 5:1–40. This was directed against Romaine's treatise, *A Discourse upon the Self-existence of Jesus Christ*, which she considered guilty of Sabellian insinuations. William Romaine, *A Discourse upon the Self-existence of Jesus Christ*, 2nd ed. (London: J. Worrall and E. Withers, 1755).

the *Five Christian Leaders of the Eighteenth Century* by R. C. Ryle (1816–1900),¹¹ Romaine was actually striving to defend the eternal deity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity against Socinians and Arians in that treatise.¹² By Jesus’ self-designating name of “I AM” in John 8:24, Romaine postulated that “I AM cannot relate to his created beings” and thus “all the sophistry of Arianism and Socinianism cannot wrest the words to such a sense.”¹³ With his characteristic “simplicity, pith, point, and forcibleness” and his flair “for short, true, vigorous sentences,”¹⁴ Romaine defended the deity of Christ and derivatively the doctrine of the Trinity by the syllogism that “whoever is self-existent is the true God; but Jesus Christ is self-existent, therefore he is true God.”¹⁵ He held such a high view of the doctrine of the Trinity that he regarded it as “the most necessary article of the Christian religion.” Consequently, he condemned Arians and Socinians to be “the chief of sinners,” who “must dwell with the devouring fire, and with the everlasting burnings.”¹⁶ So, was Dutton being nitpicking in taking on Romaine? In doing so, was she even guilty of the internecine spirit among some defenders of the Trinity?

To her credit, Dutton did not condemn Romaine as a Sabellian *per se*. What she felt disconcerted about was his “giving great countenance to the Sabellian error” by asserting that the scriptural names of Father, Son, and Spirit consisted in the offices of the

¹¹J. C. Ryle, *Five Christian Leaders of the Eighteenth Century* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1960).

¹²Romaine’s *A Discourse on the Self-Existence of Jesus Christ* was one of the two sermons he delivered at St. George’s that Ryle recommended to his readers as showing “how boldly and powerfully he delivered messages in the times of doctrinal and moral collapse,” the other one being *A Method for Preventing the Frequency of Robberies and Murders*. Ryle, *Five Christian Leaders of the Eighteenth Century*, 67.

¹³Romaine, *Self-existence of Jesus Christ*, 12.

¹⁴Ryle, *Five Christian Leaders of the Eighteenth Century*, 84.

¹⁵Romaine, *Self-existence of Jesus Christ*, 21.

¹⁶Romaine, *Self-existence of Jesus Christ*, 19, 24.

Trinitarian Godhead rather than the manner of their existence and internal relationship.¹⁷

Her misgivings were not groundless with respect to what Romaine wrote,

The ever blessed trinity took the names of father, son, and holy spirit, not to describe in what manner they exist as divine persons, but in what manner the divine persons have acted for us, and for our salvation. These names were to give us ideas of the distinct offices, which the trinity has agreed to sustain in the economy of our redemption.¹⁸

Romaine reduced the biblical names of Father, Son, and Spirit to mere signifiers of their work *for us* and overlooked their bearing upon the three persons of the Godhead.¹⁹ This did not sound much different from what Sabellius alleged in the early third century that God is “one individual being;” the terms of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are “simply names applied to the different forms (modes) of action of one being and therefore, do not refer to eternal and intrinsic distinction within the godhead.”²⁰ Actually, Romaine sounded less confident in giving an explanation to the names of Father, Son, and Spirit

¹⁷Dutton, *Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ*, in *SSW*, 5:1–40.

¹⁸Romaine, *Self-existence of Jesus Christ*, 18.

¹⁹In Gill’s *Body of Doctrinal Divinity*, he refuted a similar error in the *Body of Divinity* by Thomas Ridgley (1667–1734) concerning the Sonship of Christ. Ridgley alleged that Christ’s Sonship is “by office, and not by nature” and “does not take away any argument by which we prove his Deity.” But Gill shared Dutton’s conviction about the significance of the eternal generation of the Son in that “he must first be proved to be a distinctive divine Person, before he can be considered as Mediator.” Gill, *BDD*, 1:144.

²⁰Van A. Harvey, *A Handbook of Theological Terms* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 152–53. This ancient error was resuscitated in the eighteenth century partly because it catered well to the rational sentiments of the Age of the Enlightenment. Without overthrowing the claims of the threeness in the Godhead and deflecting to the Unitarian camp, it allowed theologians to wield a reasonable sway over the mystery of the Trinity. Its influence was so insidious that even ardent defenders of Trinitarianism could fall prey to its spell, Romaine in Dutton’s day and Karl Barth and Alister McGrath in modern times. Karl Barth described the three persons of the Trinity as “three modes or ways of being.” Even though he tried to distance himself from Modalism by describing these three modes of being to be eternal and “not to be exchanged or confounded” in contrast to the momentary nature of the modes in Modalism, Barth’s formulation still takes a toll of the personal and relational implications in the orthodox “person” language. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (2004), pt. 1:350–61. Another instance of such adaptive Modalism can be found in “the three essential models” approach of Alister E. McGrath, *Understanding the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 132–42.

than to the great “I AM.” He wished that it were in his power to explain his meaning in a way easily comprehensible to his readers.²¹

It was at this point that Dutton demonstrated some of her best theological sensibility and perspicuity. As she indicated, Romaine apparently erred on two accounts. First, he betrayed his Scripture principle to give in to the rationalization of his adversaries. Dutton rightly grasped the inconsistency in Romaine’s argument when he “asserts a Trinity of persons, in the unity of Jehovah’s essence, according to the Scripture-revelation,” yet “strangely denies those *Scripture-names* [italics mine], by which those persons are revealed to us; as the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost, 1 John 5:7.”²² Although the *Johannine Comma* has been proved to be specious evidence for the Trinity,²³ Dutton nevertheless correctly captured Romaine’s inconsistent use of Scripture.

This gave rise to the other error of Romaine: Sabellianism. His explanation of the triune name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit was utilitarian, reasonable, and human-centered. In his view, these names were to “give us ideas of the distinct offices, which the Trinity had agreed to sustain in the economy of our redemption,”²⁴ devoid of any effect upon the manner of their self-existence. He even went so far as to allege that the three divine persons “were not Father, Son, and Spirit, prior to their agreeing to act, and acting according to agreement.”²⁵ Romaine’s exclusive economic lens seemed to have blinded

²¹Romaine, *Self-existence of Jesus Christ*, 19.

²²Dutton, *Divine Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ*, in *SSW*, 5:2.

²³Gill considered “the famous text in 1 John 5:7 as giving full proof and evidence of this doctrine [of the Trinity]” and gave a lengthy defense for its canonicity. Even though he was fully aware of objections against its canonicity since “it is wanting in the Syriac version” and “many Greek manuscript” and “not quoted by the ancient fathers who wrote against the Arians, when it might have been of great service to them,” he refuted all as insubstantial and unconvincing argumentations and attributed these to the enemies’ stratagem to “weaken its authority” and “extirpate it from a place in the sacred writings.” Gill, *BDD*, 1:136.

²⁴Romaine, *Self-existence of Jesus Christ*, 18.

²⁵Dutton, *Divine Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ*, in *SSW*, 5:4.

him to the biblical evidence to the contrary. While he may believe a rose would smell as sweet and the triune God save as efficaciously by any other names, Dutton was convinced that any slighting of the biblical naming of God would confuse the very being of the Trinity. As she challenged Romaine, “take away the proper names of the three persons, or distinct subsistences, in the divine essence: and does Mr. R— know what name to call them by, to distinguish one person from another? Or can he know which is the first, second or third person? It should seem he doth not.”²⁶ Indeed, Romaine would be confused. As Robert W. Jenson states, the Father, Son, and Spirit are “a proper name of God,” not “an assemblage of after-the-fact theological abstractions” like “Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.”²⁷

Having refuted Romaine’s errors, Dutton argued positively for the significance of the triune name of Father, Son, and Spirit to the being of the Trinity. Following Romaine’s line of argument, she identified the Father, Son, and Spirit as Jehovah in the Old Testament. But diverging from him, Dutton pointed out what these names revealed about the relations and distinction of the three persons of the Godhead: “God the Father, as eternally begetting his only Son, was, is, and ever will be, Jehovah; God the Son, as eternally begotten of the Father, was, is, and ever will be, Jehovah; and God the Spirit, as eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son, was, is, and ever will be Jehovah.”²⁸ The biblical names of the Father, Son, and Spirit do not signify an ontological hierarchy of the three persons, but reveal their distinctive modes of origin and internal relations. In Gill’s words, they correspond to “the personal relations, or distinctive relative properties”

²⁶Dutton, *Divine Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ*, in *SSW*, 5:3.

²⁷Robert W. Jenson, *The Triune Identity: God According to the Gospel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 17.

²⁸Dutton, *Divine Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ*, in *SSW*, 5:4.

of each person as “paternity in the first person, filiation in the second, and spiration in the third.”²⁹

Contrary to Romaine’s economic orientation, Dutton further highlighted the immanent significance of the names of Father, Son, and Spirit. In nature, they “jointly possess, all the immense and eternal glories, of the one undivided, infinite essence of Jehovah.”³⁰ In terms of inherent relationship, this “divine, essential union” of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit warrants “a divine, essential communion, a mutual complacency, and reciprocal love-participants of the Godhead’s infinite and undivided bliss.”³¹ It is in view of this intra-Trinitarian communion that God’s adoption of sinners is nothing but gratuitous grace: “Our Jehovah, might forever have taken up his satisfaction in his own great self, resting in that high communion which was held between his three glorious persons, 1 John 5:7, John 14:10. And never have gone forth into creature-converse. . . . That self-existent, independent, and self-sufficient being, whose essential blessedness none of his creatures can add anything to, or take anything from.”³² When this intimate communion of the Trinity *ad intra* expresses itself *ad extra* in the economy of human salvation, it springs right from “the infinite love” of the Trinity, “the infinite love of God the Father who gives his Son, and the infinite love of Christ in giving himself for us, and the infinite love of the Holy Spirit in setting Christ before us and applying this great salvation upon us.”³³ Thus, rather than dispassionate terms of labor divisions in the economy of salvation, the triune name of Father, Son and Spirit reveals the internal relations of the three persons in virtue of their origin and communion.

²⁹Gill, *BDD*, 1:142.

³⁰Dutton, *Divine Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ*, in *SSW*, 5:5.

³¹Dutton, *Divine Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ*, in *SSW*, 5:7.

³²Dutton, *A Discourse concerning God’s Act of Adoption. To Which Is Added, A Discourse upon the Inheritance of the Adopted Sons of God*. in *SSW*, 4:248.

³³Dutton, *Divine Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ*, in *SSW*, 5:13.

The Co-Deity of the Father, Son, and Spirit

The Deity of the Father

As the three persons of the Godhead, the Father, Son, and Spirit are equal in deity. By nature, the Father is “the first divine person in the adorable Trinity,” who “possess[es] all the essential glories of the Godhead” as “the creator, rector, and governor of his creatures.”³⁴ As the first person in the Godhead, he is unoriginated, being “the fountain of deity, and sum of all felicity,”³⁵ whereas the Son is begotten by him and the Spirit sent by both the Father and the Son. Distinct from the Son, “God the Father is never said to take our nature;” rather “it was the Word, the second person in God” that “was made flesh.”³⁶

The Father’s deity is also proved by his work in redemption and the worship accorded to him. As Dutton reiterated in many of her works, salvation resides in the electing love of the Father, together with the redemptive grace of the Son, and the particular vocation of the Spirit. Besides, the deity of the Father is established by the fact that he is to be worshipped. In her treatise on justification, Dutton urged the justified sinner to “worship and serve God, as his own Father in Christ, from a principle of *love* and *gratitude*, for that great love manifested to him, and that full salvation bestowed upon him.” Likewise, she exhorted the regenerated souls to “give all the glory of your heavenly birth, unto God, your heavenly Father, who was the sole author of it.”³⁷

³⁴Dutton, *A few Scriptures on the 53d Chapter of the Prophecy of Isaiah. In a Letter to a Friend*, in *SSW*, 5:327.

³⁵Dutton, “Letter I: On the Gift of the Holy Spirit to Believers as a Sealer,” in *SSW*, 5:32.

³⁶Dutton, *A few Scriptures on the 53d Chapter of the Prophecy of Isaiah*, in *SSW*, 5:343.

³⁷Dutton, *A Discourse concerning the New-Birth: To Which Are Added Two Poems: The One on Salvation in Christ, by Free-Grace, for the Chief of Sinners; the Other on a Believer’s Safety and Duty. With an Epistle Recommendatory, by the Reverend Mr. Jacob Rogers, B. A.*, in *SSW*, 4:195.

The Full-Deity and Full-Humanity of the Son

Whereas the deity of the Father generally goes undisputed, the Son's deity is often at the vortex of Trinitarian controversies. Notwithstanding all the political, philosophical, or religious causes, Dutton ascribed it fundamentally to the attack by Satan. He, "in all ages," has "shown his malice in using the utmost of his power and policy against Christ, (the "rock of the church,") as God-Man, in two entire distinct natures, and one person for ever; and also against the church built upon him as such."³⁸ But Dutton was confident of Christ's victory over all these satanic "shakings" and urged believers to hold unto "the diversities of natures in the Mediator's person" with "the highest joy and deepest reverence:"

Without controversy, great is this mystery of godliness; God manifest in the flesh. The diversity of natures, in the unity of the Mediator's person, is a doctrine of the gospel to be believed by the saints with the highest joy and deepest reverence. The person of Christ, God-Man, as the "foundation" laid in "Sion," is "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence" to many, who dash against it, and are broken to pieces; but "unto them which believe, he is precious."³⁹

As the great mystery of godliness, the two natures of Christ, his full deity and his full humanity, should be embraced by faith and love.

The deity of Christ is testified by the word of God. In *A Narration of the Wonders of Grace*, the Son's deity is confirmed by such biblical evidence as Philippians 2:7: "By nature, Christ was God most high, / The second in the Trinity," who "thought it not robbery to be / co-equal with his Father."⁴⁰ In the *Hints of the Glory of Christ*, which was Dutton's allegorical exegesis of the Canticles, she affirmed that Christ "is *God by nature, by essence,*" "possessing co-equally, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, the

³⁸Dutton, *A Narration of the Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:113.

³⁹Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:113.

⁴⁰Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:125. This is only one of the many biblical evidence for Christ's deity in this poem. This religious poem of Dutton is characterized by the profuse biblical references she provided in the margin on the right, which clearly shows the biblical foundation of her poetic expressions of faith, including the deity of Christ.

incomprehensible perfections, the undivided glory and bliss, of the one great Jehovah!”⁴¹

With the Son, God the Father was pleased that “all fullness should dwell in him for us, even the fulness of the Godhead bodily,” which was an allusion to Colossians 1:19.⁴²

Then, the deity of the Son is testified by his power to save. As Dutton communicated to a “Mr. H—s,” the salvific efficacy of the Son’s love resides in his very deity:

Had not our Jesus been the Lord, the self-existent, all-sufficient, unchangeable and eternal Jehovah, he could not have loved one sinner, with the love of a Saviour, with a love great enough to save one single man, nor have borne with the provocations of one single soul. . . . I am too great a sinner, ever to hope for salvation, from any person, but one who is God by nature; from any love, that has not in it, all the radical and essential perfections of the Godhead. I had been undone, I should yet perish; if the Lord my lover, was not God my maker, if his name was not I AM!⁴³

The Lord loves the sinner with the love that saves, which resides in his eternal and essential deity. His righteousness “is styled the righteousness of God” because “the Lord Jesus Christ, the person who wrought it out, is God equal with the Father, and has all the essential perfections of the Godhead in him.”⁴⁴ It is his perfect righteousness that has been imputed to sinners and rendered them righteous before God.

Peculiar to the Son, his full deity is also demonstrated by his eternal generation. Dutton had already postulated the divine eternal sonship of Christ in her letter against Romaine. In another letter, she refuted the theological error of one Mr. W— of “set[ting] up a human soul to Christ” in eternity, by which he “robbed the Mediator of his

⁴¹Dutton, *Hints of the Glory of Christ; As the Friend and Bridegroom of the Church: From the Seven Last Verses of the Fifth Chapter of Solomon’s Song. In a Letter to a Friend*, in *SSW*, 4:13.

⁴²Dutton, “Letter 22,” in *SSW*, 6:111.

⁴³Dutton, “Letter 56,” in *SSW*, 5:228.

⁴⁴Dutton, *On Justification*, in *SSW*, 4:84.

divine nature” and reduced the Trinity to “one person in the Godhead,” namely, the Father.⁴⁵

Besides refutations, Dutton also positively contended for the Son’s eternal deity in her doctrine of adoption and covenant of grace. By “his eternal generation of the Father,” the Son is “God’s [own] Son; the Son of his nature,” “his [only] begotten Son,” who is “co-equal, co-essential, and co-eternal with his Father.”⁴⁶ In the eternal covenant of grace, the Son is the second person of the glorious Trinity who made the covenantal settlements even as he was set up by the Father as “the covenant-head” and “the Mediator” for God’s chosen seeds.⁴⁷ As her fellow Particular Baptist Fuller contended, Christ’s Sonship “was antecedent” to all his offices and “there never was a point in duration in which God was without his Son.”⁴⁸ In depicting the Son’s role as the Mediator in the eternal covenant of grace and the eternal act of adoption, Dutton seemed to have followed Gill’s arguments closely in their Trinitarian framework and immanent nature.⁴⁹

Yet it does not lead to the eternal humanity of the Son, which would certainly have jeopardized his full deity and hence the Trinity. This was prevented by Dutton’s covenantal emphasis and the temporal tension she maintained in her theological conceptions. As she carefully explained,

⁴⁵Dutton, “Letter 76,” in *SSW*, 1:301.

⁴⁶Dutton, *God’s Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:237.

⁴⁷Dutton, “Hymn 37: The Covenant of Grace,” in *SSW*, 2:213–14.

⁴⁸Andrew Fuller, *Letters on Systematic Divinity*, in *Works* 1:710.

⁴⁹Both Dutton’s doctrine of adoption and covenant of grace followed Gill’s in the Trinitarian and immanent emphases. For Gill’s doctrines of adoption and eternal covenant of grace, see Gill, *BDD*, 201–50. A good introduction of Gill’s Trinitarian and eternal orientation is by Muller, “The Spirit and the Covenant: John Gill’s Critique of the *Pactum Salutis*.” As for Dutton’s view of justification, it will be demonstrated in the next chapter on the economic Trinity. Suffice it to say at this point that she avoided Gill’s hyper-Calvinism of eternal justification by noting that “though, from eternity, God decreed to justify all the elect; yet they are not actually justified, until the Holy Spirit doth, in due time, apply Christ, and his righteousness, unto them, 1 Pet. i.2, 19, 20. Rom. viii.30. Gal. ii.16. Tit.iii.4,5,6,7.” Dutton, *On Justification*, in *SSW*, 4:109n.

I would not be mistaken by any, when, in the first part, I speak of the glory Christ had with God before the world was; as if, thereby, I thought that either his body or soul was then created; for I have no such apprehensions. This being all I intend by it; that Christ, as Mediator, “was set up from everlasting” in God’s covenant; and, as such, had all “glory” then settled upon him. When God, the eternal Son, engaged from everlasting to take our nature into personal union with himself, the Father looked upon it as if done; for he “calls the things which be not as though they were.”⁵⁰

Dutton harbored no illusion of the Son’s eternal humanity; nor did she encourage it in any way. From the eternal and a-temporal perspective of God, the only begotten Son of God embodied the tension of “already” and “not yet” with respect to his assumption of human nature as the Mediator. For “strictly speaking, there is no first nor second with God, whose vast mind comprehends all things at once” whereas “we creatures, must speak of his acts in a successive order, as our capacities can take them in.”⁵¹ Thus, when Dutton envisioned Christ’s mediatorial role before all time, she carefully specified that “God looked upon it *as if done* [italics mine],” not *actually* done.⁵²

Still, already presumed in the eternal mediatorial role of the Son is his human nature. Unique to the second person in the Godhead, he is fully divine and fully human as the Mediator between God and sinners. In the first part of her *Wonders of Grace*, Dutton pointed out the mystery of Christ in respect of his being:

Christ’s person is a mystery,
And was so from eternity;
When he engaged before all time
To take our nature upon him,
God looked upon it as if done;
And thenceforth did repute his Son,
As the great Mediator, who

⁵⁰Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:112.

⁵¹Dutton, *God’s Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:236.

⁵²In *Hints of the Glory of Christ*, Dutton wrote that in the Father’s eternal decrees and covenant with the Son, he has prepared Christ “a body, i.e., a human nature,” whereupon the Father “taking his great word, looked upon it as if done; and from thenceforth, reputed him as the great Mediator, and transacted with him as such.” It is “the already and not yet” tension in God’s salvific plan. Dutton, *Hints of the Glory of Christ*, in *SSW*, 4:14.

Should one day openly be so.⁵³

The humanity of Christ was ordained in eternity by the covenantal agreement of the Godhead for the salvation of sinners, which he came to assume “in the fullness of time.” As the God-Man, Christ’s “human nature was anointed distinctly, yet not separately from his divine person” by “God the Father, with the Holy Ghost above measure.”⁵⁴

Specifically, the two natures of Christ are hypostatically united. Dutton recognized it to be a “mystery of godliness” that “God manifest in the flesh.”⁵⁵ This mystery of the two natures of the person of Christ is characterized as “mixture,” which, however, is not “in the least wise *mixed*, by way of *confusion*.” Rather, “the divine nature, by assuming the human, sustained no *change*: nor was the *human*, by that assumption, *absorbed*, swallowed up, or lost any of its essential properties: But both these natures, so vastly different, are closely *joined* in *Christ*.”⁵⁶ It was the hypostatic union of Christ’s two natures: “there is his human nature, *Christ*; there is his divine person, as God, *hypostatically united* [italics mine] to the human nature in the womb of the virgin, which had no personal subsistence of its own, but subsisted in the divine person of the Son, as being assumed by him into personal union.”⁵⁷ In language reminiscent of the Chalcedon creeds, Dutton depicted the person of Christ as a mixture of human and divine natures without confusion between the two or dissolution of either.

⁵³Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:118.

⁵⁴Dutton, *A Few Scriptures on the 53d Chapter of the Prophecy of Isaiah*, in *SSW*, 5:343.

⁵⁵Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:113.

⁵⁶Dutton, *Hints of the Glory of Christ*, in *SSW*, 4:16.

⁵⁷Dutton, *A Few Scriptures on the 53d Chapter of the Prophecy of Isaiah*, in *SSW*, 5:343. In another letter, Dutton again highlighted the hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ: “With regard to his great person, in which both the divine and human natures, are hypostatically united!” Dutton, “Letter 7,” in *SSW*, 7:18.

This hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ was portrayed by Dutton in her allegorical interpretations of the Canticles 5:10. Although Dutton recognized the legitimacy of literal interpretation of the love poetry, she “chose to take this Song” as “independent upon the glory of Solomon, and his queen; and as wholly relating to the super-excellent glory of Christ, and his spouse.”⁵⁸ As Owen had done before her,⁵⁹ Dutton discerned in the “white” and “ruddy” of the beloved the glorious person of Christ the God-Man:

He is white: with regard to the glory of his deity. The Lord Jesus Christ, the church’s beloved, is so great a person, that has all the immense glories of the Godhead, radically in himself. He is God by nature, by essence. The second person in the sacred Trinity, possessing co-equally, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, the incomprehensible perfections, the undivided glory and bliss, of the one great Jehovah! . . . [He is ruddy] with respect to the truth of his humanity. His divine and human nature, *hypostatically united* [italics mine], are hereby intended.⁶⁰

By seeing the deity of Christ in the beloved’s whiteness and humanity in his ruddiness, Dutton may be guilty of having “stretch[ed] the actual text to the breaking point.”⁶¹ Still, the allegorical approach of seeing what is not immediately visible seems well attuned to the mystery of the hypostatic union of the Son’s two natures.

This union of Christ’s divine and human natures in turn bears out in his love and work. The obedience of Christ, which was by “his human nature only,” was also “the obedience of the person” in that his “human nature was personally united to the Son of God” and thus was “properly styled the righteousness of God, as having a divine glory

⁵⁸Dutton, *Hints of the Glory of Christ*, in *SSW*, 4:10.

⁵⁹Dutton’s interpretation of the “white” as Christ’s deity and the “ruddy” as his humanity was identical with Owen’s interpretation, though his was more elaborate. See John Owen, *Communion with the Triune God*, 146–47. Since Dutton was not unfamiliar with Owen’s works, having quoted his in her other writings, it seems plausible that she had copied him at this point.

⁶⁰Dutton, *Hints of the Glory of Christ*, in *SSW*, 4:13.

⁶¹This was the charge Kopic made against Owen’s allegorical interpretations of the Canticles. Kelly, M. Kopic, “Worshipping the Triune God: The Shape of John Owen’s Trinitarian Spirituality,” introduction to Owen, *Communion with the Triune God*, 36.

upon it.”⁶² It is the hypostatic union of his two natures that warrants the “purity of his human nature, and of the whole of his obedience therein”⁶³ so that he attains the salvific effect of divine righteousness. As Dutton pointed out, “his fitness for the Saviour’s work, his being mighty to save, [lies] in the fitness of his person as God-Man, in his having two distinct natures united in one person forever.”⁶⁴ This union also has impact upon his compassion, which is often embodied in “the bowels of Christ.” Since “the divine, and human natures are closely joined in his great person,” the bowels of Christ “are truly human, and yet truly divine” so that “the one love of Christ, the church’s bridegroom, has all perfections in it, both created and uncreated; and shines forth with an infinite beauty, and incomprehensible glory!”⁶⁵ Thus, the two natures of Christ are united in such a way as to warrant the efficacy of his love, compassion, and redemption.

The Deity of the Spirit

The Spirit is coequal with the Father and Son in his divine nature. Like the Son, the deity of the Spirit is also revealed in Scripture. He was “sent from the Father and the Son” (John 14:26),⁶⁶ which aligned with the “filioque” tradition. But this did not render the Spirit inferior in any way to his senders. Rather, while he is commissioned by the Father and Son to fulfil their mind, he yet “carries on” “his own design and will” in all.⁶⁷ As attested by 1 John 5:7, the Spirit is in nature one “with the Father and the Son” and “these eternal glorious three” are “of an equal dignity.”⁶⁸

⁶²Dutton, *Hints of the Glory of Christ*, in *SSW*, 4:24–25.

⁶³Dutton, *Hints of the Glory of Christ*, in *SSW*, 4:17.

⁶⁴Dutton, “Letter 76,” in *SSW*, 1:302.

⁶⁵Dutton, *Hints of the Glory of Christ*, in *SSW*, 4:54.

⁶⁶Dutton, “Hymn 6: The Love of the Spirit,” in *SSW*, 2:182.

⁶⁷Dutton, “Hymn 6: Love of the Spirit,” in *SSW*, 2:182.

⁶⁸Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:129.

The deity of the Spirit is also proved by his divine power of regeneration. As Dutton defined, the new birth is above all “a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit of God” by his “sovereignty” and “*irresistible* power.”⁶⁹ The total depravity of sinners manifests itself not only in their indisposition, but also active resistance to God’s work, which makes the new birth, or second creation of God, even harder than the first creation *ex nihilo*. It demands nothing short of divine power to bring it about:

When God created the heavens and the earth, though there was no previous matter to work upon, yet there was nothing to resist; but in the new creation there is much opposition. . . . There is, not only natural darkness of mind, as it notes, no disposition to spiritual light, but there is also, moral darkness, or the darkness of sin; which is an active principle, that resists, opposes, and hates the light. *How great then is the display of divine power in the new creation* [italics mine]!⁷⁰

The power of the Spirit in regeneration points unmistakably to his divine nature.

Moreover, the deity of the Spirit can be established by his attributes, such as his holiness. As revealed in Scripture, holiness pertains to God alone. It is the “perfection of the Godhead.”⁷¹ God the Father is “our Holy Father,” the Son “the Holy Jesus, our elder brother,” and the Spirit “the Holy Spirit our comforter,” against whom Christians should not sin.⁷² The Spirit is designated as “the Holy Spirit” not only because of his office as the sanctifier, but also because of his very nature as God.

The Tri-Unity of the Father, Son, and Spirit

In her doctrine of the Trinity, Dutton also highlighted the tri-unity of the Father, Son, and Spirit in deity, love and glory. The tri-unity of their divine nature is clearly shown by her use of the Old Testament divine name of Jehovah, which is “the *only* proper name in ordinary use for Israel’s God.”⁷³ As Dutton defined it, “this name of

⁶⁹Dutton, *New-Birth*, in *SSW*, 4:153–54.

⁷⁰Dutton, *New-Birth*, in *SSW*, 4:159.

⁷¹Dutton, *New-Birth*, in *SSW*, 4:155.

⁷²Dutton, *God’s Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:249.

⁷³Jenson comments that “it is remarkable that ‘Yahweh,’ with its variants, was the

God, the Lord, or Jehovah, is a name of essence, which denotes the self-existence, independence, all-sufficiency, immutability, immensity and eternity of the divine being.”⁷⁴ This name of Jehovah was used by Dutton in both corporate and individual senses.

On the one hand, Dutton employed it to address the Godhead. In her letter *On the Gift of the Holy Spirit to Believer as a Sealer*, Dutton explicitly identified the “Three-One God” as the “Great Jehovah”: “God the Holy Ghost, given to believers as an earnest, is a part of their whole inheritance in God, in the Three-One God, Father, Son, and Spirit, in the Great Jehovah, who is their everlasting portion, their eternal lot!”⁷⁵ The Christian God is identified as “the Three-One God,” the “Father, Son, and Spirit,” and as “the Great Jehovah.” This equation was made again when Dutton assured one afflicted brother with the rhetorical question: “how does Jehovah, Father, Son and Spirit, your Three-One God, love you?”⁷⁶

On the other hand, Dutton used the divine name Jehovah separately to refer to the three persons of the Godhead. As demonstrated above in her arguments against Romaine’s Sabellian insinuations, Dutton announced that “God the Father, . . . was, is, and ever will be, Jehovah; God the Son, . . . was, is, and ever will be, Jehovah; and God the Spirit, . . . was, is, and ever will be Jehovah.”⁷⁷ The Father is “Jehovah,” who has elected his people from eternity and made his covenant with the Son concerning their redemption.⁷⁸ The Son is Jehovah, “the Lord, the self-existent, all-sufficient,

only proper name in ordinary use for Israel’s God; other substantives, predominantly ‘Elohim,’ were used as common terms and appellatives.” He goes on to propound that “Israel’s salvation depended precisely on unambiguous identification of her God over against the generality of the numinous.” Jenson, *Triune Identity*, 5.

⁷⁴Dutton, “Letter 23,” in *SSW*, 6:115.

⁷⁵Dutton, *On the Gift of the Holy Spirit to Believers as a Sealer*, in *SSW*, 5:36.

⁷⁶Dutton, “Letter 9,” in *SSW*, 6:81.

⁷⁷Dutton, *Divine Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ*, in *SSW*, 5:4.

⁷⁸In the second part of Dutton’s *Wonders of Grace*, “Of God’s Election, and

unchangeable and eternal Jehovah.”⁷⁹ For the downcast in spirit, Dutton reminded them that “Jehovah-Jesus is [their] strength” and “the almighty strength of Jehovah-Jesus is engaged on [their] side.”⁸⁰ The Spirit is Jehovah, “Jehove” whose “thoughts endure.”⁸¹ In one letter, Dutton comforted the brother that “particularly and individually,” he was the one “that Jehovah the Spirit loved!”⁸² Like her fellow Particular Baptist ministers, Dutton demonstrated both a high sense of biblical unity and the tri-unity of the Father, Son, and Spirit by addressing them indiscriminately with the biblical divine appellation of Jehovah.

Besides their tri-unity in deity, the Father, Son, and Spirit are also united in love. What Jones noted about Dutton’s “close walk with God” and “frequent communion with God in Christ”⁸³ resided in the fact that love was the prominent attribute of the Godhead. The biblical revelation that “the Three are One” (1 John 5:7) was interpreted by

Covenant-Transactions Concerning a Remnant in his Son,” Dutton wrote about the Father’s election from eternity: “Jehovah from eternity, / Had all his creatures in his eye, / Which he determined to make / by Christ, for his own glory sake.” Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:119. In “Hymn 46: “Christ the Fountain of Grace,” she likewise described the Father’s relation with the Son as that between Jehovah and Christ: “Jehovah’s grace all meets in Christ, / As waters in their sea: / And hence the needy have supplies, / Exceeding full and free. / Rivers of life, of joy and peace, / Jehovah opened wide.” Dutton, “Hymn 46: “Christ the Fountain of Grace,” in *SSW*, 2:224.

⁷⁹To one Mr. H—s, Dutton explicated the divine person of Christ as the Lord and Jehovah: “Had not our Jesus been the Lord, the self-existent, all-sufficient, unchangeable and eternal Jehovah, he could not have loved one sinner, with the love of a Saviour, with the love great enough to save one single man, nor have born with the provocations of one single Soul.” Dutton, “Letter 56,” in *SSW*, 5:228. In another letter, Dutton admonished “a dear brother in Christ” not to forget that his strength lies “in the Lord Jehovah,” and “Jehovah-Jesus is [his] strength.” Dutton, “Letter 27,” in *SSW*, 1:161.

⁸⁰Dutton, “Letter 27,” in *SSW*, 1:161; “Letter 8,” in *SSW*, 6:75.

⁸¹As for the Spirit, in Hymn 6, Dutton wrote about the Spirit: “He is as sovereign in his love, As Son and Father be; / And when on his elect he moves, / He is an agent free. / It’s well for us he is Jehove; / And all his thoughts endure; / His office-work flows from his love, / And there is secure.” Dutton, “Hymn 6: The Love of the Spirit,” in *SSW*, 2:181.

⁸²Dutton, “Letter 9,” in *SSW*, 6:81.

⁸³Jones, who edited and republished her *A Narration of the Wonders of Grace* (1833), wrote about her spiritual piety: “perhaps very few, if any, of the children of God, or servants of the Lord, in our days, are favoured to walk so close with God as she did, or to have such frequent communion with God in Christ as she had.” Jones, *Memoir of Mrs. Anne Dutton*, in *SSW*, 2:108.

Dutton as “one in essence, and so one in love.”⁸⁴ The Father, Son, and Spirit are united in love, which is eternal, infinite, unchanging, and free,⁸⁵ even though it is expressed respectively in election, redemption, and special vocation.⁸⁶ Dutton set such a great store by their unity in love that at one point her heart felt restless when she missed out the love of the Spirit. Her heart did not rest until the words of Romans 15:30 brought home to her the Spirit’s love: “From hence, the blessed Spirit, was graciously pleased to lead me into his infinite, eternal, and unchangeable grace and told me, ‘That it was from his everlasting love, (having loved me as the Father and the Son loved me) that he came down at the appointed time, to quicken me when dead in sins.’”⁸⁷ To a great extent her deliberate seeking of the Spirit’s love and her heart-content in securing it dramatized what had been articulated by one of the Cappadocian Fathers, Gregory Nazianzen about the unity of the Trinity:

No sooner do I conceive of the one than I am illumined by the splendor of the three; no sooner do I distinguish them than I am carried back to the one. When I think of any one of the three I think of him as the whole, and my eyes are filled, and the greater part of what I am thinking escapes me. I cannot grasp the greatness of that one so as to attribute a greater greatness to the rest. When I contemplate the three together, I see but one torch, and cannot divide or measure out the undivided light.⁸⁸

⁸⁴Dutton, *A Discourse upon Walking with God: in a Letter to a Friend*, in *SSW*, 2:40.

⁸⁵This is most explicit in Dutton’s description of the Father’s love, which is “eternal, infinite, unchanging, full and free.” But the same epithets could be applied to the love of the Son and the Spirit as well, even though in a less explicit way. For example, the love of Christ could not be drowned or moved by anything, being fixed upon his own. Dutton, “Hymn 5: The Love of the Son,” in *SSW*, 2:180. The Spirit is “an agent free” in his sovereign love and his love is “from eternity” and “cannot changed be.” Dutton, “Hymn 6: The Love of the Spirit,” in *SSW*, 2:181. These epithets for God’s love are congruent with Dutton’s description of it elsewhere. For example, in *A Discourse upon Walking with God*, Dutton claimed, “By giving me frequent communion, and sweet fellowship with himself, in his three glorious persons; in the *infinite, free, full, unchangeable and eternal love* [italics mine] of the Three-One God, displayed ‘in and through’ the man Christ Jesus; as that which gloriously encompassed me in one eternal round.” Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:72.

⁸⁶Dutton, “Hymn 4: The Love of the Father;” “Hymn 5: The Love of the Son;” “Hymn 6: The Love of the Spirit,” in *SSW*, 2:179–82.

⁸⁷Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:63.

⁸⁸Quoted in Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: in Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2004), 378.

It is in view of the triune God's oneness in "love, grace, and mercy" that "it is impossible for the soul to sink into damnation!"⁸⁹

Moreover, the Father, Son, and Spirit are united in their glory. Repeatedly Dutton exalted the triune God as "the glorious three," or "the glorious three in one." Their equal share of glory is warranted by their very co-equality in divine nature. In one of her hymns, Dutton exalted the triune God:

The glories of Jehovah shine
In his own Son, who is divine,
Well he could tell the Father's name,
Because his nature is the same.
The Father, Son, and Spirit be
One God most high, yet one in three;
The Godhead's glory jointly share,
Because that they co-equal are.⁹⁰

If their unity in love manifests God's condescendence for sinners, their unity in glory speaks forth his transcendence above them. The former lays ground for the communion between God and his children, whereas the latter their total dependence on him. In the end, God's love for sinners and his glory would merge in the new heaven and earth when "the glory of the Trinity," "through Christ, as man eternally," will "cast its dazzling rays" on the sinner to make them "shining bright always."⁹¹

Finally, a summary of Dutton's doctrine of the co-equality and the tri-unity of the Trinity could be illustrated in the following lines:

And these eternal glorious Three,
Are of an equal dignity,
For they co-equally possess
The Godhead's undivided bliss.
Subsisting in one nature still,
They have but one essential will;
They're one in love and counsel too;
And one in all the work they do.

⁸⁹Dutton, "A Letter on a Believer's Safety, Amidst all his Spiritual Enemies," in *SSW*, 5:306.

⁹⁰Dutton, "Hymn 1: The Mystery of the Trinity Revealed in Christ," in *SSW*, 2:176.

⁹¹Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:148.

For thus the glorious gospel says,
For the obedience of faith.
These Three in One, let saints adore,
As their own God, for evermore!⁹²

Whereas this glory inheres in the three persons, it is magnified in the glorious person of the Son, “the Lord Jesus Christ, the church’s beloved,” who “is so great a person that has all the immense glories of the *Godhead*, radically in himself.”⁹³ Thus, in biblical and worshipful languages, Dutton captured the unity of the Trinity in an all-inclusive way as being one in nature, in will, in love and counsel, in all the work they do, and in glory. With her emphasis on the tri-unity of the Father, Son, and Spirit in deity, love, and glory, Dutton would probably have concurred whole-heartedly with John Owen: “The divine nature is the reason and cause of all worship; so that it is impossible to worship any one person, and not worship the whole Trinity.”⁹⁴

The Mystery of the Triune God

Still, Dutton never lost sight of the mystery of the Trinity. As used in Scripture, the word “mystery” embodies God’s freedom to conceal and reveal instead of sheer impenetrability of divine truths or human fantasies. The three-in-oneness and one-in-threeness of the triune God is one such mystery, “a mystery too bright, / to be beheld by nature’s light.”⁹⁵ It is revealed by God in Scripture and grasped by gospel faith rather than human reason. The two natures of the person of Christ is another such mystery: “Two natures in his person be, / Divine, humane; O mystery!”⁹⁶ In this respect, Dutton’s

⁹²Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:129.

⁹³Dutton, *Hints of the Glory of Christ*, in *SSW*, 4:13.

⁹⁴Owen, *Communion with the Triune God*, 419.

⁹⁵Dutton, “Hymn 1: The Mystery of the Trinity Revealed in Christ,” in *SSW*, 2:176.

⁹⁶Dutton, “Hymn 2: The Mystery of Grace in Christ’s Person,” in *SSW*, 2:177.

most common metaphors for the love of God, such as oceans and seas,⁹⁷ may well convey the wonders of the Trinity's being as well as the immensity of his love.

As a divine mystery, the being of the Trinity is to be believed and adored. Rather than “nice and hot disputes” over theological terms that tax human intelligibility, Dutton and her fellow Particular Baptists let God be God by confessing the biblical mystery of the Godhead. All their efforts at defending the doctrine of the Trinity was to deepen their sense of wonder and worship of the Trinity and rather than bringing him down to their terms. They had attained what Dixon aspired to recover in his own Catholic confessional tradition that “the mystery of the most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life.”⁹⁸

⁹⁷For example, in one letter, Dutton described the grace of God as “bottomless, boundless, endless; and inexhaustible and all-overflowing ocean” and as “a sin-drowning and a soul-exalting ocean.” Dutton, “Letter 6,” in *SSW*, 6:71.

⁹⁸Dixon, “*Nice and Hot Disputes*,” xiii.

CHAPTER 6

THE WORK OF THE TRINITY

To have such a knowledge of the acts and works of Father, Son, and Spirit, as each has a particular, and all have a joint hand in our salvation, that brings the soul into fellowship with the Three-One God, changes it into his image, and engages it to dedicate itself to him: This, my dear brother, is true and real religion.

—Anne Dutton, *Letters on Spiritual Subjects*

Introduction

Distinguished from the being of the Trinity, the work of the Trinity, or economic Trinity is “God’s activity or operations in the world.”¹ As introduced in the previous chapter, the two are distinct, but not discrete. Just as the being of the Trinity is “a conceptual foregrounding of the entire matrix of economic revelation,”² so what the Trinity does reveals and reaffirms his divine nature. While the acts of the Trinity usually entail both his work in creation and redemption, it is to his operations in the latter that Dutton primarily attended, which is the focus of this chapter.

In her redemptive focus, Dutton followed the Reformed tradition in differentiating the work of the Trinity as election by the Father, redemption by the Son, and particular application by the Spirit. These distinctive offices of the triune God make up the structure of her religious poem, *A Narration of the Wonders of Grace*, which progresses from the eternal election of the Father, the incarnation and redemption of the

¹Van A. Harvey, *A Handbook of Theological Terms* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 247.

²Fred Sanders, “The Trinity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, ed. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 48.

Son, to the work of the Spirit in the church and upon the hearts of the elect.³ Separately these acts of the Trinity are the topics of some of Dutton's most theologically dense works, such as *A Discourse Concerning God's Act of Adoption*, and *A Treatise on Justification*. They also constitute the main subjects of some of her letters, such as her letters on election and the advocateship of Christ.⁴

Notwithstanding the differentiations of work of the Father, Son, and Spirit, Dutton also highlighted their unity in the economy of redemption, which is presupposed upon their unity in being. When the Father planned the election of his people before the foundation of the world, the Son and the Spirit both played their parts in the eternal covenant of redemption. Even though the Son is chiefly responsible for human redemption in history, it is essentially the joint love and work of the Trinity, "the acts and works of Father, Son, and Spirit, as each has a particular and all have a joint hand, in our salvation, that brings the soul into fellowship with the Three-One God."⁵ In this respect, Dutton's doctrine of the economic Trinity underscored what has been propounded by the ancient Latin slogan that *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*, "the inseparability of divine operations."⁶

In addition to the differentiations and unity of the Trinity's work, Dutton demonstrated certain order of salvation when explicating the redemptive grace of God:

³Dutton, *A Narration of the Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:75–241.

⁴Dutton, "Letter 11: On Election," *SSW*, 84–89. Dutton wrote two letters on the advocateship of Christ in response to the queries by one Mr. J. D., which were both reproduced in Volume 5 of Watson's edition. The first letter was also included in the first volume of Watson's edition. Dutton, "Letter 97: On Christ's Advocateship," in *SSW*, 1:371–76; Also Dutton, *A Letter to Mr. J. D. on his Thoughts Concerning the Advocateship of Christ in Heaven*, in *SSW*, 5:302–5; Dutton, *An Answer to a Letter from Mr. J. D. on Christ's Advocateship*, in *SSW*, 5:309–15.

⁵Dutton, "Letter 37," in *SSW*, 7:399.

⁶This had been universally held by pro-Nicene theologians as a key principle against the charge of tritheism, which should be retrieved and represented in contemporary discussions of the Trinity. See Stephen R. Holmes, "Trinitarian Action and Inseparable Operations: Some Historical and Dogmatic Reflections," in *Advancing Trinitarian Theology: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 60–61.

That same grace, which fixed upon us in God's eternal election; which bought us by our Lord's great redemption; which brought us nigh to God by the Holy Ghost's *effectual vocation*; which blest us with a free and full *justification*; and which sealed us with the spirit of *adoption*; will carry us on still, in its own almighty arms, through an increase of grace, into the ineffable bliss of eternal *glorification* [all italics mine].⁷

In her theological conception, the Reformed *ordo salutis* of calling, justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification is discernible. But as will be illustrated below, Dutton also diverged from this tradition by conceiving the whole schema of salvation in the immanent will of God and emphasizing the eternality of election and adoption by the Father.⁸ In Dutton's timeline, the Father's act of adoption well preceded the Son's act of justification. Although eternal adoption is an inherent part of hyper-Calvinism,⁹ it can still be demonstrated that Dutton subscribed to the hyper-Calvinists' exaltation of the divine sovereignty without falling into their traps either to minimize the central gospel message of the crucified Christ or to abrogate Christians' responsibility to spread the gospel.

Finally, Dutton's doctrine of the economic Trinity stressed communion with the triune God and assurance in him. The election of God springs from his free, sovereign and distinguishing love, which is "exceedingly sweet" to the souls of his people.¹⁰ Justification of Christ works upon human soul through faith, "a working faith . . . by love" that unites the soul with Christ, endearing the Lord and everything about God to the

⁷Dutton, "Letter 16," in *SSW*, 6:97.

⁸This deviation seems to have been ignored by Watson when she arranges Dutton's theological treatises in vol. 4 of her edition in the order from *A Treatise on Justification*, *A Discourse Concerning the New-Birth*, *A Discourse Concerning God's Act of Adoption*, to the *Three Letters* on the sanctification of God's children. See Watson ed., *SSW*, vol. 4.

⁹In his definition of hyper-Calvinism, Peter Toon mentioned that "it placed excessive emphasis on the immanent acts of God—eternal justification, eternal adoption and the eternal covenant of grace." Peter Toon, *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity, 1689–1765* (London: Olive Tree, 1967), 144.

¹⁰Dutton, *A Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley: In Vindication of the Doctrines of Absolute, Unconditional Election, Particular Redemption, Special Vocation, and Final Perseverance*, in *SSW*, 1:43.

soul.¹¹ As to its effect, justification by God produces in the soul peace, blessedness, and obedience. This communion between God and sinners becomes even more immediate and intimate in the special application of the Spirit, which by its very nature inheres in his direct interaction with the soul in regeneration, sanctification, and sealing. As for the effect of assurance, while the election of God guarantees the saints' security from eternity, the redemption of the Son actualizes it and the application of the Spirit seals it. All these aspects of the differentiated and unified work of the Trinity, the nature of the particular work of each person of the Godhead and its effects, especially with respect to communion and assurance, will be explored in the chapter according to Dutton's conception of the order of salvation.

The Work of the Father

The Election of the Father

The election of God is a biblical doctrine. Drawing on Ephesians 1 and Romans 9, Dutton defined election as eternal, "personal," "absolute and unconditional," a sovereign act from the good pleasure of [God's] will, and "the foundation which God laid for the salvation of a certain number of mankind."¹² Contrary to John Wesley's charge that it is "a doctrine from *hell*, of *devils*, and an *horrible decree*,"¹³ the doctrine of

¹¹Dutton called the saving faith in the justification of sinners as "a *Christ* discerning faith, a *soul* transforming faith, an *heart* purifying faith," "a *working* faith" that "*works by love*": "I [*sic*] unites the soul to the objects beheld; it makes *Christ*, and *God* in him, *precious* to the soul; it makes his promise precious, his ordinances precious, his commandments precious, his people precious; and enables the soul to lay out itself for the glory of God, in all holy obedience." Dutton, *A Treatise on Justification: Shewing the Matter, Manner, Time, and Effects of It*, in *SSW*, 4:90.

¹²Dutton, *Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley*, in *SSW*, 1:43; 45.

¹³Dutton, *Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley*, in *SSW*, 1:47. The Wesleys' hostility toward the doctrine of predestination and election was also noted by Cennick in his letter to Whitefield that "no atheist can more preach against predestination" than did the Wesleys. Quoted in Thomas S. Kidd, *George Whitefield: America's Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 142.

election is undergirded by abundant scriptural evidence.¹⁴ As Dutton traced God’s choosing Jacob and rejecting Esau in Romans 9 back to Genesis 25:22, 23, Deuteronomy 14:2 and Malachi 1:2, the election of God has not been contrived by human imagination or malice, but revealed in both Testaments. It is neither hellish nor horrible, but biblical and blessed of God’s everlasting love. Put in more emphatic terms, it is “most certainly *a doctrine of the Bible*.”¹⁵ In the Reformed spirit of *sola Scriptura*, Dutton unapologetically proclaimed that “I believe and hold the doctrine of election, because it is part of the word of life—of the faithful word.”¹⁶ Although some expressions of the doctrine may not be proper or perspicuous, its biblical origin “is sufficient” for its veracity.¹⁷

God’s act of election is eternal. It is “God’s eternal election” of a certain number of people in Christ unto salvation,¹⁸ his “*everlasting choice* of them in Christ, unto eternal life.”¹⁹ Although Dutton conceived God’s adoption to be an eternal act, his election even preceded that in being “the foundation of the special relation to himself, as his adopted children” as well as “antecedent to their being blessed in [Christ] with all spiritual blessings.”²⁰ No matter how far antecedent is eternity to eternity, it is certain that God did his election before the foundation of the world.

Moreover, God’s election resides in his sovereign will and grace. He has chosen his elect in eternity unto eternal life “merely from the sovereign pleasure of his *will* towards them, and not from their *foreseen work*, even *faith* itself.”²¹ Against

¹⁴Dutton, “Letter 11: On Election,” in *SSW*, 6:85.

¹⁵Dutton, *Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley*, in *SSW*, 1:47.

¹⁶Dutton, “Letter 11: On Election,” in *SSW*, 6:86.

¹⁷Dutton, *Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley*, in *SSW*, 1:49.

¹⁸Dutton, “Letter 11: On Election,” in *SSW*, 6:85.

¹⁹Dutton, *Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley*, in *SSW*, 1:40.

²⁰Dutton, *Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley*, in *SSW*, 1:45.

²¹Dutton, *Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley*, in *SSW*, 1:40.

Wesley's Arminianism, Dutton hammered out that “*election is of grace, and not of works.*”²² God’s “free and distinguishing love” is “the *springhead*, the original source of all his loving kindness towards them, as it lay in his *everlasting love!*”²³ Whether out of “the pure mass” in supralapsarianism or out of “the corrupted mass” in sublapsarianism,²⁴ election was not synergistic as Wesley alleged it to be. It is “a *sovereign act* of God’s good pleasure towards his chosen, without any *foreseen goodness* in them.”²⁵

As for its effect, the doctrine of election offers sinners sweet communion with God and comfortable trust in his love. On one hand, they enjoy the everlasting love of God in his election. Contrary to Wesley’s accusations of the horror of the doctrine, Dutton claimed to have “experienced the exceeding sweetness on [her] soul” from election and “tasted that the Lord has been gracious to [her] poor soul.”²⁶ In the words of Jesus’ prayer in Matthew 11:25, 26, she had been filled with “pleasing wonder and humble adoration” that “the mysteries of salvation-grace by electing love, unto eternal glory” should be revealed to her, “a babe.”²⁷ Whereas Wesley was embittered by God’s secret sovereign will, Dutton was melted by “God’s free, distinguishing love to [her] that

²² Dutton, *Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley*, in *SSW*, 1:41.

²³ Dutton, *Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley*, in *SSW*, 1:42.

²⁴ Here Dutton seemed to have favored the sublapsarian view of God’s election as she repeatedly pointed out that humankind was foreseen or foreknown by God in eternity as sinners. This sublapsarian view justified God’s act of election to be pure grace and his act of reprobation pure justice. Dutton, *Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley*, in *SSW*, 1:42. But in her *A Discourse Concerning God’s Act of Adoption*, Dutton switched to the supralapsarian view as she defined adoption as God’s taking a certain number of people from among humankind as “considered in *the pure mass* [italics mine].” Dutton, *A Discourse Concerning God’s Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:225. Her switch in this matter was not idiosyncratic or theologically inconsistent. The rationale was supplied by John Gill after he tendered arguments for both positions: “the difference is not so great as may be thought at first sight; for both agree in the main and material things in the doctrine of election,” which is an absolute, unconditional, personal, particular, and eternal decree out of God’s sovereign will and pleasure. He listed some well-known theologians, who differed in this view yet got on well with each other, such as John Calvin (a sublapsarian) and Theodore Beza (a supralapsarian). As for his part, Gill thought “both may be taken in.” Gill, *BDD*, 182–85.

²⁵ Dutton, *Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley*, in *SSW*, 1:45–47.

²⁶ Dutton, “Letter 11: On Election,” in *SSW*, 6:86.

²⁷ Dutton, “Letter 11: On Election,” in *SSW*, 6:86.

was no better by nature than others.”²⁸ It was how they stood before God that determined what they felt about election: bitter if defiant and arrogant, but sweet if humble and grateful.

On the other hand, the elect find assurance of salvation in the election of God. As Dutton reminded Wesley, “If your *salvation* doesn’t stand upon God’s *absolute grace without you*, but upon your *own inherent goodness*; your *own will*; there is no salvation for you: for it is not of him that wills.”²⁹ Had it been contingent upon human will, salvation would have been jeopardized all the time by its capriciousness. It is the election of God that has “a blessed effect upon the Lord’s people . . . to strengthen their *faith* in his love.”³⁰ For indeed, it is the love of the Trinity, “Jehovah’s love,” that has made provisions “for all our need” in the “covenant from eternity.”³¹ Rather than grilling sinners with hellish fire, it is truly “a doctrine that gives strong consolation to us miserable sinners, and is a firm ground for our hope of everlasting salvation,” without which Dutton confessed that “she could not hold fast [her] confidence of everlasting salvation.”³² As stated in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, it is a doctrine that shall

²⁸Dutton, *Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley*, in *SSW*, 1:42.

²⁹Dutton, *Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley*, in *SSW*, 1:48. This echoed one of Luther’s conclusion after his repudiations of Erasmus’s assertion of the freedom of human will: “For my own part, I frankly confess that even if it were possible, I should not wish to have free choice given to me, or to have anything left in my own hands by which I might strive toward salvation. For, on the one hand, I should be unable to stand firm and keep hold of it amid so many adversities and perils and so many assaults of demons, seeing that even one demon is mightier, than all men, and no man at all could be saved; and on the other hand, even if there were no perils or adversities or demons, I should nevertheless have to labor under perpetual uncertainty and to fight as one beating the air, since even if I lived and worked to eternity, my conscience would never be assured and certain how much it ought to do to satisfy God.” Timothy F. Lull and William R. Russell, eds. *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 166.

³⁰Dutton, *Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley*, in *SSW*, 1:42.

³¹Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:123.

³²Dutton, “Letter 11: On Election,” in *SSW*, 6:86.

“afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God; and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel.”³³

Still, out of her pastoral sensitivity, Dutton proposed some prudent uses of the doctrine of election in personal faith and evangelism. For personal use, instead of being tormented by the question whether they are the elect or not, which “is making a very bad use of a very good doctrine,” God’s people should apply it with faith and patience:

But rather say, with respect to [election], “Is there an elect number that shall certainly be saved? Blessed be God, then, that a remnant shall be saved, seeing all had justly deserved to be damned. And who knows but I may be one of that happy number? I will wait upon God in the use of means, and it may please him that the grace of the means shall flow down upon me, to my eternal salvation.”³⁴

Even in this act of hopeful speculation they should not dwell too long since election resides in God’s sovereign secret will. Rather, they are to “fix [their] mind upon the general call for the gospel unto faith in Christ, and repentance towards God,”³⁵ which has been revealed and offered freely to all. It is essentially a move from subjective uncertainty to the objective manifestation of God’s love in Christ.

As for evangelism, it is by no means discouraged by the eternal election of God. Given that Christians “don’t know who are elect, and who not, until electing grace breaks up in the hearts of the vessels of mercy, converting them unto faith in Christ,” they “are to pray for all men promiscuously: That God would send the gospel into all the dark corners of the earth, and convert all sorts of sinners unto faith in Christ.”³⁶ They were not only to pray, but also to “preach promiscuously to all” as Whitefield countered John Wesley’s objection.³⁷ The unknowability of who was among the elect and who was not

³³*Westminster Confession of Faith*, 3:8.

³⁴Dutton, “Letter 11: On Election,” in *SSW*, 6:88.

³⁵Dutton, “Letter 11: On Election,” in *SSW*, 6:88

³⁶Dutton, *Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley*, in *SSW*, 1:63.

³⁷George Whitefield, *A Letter to the Reverend John Wesley* (London, 1741), 7.

should not prohibit evangelism, but promote it. With her theological sensibility and evangelical zeal, Dutton steered away from the error of hyper-Calvinism, which arrested the offering of the gospel to all people out of a reasoned take of the doctrine of predestination and election.

Adoption of the Father

In the Reformed *ordo solutis*, popularized by Puritans such as William Perkins (1558–1602) and William Ames (1576–1633), adoption usually appears in the order of calling, justification, adoption, sanctification and glorification.³⁸ This is reflected in Watson’s editorial arrangement of Dutton’s theological treatises in vol. 4. But her editorial move overlooks Dutton’s explicit deviance from the Reformed *ordo salutis* in her conception of God’s act of adoption:

In what I have offered in the ensuing discourse, concerning God’s act of adoption, I have not so much insisted upon it as a transient act, that passes upon the elect in time, but rather as it is an immanent act from eternity: Because I judge this to be the foundation of the other, and necessary, to be doctrinally laid, as the basis of that which is more commonly treated of. We should not conceal the truth of God, nor the eternity of his loving kindness herein from his dear children, Ps 40:10. . . . From blessed experience, I can say, through grace, that the display of God’s everlasting love, in electing, adoption, and settlement-grace under the Holy Ghost’s witness of my particular interest herein, have always been attended with strong influential drawings of my soul unto God in Christ and to an holy, humble, thankful walk before him.³⁹

Instead of taking it as “a transient act” after regeneration and justification, Dutton located God’s act of adoption in eternity and simplified the order of salvation as “electing, adoption, and settlement-grace under the Holy Ghost’s witness.”

The doctrine of eternal adoption was not strange to eighteenth-century Particular Baptists. It was believed to be an inherent part of their hyper-Calvinism:

³⁸This order itself is based upon Paul’s Romans 8:29–30: “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”

³⁹Dutton, preface to *A Discourse concerning God’s Act of Adoption. To Which Is Added, A Discourse upon the Inheritance of the Adopted Sons of God*, in *SSW*, 4:222.

The Hyper-Calvinists held that though all Christians are the children of God by faith in Christ, this sense of adoption, caused by the work of the Holy Spirit, is only an open manifestation in time of the eternal adoption of each elect person by God the Father in eternity. It is because the elect are already adopted that the Spirit of adoption is sent into their hearts. Adoption was therefore considered as an act of God's free grace from eternity, a logical consequence of eternal election and eternal union.⁴⁰

This was certainly true for Gill's systematic theology, though whether it pinned him down as a hyper-Calvinist in terms of denying the free offer of gospel or the duty of faith was open to question.⁴¹ Gill conceived eternal election and eternal adoption as "internal and immanent acts, taken up in the mind of God, from eternity, and which abide in his will" in his systematic theology.⁴² The transient adoption in time, "as openly bestowed upon believing in Christ, and as manifested, applied, and evidenced by the Spirit of God," is the realization and result of God's eternal act of adoption.⁴³ This emphasis on the eternality of adoption was shared by Dutton. Although not entirely oblivious to the transient adoption,⁴⁴ Dutton fixed her attention on the eternal act of the Father in adoption. For all its insinuations of hyper-Calvinism, Dutton seemed to be bringing out the organic unity between God's act of adoption and his eternal predestination as implied in such scriptures as Romans 8 and Ephesians 1:5. When the biblical tensions between God's sovereignty and human responsibility were maintained, which Dutton did, the

⁴⁰Toon, *Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism*, 111.

⁴¹For disagreement over Gill's hyper-Calvinist identity, see Michael A. G. Haykin, ed., *The Life and The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697–1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation* (New York: Brill, 1997). Also David Mark Rathel, "Was John Gill a Hyper-Calvinist? Determining Gill's Theological Identity," *Baptist Quarterly*, 48, no. 1 (2017): 47–59.

⁴²John Gill, *BDD*, 1:201. For a summary of Gill's doctrine of election, see Curt D. Daniel, "Hyper-Calvinism and John Gill" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983), 261–63.

⁴³Gill, *BDD*, 1:518.

⁴⁴Dutton acknowledged two kinds of adoption, "the secret adoption" in eternity and the "open adoption" in time. Dutton, *God's Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:241. In her treatise on justification, she ascribed the timely adoption to the work of the Spirit. She wrote that the act "by *the Spirit of adoption*" on the justified soul "gives him glorious freedom, and abundant liberty to worship and serve God, as *his own Father in Christ* [*italics mine*], from a principle of *love and gratitude*, for that great love manifested to him, and that full salvation bestowed upon him; and the main *end* of his obedience is to *glorify* his Father which is in heaven." Dutton, *On Justification*, in *SSW*, 4:118.

doctrine of eternal adoption need not to be feared as a label for hyper-Calvinism in its denial of gospel offer and duty faith.

It follows that the first and foremost distinctive feature of Dutton's doctrine of adoption may be its eternality. As she defined it, "adoption is a gracious, *immanent, eternal* [italics mine] act of God's sovereign will: whereby he has taken a certain number of persons from among mankind, as considered in the pure mass, into a supernatural, covenant-relation of children to himself, by Christ Jesus to the praise of the glory of his grace."⁴⁵ Although Dutton never neglected God's sovereign grace in the act of adoption, she expended the greatest length on its being an eternal act. In doing so, she was aware that "some persons may scruple the truth of the position" of eternal adoption, and anticipated their objections based upon scriptures, such as Isaiah 43:6,7, which apparently positioned the calling of God before his adoption.⁴⁶ But even more biblical evidence points to the fact that God's act of adoption is an eternal act, which demonstrates both his eternal love and saints' eternal security of salvation.

Specifically, the eternality of adoption is built upon scriptures about the saints' inheritance in God, their brotherhood with Christ the first-born, and the order of salvation. It is predicated upon the logical implications of those scriptures that speak of God's eternal inheritance preserved for his elect. As Dutton contended, "For if an inheritance was settled upon the elect before the world began, then they must be made heirs before the world began; for heirs and inheritance are correlates. Again, if the elect were made heirs, they must needs be made children before the world began: for heirship depends upon sonship: If children, then heirs, etc., Rom 8:17."⁴⁷ It is also evidenced by the biblical order of salvation. Revealed in Ephesians 1:5, adoption "comes in between

⁴⁵Dutton, *God's Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:224.

⁴⁶Dutton, *God's Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:226.

⁴⁷Dutton, *God's Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:227–28.

our being chosen in Christ, and our being blest in him.”⁴⁸ Being an inherent part of God’s predestination, it stands between the eternal election of God and his efficacious salvation of the elect in time. They bear the name of sons in the mind of God “before the Spirit is sent into their hearts,” “before Christ died for them,” and “before their being gathered to him by faith.”⁴⁹ Besides, the eternality of God’s adoption is also proved by those scriptures that demonstrate the eternal sonship of Christ and the elect’s brotherhood with him. In the eternal intra-Trinitarian covenant, Christ is the Son of God in a two-fold sense: “his divine nature as the second person in the glorious Trinity” and also “as Mediator in his human nature.”⁵⁰ He is “the only begotten” Son of God, who is above all creatures, but at the same time “the firstborn” of his many brothers, who are predestinated to be conformed to his image, “relation, disposition and inheritance.”⁵¹ It was upon Christ in his perfect nature of man that God designed “the pattern” by which he carried out his act of adoption.⁵²

However, God’s eternal adoption did not amount to eternal justification. Dutton eschewed this theological pitfall of hyper-Calvinism when she explicitly claimed that “though, from eternity, God decreed to justify all the elect; yet they are *not actually justified* [italics mine], until the Holy Spirit does, in due time, apply Christ, and his righteousness, unto them. 1 Pet 1:2, 19, 20, Rom 8:30, Gal 2:16, Tit 3:4–7.”⁵³ The tension between the two is sustained by Dutton’s note on the trans-temporality of God’s mind. As the great I AM, God’s “vast mind comprehends all things at once” without chronological

⁴⁸Dutton, *God’s Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:228.

⁴⁹Dutton, *God’s Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:229.

⁵⁰Dutton, *God’s Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:237.

⁵¹Dutton, *God’s Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:239. Dutton built her argument on such biblical evidence as Rom 8:29, Heb 2:12, Ps 89:27, John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 20:17.

⁵²Dutton, *God’s Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:238.

⁵³Dutton, *On Justification*, in *SSW*, 4:109n.

distinction.⁵⁴ It is in terms of God's omniscience that the historical act of justification is both anticipated and actualized in his eternal acts of election and adoption. Then, Dutton's emphasis was on the "covenant-transactions . . . made between [the] three glorious persons, concerning the whole body of the elect before the world began,"⁵⁵ antecedent to its fulfillment in the incarnation and crucifixion of Christ. In particular, the contracting was made between God the Father and the Son concerning his mediatorial role. God the Father "prepared him a body, i.e., a human nature," "looked upon it as if done" and "reputed him as the great Mediator" when the Son agreed.⁵⁶ Being "an immanent act from eternity," the act of adoption is "the foundation" and "basis" of its being "a transient act" in history.⁵⁷ In a sense, the eternity of God's adoption is not only biblical revelation, but also the logical outcome of Calvinists' theo-centricism, which is bound to view salvation from the knowledge of God rather than human knowledge or experience.

As for its effects, one is that God's children are adopted into loving communion with him. One main difference between God's election and his act of adoption is the enhanced sense of God's relatedness to his people in the latter. Etymologically, adoption signifies a family relationship. In adoption, God shows "his infinite heart-love . . . in the grace and bowels of a Father" and he delights as a father in his adopted children.⁵⁸ His love is all the more magnified since he adopted the elect to conform to the image of Christ to be his "glory sons" and to inherit eternal kingdom.⁵⁹

⁵⁴Dutton, *God's Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:236.

⁵⁵Dutton, *God's Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:231.

⁵⁶Dutton, *Hints of Christ's Glory; As the Friend and Bridegroom of the Church: From the Seven Last Verses of the Fifth Chapter of Solomon's Song. In a Letter to a Friend*, in *SSW*, 4:14.

⁵⁷Dutton, *God's Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:222.

⁵⁸Dutton, *God's Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:242.

⁵⁹Dutton, *God's Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:242.

Indeed, the “glorious display of grace in the bestowment of this adoptive relation” will certainly ravish human souls and fill their hearts with wonder and praises for the glory of God’s grace.⁶⁰

The other comfortable effect of God’s act of adoption is the elect’s assurance of their salvation and heavenly inheritance. This is warranted by the supernatural and covenantal nature of this adoptive relation.⁶¹ The relationship between God the Father and his adopted children is supernatural when compared with the natural relation between God the creator and his created humanity in Adam. His act of adoption springs from his supernatural grace, secured in the “sovereignty, eternity of Jehovah’s grace” and in “an everlasting covenant.”⁶² The epithets of supernatural, sovereign, eternal and everlasting speak forth the divine origin and power of this adoption, which underpins the security of God’s adopted children. It is also covenantal because God the Father made “a covenant of promise” with “Christ as the head and representative of his people.”⁶³ The headship of Adam gives them but nature-perfection and “nature-bliss” in the Garden of Eden, which were both lost in his fall.⁶⁴ But the blessings of Christ’s covenantal headship are supernatural and immutable as spelled out in one of Dutton’s hymns:

But to his own, the chosen race,
Christ was ordained an head of grace;
It pleased God in him to lay
The stores of grace, that can’t decay.
That remnant which the Father’s grace,
Did from everlasting embrace
Were blest, as chosen in his Son,
With life and glory yet unknown!

Their vast inheritance is sure,

⁶⁰Dutton, *God’s Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:243–44.

⁶¹Dutton, *God’s Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:233.

⁶²Dutton, *God’s Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:244–45.

⁶³Dutton, *God’s Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:235.

⁶⁴Dutton, “Hymn 27: Adam’s Headship,” in *SSW*, 2:202–3.

Christ's glory-fulness will endure;
No tongue can tell the heights of bliss,
That settled are on Christ and his.⁶⁵

The inheritance of God's adopted children "is sure" and their bliss unspeakable. They are "heirs of promise" in the eternal settlement between the Father and the Son so that their title and right is originally "by the Father's gift" and secondarily "by the Son's purchase," which cannot be lost or forfeited.⁶⁶ As Dutton pointed out: "Our relation doesn't depend upon our obedience, but upon the immutable will, promise, and oath of Jehovah," which "affords strong consolation to the heirs of promise."⁶⁷

The Work of the Son

The Mediator in Eternity

The Son was set up as the Mediator from eternity in the Trinitarian covenant of grace. In the first part of Dutton's *Wonders of Grace*, which is titled "of Christ the Mediator, as Set up from Everlasting in all the Glory of Headship," the Son was reputed "from eternity" by the Father to be "the great Mediator."⁶⁸ His glory was such that Dutton speculated it was right upon Satan's refusal to stoop to Christ as the great Mediator that resulted in his fall.⁶⁹

As the Mediator, the Son agreed to "take [human] nature upon him," though he is co-equal with the Father and Spirit in divine essence and glory.⁷⁰ This did not result in his eternal humanity or eternal soul. Dutton made this clear when she pleaded in the preface "not to be mistaken by any" that "when, in the first part, I speak of the glory

⁶⁵Dutton, "Hymn 58: Christ's Headship," in *SSW*, 2:237–38.

⁶⁶Dutton, *A Discourse Upon the Inheritance of the Adopted Sons of God*, in *SSW*, 4:265–73.

⁶⁷Dutton, *God's Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:246.

⁶⁸Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:115

⁶⁹Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:117.

⁷⁰Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:115.

Christ had with God before the world was; as if, thereby, I thought that either his body or soul was then created; for I have no such apprehensions.”⁷¹ Christ’s eternal mediatorial role, as in her doctrine of eternal adoption and covenant of grace, is founded upon God’s omniscient and trans-temporal perspective. When “the eternal Son, engaged from everlasting to take our nature into personal union with himself, the Father looked upon it *as if done* [italics mine]; for he ‘calls the things which be not as though they were.’”⁷² The mediatorial role of the Son is eternal in accordance with what she categorized as the immanent justification, “an act of God’s will, that always abides the same in his divine mind, from eternity to eternity.”⁷³

As the Mediator, the Son demonstrated his faithful love to God’s elect right from eternity. This is illustrated by the biblical metaphor of marriage, which will be pursued into the Son’s salvation of them in time and consummation with them in eternity. Before time began, God the Father had “chosen a bride” for the Son, of which the marriage of Adam and Eve was but a shadow.⁷⁴ For the bride the Father elected for the Son was “complete in [the] glory-dress” of him.⁷⁵ Like Adam in the Garden of Eden, the Son fell in love at first sight. He was so exhilarated that “his heart was ravished with this sight,” “his soul overcome with strong delight,” and he “took to cleave to her alone.”⁷⁶ Before this metaphor of love and marriage be carried into the history of human fall and

⁷¹Dutton, preface to *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:112.

⁷²Dutton, preface to *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:112.

⁷³Dutton classified justification into two: the immanent justification in terms of God’s eternal and immutable will and the transient justification God passes upon his creatures in time, which is further divided in terms of whether it is passed upon the whole body of the elect or every individual person of God’s chosen. See Dutton, *On Justification*, in *SSW*, 4:109–10.

⁷⁴Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:120.

⁷⁵Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:121.

⁷⁶Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:120.

redemption, what it already revealed at this eternal stage was the loving bond between the Son and his bride.

Justification by the Son

In time, the redemptive covenant of God is fulfilled in the cross of Christ, which reconciles sinners to the Father and justifies them by the righteousness of the Son. In her treatise *On Justification* published in 1740, Dutton summarized justification as wrought by the free-grace of God, through the righteousness of Christ, imputed to the sinner, received by faith alone, and producing great and glorious effects. The matter, manner, and effect of justification are all articulated with strong echoes of the Reformed tradition. Actually it was in the very words of Martin Luther that Dutton marked the primacy of this doctrine of justification: “The church either stood or fell, as this doctrine was maintained or rejected.”⁷⁷ Like the great Reformer, her treatment of the doctrine was both doctrinal and experiential by showing “a clear knowledge” of the subject and at the same time “an experimental acquaintance with the power of religion, in pointing out the comfort of saving faith in the atonement of Christ, and its salutary influence on the renewed heart.”⁷⁸ The doctrine is not only crucial to the standing of the church, but also to the comfort of the sinner. But differing from Luther, Dutton’s doctrine of justification is more explicitly Trinitarian, which will be demonstrated later.

First, as for the matter of justification, Dutton pinned it down to be the obedience and righteousness of Christ. It is achieved through “the complete obedience of Jesus Christ, exclusive of all the creature’s works, whether, before, or after its

⁷⁷Dutton quoted Luther’s famous statement on the doctrine of justification by faith, which showed her knowledge of the Reformer’s theology. Dutton, *On Justification*, in *SSW*, 4:69. It was repeated at the end of her main theological contentions: “And this doctrine of justification, by the free-grace of God, through the righteousness of Christ, received by faith alone, was of such great account with Luther, that he said of it, ‘the church either stood or fell, as this was maintained or rejected.’” Dutton, *On Justification*, in *SSW*, 4:124.

⁷⁸Dutton, *On Justification*, in *SSW*, 4:69.

regeneration by the Spirit of God.⁷⁹ Christ's obedience includes both his active obedience "in fulfilling all the law's requirements" and his passive obedience in "enduring all its penalties."⁸⁰ It is upon the righteousness of Christ, which is essentially "*the righteousness of God*" in respect of his deity that God justifies the sinner.⁸¹ Reiterating Luther's proclamation of justification by faith alone, Dutton affirmed:

Thus an error in the *foundation* will prove *fatal* to the building; and therefore the *knowledge of Christ*, as the alone way of a sinner's *justification* and *life*, must needs be of the highest *importance*; since no other *refuge* can stand the storm, but Christ, as the Lord our righteousness; this glorious *hiding-place* which God has prepared for poor sinners, which they may *run*, and be forever *safe*.⁸²

It was in view of the centrality of Christ in justification that Dutton rebutted the error of the Quakers, who alleged that "persons may be saved by the light within."⁸³

This exclusive grace of Christ is predicated upon the total depravity of fallen humanity, which renders them utterly incapable of doing God's laws or working out their own ransom.⁸⁴ In Section VI about "The Insufficiency of Legal Obedience to the Justification of a Sinner," Dutton compared their relations with the law to the enslavement of Israel under Pharaoh and his cruel task-masters. Just as the task-masters "commanded *the full tale of brick*, and yet *afforded no straw*," the law "*commands duty*, . . . but can give no *strength*."⁸⁵ The biblical type of Pharaoh's taskmasters not only captures the impossible demands imposed by the law of God, but also invokes its role as

⁷⁹ Dutton unequivocally defended the doctrine of the justification by faith in Christ alone and believed human work to be irrelevant to their salvation either before regeneration or afterward. In the latter case, "though they are indeed pleasing, and acceptable unto God, by Christ, in point of filial obedience." Dutton, *On Justification*, in SSW, 4:74; 81.

⁸⁰Dutton, *On Justification*, in SSW, 4:74.

⁸¹Dutton, *On Justification*, in SSW, 4:84.

⁸²Dutton, *On Justification*, in SSW, 4:143.

⁸³Dutton, "Letter 19," in SSW, 6:103.

⁸⁴Dutton, "Hymn 45: Man's Destruction of Himself and his Salvation of Christ," in SSW, 2:223.

⁸⁵Dutton, *On Justification*, in SSW, 4:133.

schoolmaster in Galatians 3:24 and sinners' bondage to it. The hopeless inadequacy of human work is also illustrated by the imageries in Isaiah 28:20. It is likened to the bed, which "*is shorter than that a man can stretch himself upon it*" and to the covering, which is "*narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.*"⁸⁶ In this respect, "there is no true *rest* for a *sinner*, from the *works* of its own hands; no *covering* for a *naked* soul, from the *fig-leaves* of its own *righteousness*, though ever so artfully sewed together."⁸⁷ Justification is found in the righteousness of Christ alone.

At this point, Dutton anticipated objections to this "Scripture-doctrine of justification" by faith from the book of James, which seems to be advocating a contrary "work-righteousness." It appears so self-evident that Luther famously, or rather infamously dismissed the book as "an epistle of straw" in the preface to his 1522 edition of New Testament. But Dutton was positive. She attributed the apparent contrariety to the different audiences Paul and James were addressing and hence their different authorial intentions. Paul targeted the "proud self-righteous *justiciaries*" and confronted their triumphant ignorance with the true righteousness of Christ, by which alone they are justified by God. James, however, directed his argument at the "boasting and self-deceiving *hypocrites*" of "a barren, idle, dead faith," challenging them to produce the fruit of genuine justification by the imparted righteousness of Christ.⁸⁸ The organic unity of the two may be encapsulated by Calvin's response to the Council of Trent that whereas it is faith alone which justifies, and yet the faith which justifies is not alone. Paul was addressing the former and James the latter.

Then, the manner of justification resides in imputation on God's part and faith on the sinners'. In accordance with the passive obedience of Christ unto death to pay for

⁸⁶Dutton, *On Justification*, in SSW, 4:141.

⁸⁷Dutton, *On Justification*, in SSW, 4:141.

⁸⁸Dutton, *On Justification*, in SSW, 4:128–29n.

human transgression of God's law and his active obedience to fulfill the law, the imputation of God entails the dual sense of acquittal and acceptance. As Dutton stated, "God *imputes* the *passive* obedience of Christ unto the soul, or his being *obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*; whereby he satisfied justice, and thereby discharges it from all *guilt*, and freely forgives all its *sins*. And he likewise *imputes* his *active* obedience, or the obedience of Christ's life, to the soul; whereby he *makes*, and *declares* it to be *righteous* in his sight."⁸⁹

This imputation is illustrated by several biblical images. Comparing Christ's righteousness to a robe, it covers the sins of sinners; to a wedding robe, it even covers them as his bride and presents them as flawless in Jehovah's sight.⁹⁰ In imputing his righteousness to the sinner, Christ is also likened to "a hiding place," a "refuge" from God's wrath, who "once has borne the dreadful storm, / Of God's avenging wrath."⁹¹ In addition, the grace of Christ's imputed righteousness is captured by what Dutton deemed the "glorious exchange:"

He who knew no sin, was made sin for *us*; that *we* (who knew no righteousness) might be made the righteousness of *God in him*. Oh *glorious exchange* [italics mine]! The riches of divine grace displayed herein, will be the eternal admiration of all the saved ones! Oh how beautiful is Christ, to the eye of his sinful spouse, *as ruddy*, in this first head of his sufferings; while, in condescending grace, his white, his glorious *self*, stoops down to be made *sin for her!*⁹²

The italicized pronouns effectively conveyed Dutton's sense of imputation as "the glorious exchange" between the sinless Savior and the direful sinner. Echoing "the happy exchange" of Luther between Christ and the sinner,⁹³ Dutton had imbibed the

⁸⁹Dutton, *On Justification*, in *SSW*, 4:87–88.

⁹⁰The image of Christ's righteousness as robe can be found in some of Dutton's hymns. See Dutton, "Hymn 32: Encouragement for Sinners to Come to Christ under the First Work of the Spirit," "Hymn 40: The Glories of Christ's Righteousness," and "Hymn 41: The Glories of Christ's Righteousness," in *SSW*, 2:208, 217–19.

⁹¹Dutton, "Hymn 44: Christ our Hiding Place," in *SSW*, 2:222.

⁹²Dutton, *Hints of the Glory of Christ*, in *SSW*, 4:25.

⁹³This idea of happy exchange can be found in Martin Luther's *The Freedom of the Christian*, "So Christ has all the blessings and salvation which are the soul's. And the soul has

Reformation fountain of justification with all its doctrinal clarity and experiential comfort.

On the part of the elect, justification is by faith alone. This does not mean that they have contributed in any way to the justifying faith. As St. Augustine remarked, faith is a divine gift. It is not the sinner's "*will*, his *faith*, as an *act* of his that saves him, but the *object* that his faith lays hold of" that saves, so "his faith is not the *cause* of his salvation, but the *means* of receiving it."⁹⁴ This justifying faith embodies the conviction of "the insufficiency of my *own* righteousness" and "the all-sufficiency of *Christ's*."⁹⁵ It is the "righteousness [of Christ]" that "*justifying faith looks to*," "*receives and embraces*," and "upon *this* alone it *depends*."⁹⁶ It is a personal knowing, receiving, and relying upon the righteousness of Christ.

Next, Dutton described the effects of justification, which are peace, state of blessedness, and obedience. They are Trinitarian and Christocentric. First, the justified sinner enjoys "peace with God," which is "made by Christ" and "applied by the blessed Spirit to every believer in particular."⁹⁷ It is "their peace of *conscience*," "*true, solid*,

upon it all the vice and sin which become Christ's own. Here now begins *the happy exchange* [italics mine] and conflict." Quoted in Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*, trans. and ed. Roy A. Harrisville (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 226. According to Lohse, "in his statements about Christ's redemptive work, Luther often pursued the motif of the 'happy exchange.'" He also remarked succinctly on the historical development of the motif: "The motif originated in the ancient church and was variously interpreted in the medieval period, in the course of which a link was often forged with the idea of satisfaction." Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 225–26. The motif of this "wonderful exchange" also appears in the seventeen sermons on 1 Cor 15 Luther preached in 1532/33: "Luther spoke of the 'great exchange' which God offers us in Christ. Christ exchanges all his beauty, purity, and strength for our ugliness, evil, and weakness; in his passion our guilt in exchange for his forgiveness; and in his resurrection our death-out ultimate defeat-in exchange for his life." Fred W. Meuser, "Luther as Preacher of the Word of God," in *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*, ed. Donald K. McKim (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 145.

⁹⁴Dutton, *Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley*, in SSW, 1:48–49.

⁹⁵Dutton, *On Justification*, in SSW, 4:102.

⁹⁶Dutton, *On Justification*, in SSW, 4:103.

⁹⁷Dutton, *On Justification*, in SSW, 4:113.

lasting peace” that “abide through *life*, through *death* at *judgment* and to *eternity*.”⁹⁸

Notwithstanding its Trinitarianism, the peace believers enjoy is built upon the foundation of Christ. It is “Christ’s legacy bequeathed to them” and “rests in his love,” whose “*gifts* and *calling* are without *repentance*.”⁹⁹ Besides peace, the justified are also delivered from curse and condemnation to a blessed state in Christ. They are blessed in affliction because God works it for their good and in death because they “have a blessed and glorious resurrection secured to them in Christ their head.”¹⁰⁰ As for the effect of obedience, Dutton designated it as “*new* obedience” in virtue of their new relationship with God by the justification of Christ. Now that Christ has redeemed them, the law is sweetened by his love so that they receive the law “from their *husband*, Christ” and obey God their “own Father in Christ” not in servitude but gratitude.¹⁰¹ In a fundamental way, sinners’ justification by Christ has changed their status with God and hence their relation to the law.

Derivatively, the effect of justification also includes the communion between sinners and the Trinity in love and their comfortable assurance in salvation. The sense of communion is conveyed through the relational and matrimonial languages used by Dutton. The elect of God were betrothed to the Son in the eternal covenant of grace. Their fall was the treacherous betrayal of the Son, the faithful bridegroom.¹⁰² His incarnation and death in the fullness of time was the manifestation of his love as “[their] husband,” which “many waters could not drown” (Cant 8:6).¹⁰³ He “served,” and “died”

⁹⁸Dutton, *On Justification*, in *SSW*, 4:113.

⁹⁹Dutton, *On Justification*, in *SSW*, 4:113n.

¹⁰⁰Dutton, *On Justification*, in *SSW*, 4:117–18n.

¹⁰¹Dutton, *On Justification*, in *SSW*, 4:119.

¹⁰²Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:123.

¹⁰³Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:126.

in love to “exalt his bride.”¹⁰⁴ His glorious return will be “his wedding-day” with his “glorious bride,” filled “with glorious joys” and “marriage songs.”¹⁰⁵ In the end, his victory in the cosmic battle of the last judgment will issue in the matrimonial bliss as Christ will “bring home his lovely spouse, / into his father’s royal house,” where they shall swim “in love’s ocean” and in the inconceivable “sea of bliss” of “the glorious Three in One!”¹⁰⁶ The aquatic images of sea and oceans highlight the magnitude and mystery of the love of the Trinity, in which the saints will communion with the Godhead.

The other derivative effect of justification is the assurance that the redeemed find in Christ’s righteousness. Christ is “the *surety*,” who has paid the debt of sin for the sinner. He is “the *rock* of ages” and “the *rock* of immutability,” who will hold the soul “*unshaken*, in a state of *salvation*, through *life*, through *death*, at *judgment*, and forever.”¹⁰⁷ In particular, his cross is the warranty of the sinner’s salvation. In evangelical spirituality, living “in the light of the cross of Chris” has been “seen as a crucial element” with emphasis on both “the objective truth of the cross” and the sinners’ personal take of its benefits of forgiveness and justification.¹⁰⁸ Dutton’s take was victorious as well as personal. As she described, the Spirit of God “reveals the *blood* of Christ to a sin-burdened soul, in its *infinite all-sufficiency* [italics mine] to cleanse from all sin, in some one or other promise or declaration of the gospel and enables the soul to *act* faith therein.”¹⁰⁹ In response, the soul “has an entire *dependence* upon the precious blood of

¹⁰⁴Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:126.

¹⁰⁵Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:141–44.

¹⁰⁶Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:148–49.

¹⁰⁷Dutton, *On Justification*, in *SSW*, 4:142.

¹⁰⁸Ian M. Randall, *What a Friend We Have in Christ: The Evangelical Tradition* (New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 93–94.

¹⁰⁹Dutton, *On Justification*, in *SSW*, 4:95.

Christ, for all its pardon and peace with God.”¹¹⁰ Rather than ruminating on the gruesome details of Christ’s crucifixion as typified by the Moravians’ “Blood and Wounds Theology,” Dutton opted for a triumphant take of the cross, which secured the salvation of sinners.¹¹¹

Consequently, this assurance in Christ prevents sinners from either drawing specious comfort from legalism and works righteousness or specious discomfort from perfectionism. Dutton was unequivocal about “the insufficiency of legal obedience to the justification of a sinner.” While God’s law enjoins perfect obedience, human beings in the fall have “lost [their] *power* to yield such an obedience as the law requires,” which accounts for all their miseries.¹¹² Had justification depended in any way upon the good works of the creature, “it could never have been sure.” It is only when “it stands wholly upon grace, absolute grace, and is merely received by faith alone” that “it stands *sure*, inviolably sure to all the *seed*, to all the heirs of promise, through all time, and unto all eternity.”¹¹³ On the other hand, Dutton cautioned against spiritual fear or doubts, which arose from mistaking sanctification for justification: “*beware* that you don’t so strictly *adhere* to your sanctification as to *doubt* of your justification when you can’t see it; or such *fruits* of your faith, which will evidence from your *holiness* that you are a *justified man*.”¹¹⁴ Justification is not founded upon the perfection of the sinner, but the perfect obedience of Christ. As Luther wrote, “This is the reason why our doctrine is certain: because it carries us out of ourselves, that we should not lean to our own strength, our

¹¹⁰Dutton, *On Justification*, in *SSW*, 4:96.

¹¹¹This victorious note of Christ’s death can also be shown in Dutton’s two hymns about “Christ’s Dying Love.” Rather than dwelling upon his sufferings, Dutton’s stress was unmistakably put on the love and victory of Christ. See Dutton, “Hymn 51: Christ’s Dying Love,” in *SSW*, 2:229; “Hymn 52: Christ’s Dying Love,” in *SSW*, 2:230.

¹¹²Dutton, *On Justification*, in *SSW*, 4:133.

¹¹³Dutton, *On Justification*, in *SSW*, 4:107.

¹¹⁴Dutton, “Letter 15,” in *SSW*, 6:49.

own conscience, our own feeling, our own person, and our own works, but to that which is without us, that is to say, the promise and truth of God which cannot deceive us.”¹¹⁵

The Advocateship of Christ

Besides Christ’s mediatorial offices from eternity and in time, Dutton also noted the advocateship of Christ now in heaven. In the two letters she addressed one Mr. J. D’s confusions about the advocateship of Christ, Dutton spelled forth its nature and effect. By nature, advocateship pertains to the priestly office of Christ. Even though Dutton frequently referred to Christ as husband, she never overlooked his three-fold office of “prophet, priest and king” in the Reformed tradition.¹¹⁶

Still, Christ’s advocateship differs from his priestly intercession. Whereas “intercession more generally regards the communication of favour, or of all grace, unto all glory,” “advocacy more strictly respects Christ’s pleading the merits of his own blood, for the forgiveness of our sins, and for the nullifying of all those charges” by Satan.¹¹⁷ It affects their “*well-being*,” their sanctification rather than their “*being*,” their justified standing in Christ.¹¹⁸ In operation, the advocateship of Christ involves the three persons of the Godhead: the Father “calling [the Son] to it and anointing him to it,” the Son

¹¹⁵Quoted in Galen K. Johnson, *Prisoner of Conscience: John Bunyan on Self, Community, and Christian Faith* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2003), 84

¹¹⁶For example, in her religious poem of *Narration of Grace*, Dutton wrote about the soul’s “long[ing] for Christ indeed,” who is “a Saviour,” and “glorious . . . as prophet, priest, and king.” Dutton, *Narration of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:159.

¹¹⁷Dutton, *A Letter to Mr. J. D. on his Thoughts Concerning the Advocateship of Christ in Heaven*, in *SSW*, 5:302. This is repeated in her *Walking with God*: “Christ as our advocate defends us from all charges; as our intercessor pleads for the communication and continuation of all favors.” Dutton, *A Discourse upon Walking with God: in a Letter to a Friend*, in *SSW*, 2:26.

¹¹⁸Dutton, *An Answer to a Letter from Mr. J. D. on Christ’s Advocateship*, in *SSW*, 5:309.

“accepting and executing of it,” and the Holy Spirit “becoming the anointing for the Saviour’s pleading.”¹¹⁹

Then, Dutton pointed to the biblical origin of Christ’s advocateship when Mr. J. D. remained unconvinced after all her exhortations. Not only does 1 John 2:1 speak explicitly of “an advocate” in heaven, he has also been predicted in the Old Testament. J. D. apparently questioned: “Whether or not he[*sic*] Antediluvian world, or before, or after the giving of the law, had any need of, or had an advocate in heaven to plead for them under that dark dispensation or not?”¹²⁰ In reply, Dutton walked him through the Old Testament and offered a Christological interpretation from the *protevangelium*, to patriarchs like Noah, Abraham, until the priests, whose office of sacrifice and intercession is a foreshadow or type of Christ’s propitiation and advocateship. The trans-temporal perspective of God, which Dutton used to eschew the logical conclusion of eternal justification, is employed again to defend the typological and Christological reading of the Old Testament:

And though our Lord was not then incarnate, and so the giving himself a sacrifice, his life unto death for us, was not actually accomplished; yet he being set up in covenant, as atoning Mediator from everlasting, took his great *work*, and looked upon it in that respect as *done*. And upon this bottom he had a right to intercede and plead for his *own*, among the *Antediluvians*, from *Adam* till the deluge came; and though their ideas might be indistinct as to this, for want of clearer revelation, yet they had an advocate as well as a propitiation, and were saved, as we, through Christ’s advocacy.¹²¹

As for the effect of Christ’s advocateship, it is for the comfort of saints and the glory of God. In addition to his blood that is shed for the sinner, Christ’s pleading in heaven tenders “a *double* comfort to a believer” that “he is able to save them to the uttermost.”¹²² It imparts “the highest assurance of God’s continual walk” with the saints

¹¹⁹Dutton, *Concerning the Advocateship of Christ in Heaven*, in *SSW*, 5:305.

¹²⁰Dutton, *On Christ’s Advocateship*, in *SSW*, 5:310.

¹²¹Dutton, *On Christ’s Advocateship*, in *SSW*, 5:311.

¹²²Dutton, *Concerning the Advocateship of Christ in Heaven*, in *SSW*, 5:303.

despite “all the opposition of the united powers of darkness.”¹²³ Christ’s advocateship is not to “move an unreconciled God” or “pacify unsatisfied justice” as if his death on the cross had failed in any way for justification. Rather, Christ’s advocacy is “to move a reconciled God, to communicate according to the strong propense of his own heart, the natural fruits of a perfect reconciliation made, and to sue out our pardon and peace, from infinite grace, and satisfied justice, for God’s glory and our joy.”¹²⁴ As Dutton experienced, “Christ’s intercession with the Father is always *prevalent* for the deliverance of his people in the most *desolate circumstances*.”¹²⁵

Even if that appeared unnecessary to J. D. in view of the perfect reconciliation and perfect satisfaction of justice by the death of Christ, Dutton exhorted him to trust God’s infinite wisdom and grace. Rather than indulging in his own reasoning, he should hold unto the truth that “everything is managed in heaven for us sinners by Christ our Mediator as is most for the glory of God in all his persons, and as is most for our security and joy, present and eternal.”¹²⁶ Essentially it is an urge for him to let God be God. Thus, although disbelief in this doctrine may not affect the “being” or salvation of Christians, it will nevertheless “affect a Christian in his well-being, both as to his own comfort, and the grateful fruit which he ought to bring forth, in dealing by faith with and in giving glory to his great Advocate.”¹²⁷

The Work of the Spirit

Together with the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit plays a significant role in the salvation of sinners. Although Dutton appended a poem on the special work of the

¹²³Dutton, *Walking with God*, in SSW, 2:27.

¹²⁴Dutton, *Concerning the Advocateship of Christ in Heaven*, in SSW, 5:304.

¹²⁵Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in SSW, 3:121.

¹²⁶Dutton, *Concerning the Advocateship of Christ in Heaven*, in SSW, 5:304.

¹²⁷Dutton, *On Christ’s Advocateship*, in SSW, 5:311.

Spirit at the end of *Wonders of Grace*, it did not signify his work to be “*inferior* to the rest.” Rather, “all the acts and works of the three persons in God, as they have a joint hand in the salvation of the elect, shine forth with as equal splendor.”¹²⁸ Specifically, the splendor of the Spirit shines through his work in the regeneration, sanctification of sinners, and his sealing of their salvation and eternal inheritance. Working together with the Father and Son, the Spirit nevertheless stands out in facilitating not only the spiritual birth of sinners, but also their communion with God and comfortable hope in him.

Regeneration by the Spirit

The Holy Spirit plays a prominent role in the regeneration of sinners, which Dutton expostulated in *A Discourse Concerning the New Birth*. As she defined it, new birth “is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit of God, by the word, upon the soul of a man; creating a-new in Christ Jesus, in all the powers and faculties thereof; by which he produces an abiding principle of spiritual life, which contains in it all kinds of graces, every way fitted for, and actings towards their proper object.”¹²⁹ This definition not only identifies the Spirit as the chief agent in regeneration, but also spells forth the manner and effects of his regenerating work..

First, the Spirit is the chief divine agent in the work of regeneration. It is revealed in Scripture and necessitated by the nature of regeneration. In John 3, Jesus identifies the Spirit as “the *author* of the new-birth,” whose operations are “altogether *free and sovereign*” like the wind.¹³⁰ By its very nature, the regeneration of the fallen humanity demands power without them. For no one “can make himself a new creature,”

¹²⁸Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:114.

¹²⁹Dutton, *A Discourse concerning the New-Birth: To Which Are Added Two Poems: The One on Salvation in Christ, by Free-Grace, for the Chief of Sinners; The Other on a Believer's Safety and Duty. With an Epistle Recommendatory, by the Reverend Mr. Jacob Rogers, B. A.*, in *SSW*, 4:153.

¹³⁰Dutton, *New-Birth*, in *SSW*, 4:154.

but must be “wholly beholden to the Holy Spirit for that work, in which the creature is wholly passive.”¹³¹ More precisely, the creature is not wholly passive, but actively resists the regenerating operations of the Spirit. Compared with the first creation of humanity where “natural darkness” of “mere *negation*” rules, this new birth is all the harder because of the “moral darkness,” or “the darkness of sin,” which actively “*resists, opposes, and hates* the light.”¹³² So it demands nothing short of the supernatural light and the “*irresistible power*” of the Spirit to wrought it.¹³³

This led Dutton to repudiate several errors or confusions. One was directed against Robert Sandeman (1718–1771). The theological aberration of Sandemanianism took from his name and is often equated with “easy believism.”¹³⁴ Among the ten errors Dutton noted in Sandeman’s *Letters to the Author of Theron and Aspasio*, first was his omission of the Spirit’s work by in “the great work of regeneration.”¹³⁵ Another error Dutton perceived concerned baptism or moral reformation. As she retorted: “How many are there that think baptism is regeneration; or at most, a wicked man’s external

¹³¹Dutton, “Letter 100,” in *SSW*, 1:384.

¹³²Dutton, *New-Birth*, in *SSW*, 4:159.

¹³³Dutton, *New-Birth*, in *SSW*, 4:154.

¹³⁴For a thorough refutations of Sandemanianism in history, see Andrew Fuller, *Strictures on Sandemanianism, in Twelve Letters to a Friend* (Harrisburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 2:561–646. For a short introduction of Sandemanianism, in its historical background and theological aberrations, see D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, “Sandemanianism,” in J. I. Packer, ed., *Puritan Papers: 1965–1967*, vol. 4 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2004), 269–92.

¹³⁵Dutton, *Mr. Sanddeman [sic] Refuted by an Old Woman: . . . In a Letter from a Friend in the Country to a Friend in Town*, in *SSW*, 5:42–45. (As seen in the title, Dutton misspelled the name “Sandeman” as “Sanddeman.”) The other nine errors Dutton noted concerned Sandeman’s deficient understanding of the nature of justifying faith and his tendencies of Arminianism and antinomianism. In summary, Dutton commented about Sandeman: “By several parts of his performance, I suspect him to be a Sabellian; in others, he looks like a Neonomian; in some, like an Antinomian; (and what he says, tends much that way); and in many, like an Arminian. –But whatever he be really, I judge Mr. S—n to be unfounded in the faith exceedingly.” Dutton, *Mr. Sanddeman Refuted by an Old Woman*, in *SSW*, 5:75.

reformation from gross immoralities to practice the duties of morality?”¹³⁶ Mere baptism and moral reformation do not constitute genuine regeneration. In addition, the Spirit’s work in regeneration also shows the futility of religious education in terms of new birth. Despite all the privileges it brought, “the power that produced [the signs of regeneration] was not the natural force of a pious education, but the supernatural power and almighty energy of the Holy Ghost in regeneration.”¹³⁷ In the words of John Henry Newman (1801–1890), education makes the gentleman, not Christian.

Then, as to the nature of regeneration, it is an internal operation of the Spirit upon the human soul. When Dutton indicted Sandeman’s omission of the Spirit’s work in regeneration, she faulted him especially on his denial of the “heart-work” of the Spirit and the “soul’s restoration by the Spirit of grace.”¹³⁸ The Spirit works from within the sinner. He gives “the soul a spiritual ability to know God in Christ,” makes the will “willing to be saved in God’s way,” pricks the smug conscience before pacifying it “by the *sprinkling of Christ’s blood*,” and purges affections of “earthliness, sensuality and vileness” to become “heavenly, spiritual and pure.”¹³⁹ In this way, the natural and moral darkness of the soul is dispelled by the Spirit.¹⁴⁰

This internal work of the Spirit is usually experienced as the two stages of conviction and comfort in conversion. This is depicted in the dialogue between the human soul and the Holy Spirit in Dutton’s “Special Work of the Spirit in the Hearts of the Elect.” When first convicted, the soul groans that she sees “all sins do meet” in her

¹⁴⁴Dutton, “Letter 100,” in *SSW*, 1:384

¹³⁷Dutton, “Letter 67,” in *SSW*, 1:277.

¹³⁸Dutton, *Mr. Sanddeman Refuted by an Old Woman*, in *SSW*, 5:44.

¹³⁹Dutton, *New-Birth*, in *SSW*, 4:160–63.

¹⁴⁰Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:155.

“vile heart,” which makes her the very “chief of sinners.”¹⁴¹ The convicted soul is then guided by the Spirit to plead for the mercy of Christ:

I long for Christ indeed,
He is a Saviour, just such as I need;
As Prophet, Priest, and King, he glorious is,
Oh! could I say he’s mine, and I am his.
Lord, give me Christ, or else my soul must die,
None but this Jesus can me satisfy.¹⁴²

What the last two lines express is the soul’s exclusive and desperate yearning for Christ. Her plea is responded by the Spirit with “the promises of grace” in Christ, which “gives the soul a sweet relief.”¹⁴³ He applies the salvific effect of Christ as promised in the word of God.

Next, as to the effect of the Spirit’s regeneration, it is viewed in its connection with his work in sanctification. In her definition of the new birth, Dutton already pointed out that the Spirit “produces an abiding principle of spiritual life; which contains in it all kinds of graces, every way fitted for, and actings towards their proper object.”¹⁴⁴ Among others, the kinds of graces birthed by the Spirit include “faith, hope, love, patience, humility, meekness,” which are the “fruits of the Spirit.”¹⁴⁵ But these graces are not attained or even attainable in this life because of the dual natures of the saved, *simul iustus et peccator*. The work of the Spirit in new birth is “perfect as to kind, and perfect as to parts, extending to all his powers and faculties, but is not yet perfect as to degree.” Or use Dutton’s favorite imageries of human beings at different stages of development, the regenerated soul is “an infant” that “has all the parts of a man, though it is not arrived

¹⁴¹Dutton, *Narration of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:156.

¹⁴²Dutton, *Narration of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:159.

¹⁴³Dutton, *Narration of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:160.

¹⁴⁴Dutton, *New-Birth*, in *SSW*, 4:153.

¹⁴⁵Dutton, *New-Birth*, in *SSW*, 4:164.

at the full stature of the perfect man” so that “every regenerate man is two men.”¹⁴⁶ Compared with the sinners’ justification in Christ, which “is perfect, and every way complete before God,” the effect of their regeneration, or their “sanctification in themselves is very imperfect.”¹⁴⁷ The regeneration of sinners does not bring about perfection, but initiates them into the lifelong process of sanctification.

Before sanctification is explored, however, the effect of regeneration on the communion between God and sinners cannot be overlooked. Sent by the Father and the Son, the Spirit acts as the medium of communion between the triune God and his children. In the work of regeneration, he “takes of the things of Christ, and of the Father, and shows them unto us,”¹⁴⁸ namely, “the love of the Father and the grace of Christ,” to which the saved respond with love, praise, and “a holy filial fear of him.”¹⁴⁹

It was in view of this communion she had with the Trinity that Dutton dismissed Wesley’s accusation of her unregenerate state. She enjoyed “sweet communion with all the three persons” as well as “distinct communion with each of the divine persons,” which is “an inward, efficacious, soul-transforming thing,”¹⁵⁰ and thus unmistakably points to her regenerate state. In this respect, Dutton’s communion with the triune God is the evidence as well as effect of her regeneration.

Sanctification by the Spirit

Sanctification may be classified into the two categories of definitive and progressive sanctification.¹⁵¹ Dutton recognized the symbiotic relations of the two in

¹⁴⁶Dutton, “Letter 100,” in *SSW*, 1:386.

¹⁴⁷Dutton, “Letter 102,” in *SSW*, 1:397.

¹⁴⁸Dutton, “Letter 52,” in *SSW*, 1:207–8.

¹⁴⁹Dutton, “Letter 50,” in *SSW*, 5:211.

¹⁵⁰Dutton, *Against Perfections*, in *SSW*, 1:34.

¹⁵¹David Peterson, *Possessed by God: New Testament Sanctification and Holiness* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995).

what she categorized as the mystical and personal aspects of sanctification. As she understood, “That sanctification which we have by the *blood of Christ applied*; and that which we have by the *grace of the Holy Spirit*, are distinct things. The one is *mystical*, the other *personal*: the former was *completed at once* in Christ, the latter admits of *degrees*, and *repetition* in us, as we contract new defilement; and it chiefly respects the purgation of our consciences from the *guilt of sin*.”¹⁵² True to the biblical revelations such as Hebrews 10:14, Colossians 1:22, and 1 Corinthians 1:30, Dutton believed that sanctification was definitive and complete by the work of Christ on the cross. At the same time, it is progressive in terms of the sanctifying influences of the Spirit, which is also testified by biblical evidence, such as 1 Peter 1:2. It is at once “a one-time event and a process, the believers *being* and *becoming* holy and *acting* correspondingly.”¹⁵³ She was “mystically complete” and perfect in Christ, yet not “personally” complete or perfect in that the Spirit who “has begun this good work in me, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”¹⁵⁴ Or the distinction may be attributable to different orientations. As Dutton confessed, “though I see myself in myself, in this *mixed* state, to be vastly *imperfect*; yet I see myself *in Christ*, to be absolutely *perfect*.”¹⁵⁵ It was a matter of difference between self-directedness and Christ-directedness. This tension is typified by Paul in Romans 7:25: “his absolute perfection in *Christ*, and his present imperfection in *himself*.”¹⁵⁶

However, Dutton did not set up mystical and personal sanctifications as points of departure from the more commonly accepted view of progressive sanctification among

¹⁵²Dutton, *A Caution Against Error, When it Springs up Together with Truth*, in *SSW*, 6:196.

¹⁵³Klaus Bockmuehl, “Sanctification,” in *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright, and J. I. Packer (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 614.

¹⁵⁴Dutton, *Against Perfection*, in *SSW*, 1:8.

¹⁵⁵Dutton, *Against Perfection*, in *SSW*, 1:8.

¹⁵⁶Dutton, *Against Perfection*, in *SSW*, 1:9.

Particular Baptists. Rather, the two occasions when she advanced them were both prompted by the polemical need of defending gospel truth.¹⁵⁷ One was to refute the error of antinomianism advocated by John Richardson (1580–1654) and John Eaton (c.1574–1641), which was at the time absorbed by John Cennick (1718–1755). In their confusion between sanctification and justification, the antinomians totally ignored the “*necessity*” or “*usefulness*” of the sinner’s “personal inherent holiness.”¹⁵⁸ As Fuller faulted

¹⁵⁷Sanctification seemed to be a point of controversy in some Particular Baptist churches in Dutton’s time. Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892), for example, mentioned in his sermon, “Threefold Sanctification,” one such controversy in John Gill’s church and the subsequent church discipline: “In the days of my venerable predecessor, Dr. Gill, who was in the opinion even of ultra-Calvinists, sound to the core, this pernicious evil broke out in our church. There were some who believed in what was called, “Imputed Sanctification,” and denied the work of the blessed Spirit. I was reading last night in our old Church Book, a note written there in the doctor’s own handwriting, as the deliberate opinion of this Church—’Agreed—That to deny the internal sanctification of the Spirit, as a principle of divine grace and holiness worked in the heart, or as consisting of divine grace communicated to and implanted in the soul, which, though but a begun work, and as yet incomplete, is an abiding work of grace, and will abide, notwithstanding all corruptions, temptations and snares, and be performed by the Author of it until the day of Christ, when it will be the saints’ meetness for eternal glory—is a grievous error, which highly reflects dishonor on the blessed Spirit, and his operations of grace on the heart, is subversive of true religion and powerful godliness, and renders persons unfit for church communion. Therefore, it is further agreed, that such persons who appear to have embraced this error be not admitted to the communion of this church; and should any such who are members of it appear to have received it, and continued in it, that they be forthwith excluded from it.’ Two members then present declaring themselves to be of the opinion condemned in the above resolution, and also a third person who was absent but who was well known to have been under this awful delusion, were consequently excluded that evening. No, more, a person of another church who held the opinion thus condemned, was forbidden to commune at the table, and his pastor at Kettering was written to upon the subject, warning him not to allow so great an errorist to remain in fellowship. The doctor thought the error to be so deadly that he used the pruning knife at once! He did not stop till it spread, but he cut off the very twigs! And this is one of the benefits of church discipline when we are enabled to carry it out under God—that it nips error in the very bud—and thus those who as yet are not infected are kept from it by the blessed providence of God through the instrumentality of the church! We have always held, and still hold and teach that the work of the Spirit in us, whereby we are conformed unto Christ’s Image, is as absolutely necessary for our salvation, as is the work of Jesus Christ, by which He cleanses us from our sins.” Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (London, 1862; repr., Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1969), 8:93–4.

¹⁵⁸Dutton, *Caution Against Error*, SSW, 6:194–96. One author seemed to be John Richardson, whose tract was prefaced by John Eaton, both advertising Antinomianism from their erroneous view of personal sanctification. Dutton quoted Eaton’s words: “And mark what I say, not only we our persons, but also our works, both natural, civil, and religious, which by their imperfections are in themselves foul and filthy, are by free justification made so pure and clean, yea, so perfectly holy and righteous, and thereby so acceptable and perfectly well-pleasing to God, that they are all (as I said) both natural, civil, and religious actions, like the excellent sacrifice of righteous *Abel*, and works of *Enoch*, *Noah*, *Abraham*.” Dutton, *Caution Against Error*, in SSW, 6:200. As for Richardson, Dutton quoted him saying that “Christ by his death did present all his people to God *without spot, or blemish, or wrinkle*,” which she believed was a wrong taking of Eph 5:25–27. Dutton, *Caution Against Error*, in SSW, 6:196. Eaton was also author of the other controversial tract Dutton refuted, *The Steps of Abraham’s Faith*, where his Antinomianism was clear: “That the children of *Abraham*, walk holily, soberly, and righteously in all God’s commandments declaratively to man-ward, *without* the law of the Ten

antinomianism, “those who imbibe this doctrine talk of being sanctified in Christ, in such a manner as to supersede all personal and progressive sanctification in the believer.”¹⁵⁹ This error led Cennick to his physical and theological departure from the more Calvinistic Societies of Howell Harris to the Moravians, which incurred confusions and division among the brothers in its wake.¹⁶⁰ The other occasion Dutton adduced mystical and personal sanctifications was when she refuted Wesley’s doctrine of perfection. His erroneous view of perfection derived from his misunderstanding of the nature of faith and his confusion between the new birth and the perfect nature of Adam in the first creation.¹⁶¹ Except for these two occasions, Dutton dealt with the doctrine of sanctification in its personal and progressive sense, which is the focus of this section.

Perhaps second in frequency only to the biblical title of “the comforter” is the Spirit’s identity as “the sanctifier” in Dutton’s works, which gives full credit to his role in the sanctification of sinners.¹⁶² The Spirit is not only the author of regeneration, but also the sanctifier to “make them saints as the effect.”¹⁶³ Whereas justification of sinners is “through the blood and righteousness of Christ,” their sanctification is by the “Holy Spirit.”¹⁶⁴ In her letter of entreaty for Christians to depart from iniquity, Dutton was unequivocal about the power of the Spirit in personal growth into godliness and the revival of Christian faith:

Commandments.” Quoted in Dutton, *Caution Against Error*, in *SSW*, 6:202–203.

¹⁵⁹Andrew Fuller, *Dialogues and Letters Between Crispus and Gaius*, in *Works* 2:662.

¹⁶⁰Dutton, *Caution Against Error*, in *SSW*, 6:192, 198, 205.

¹⁶¹Dutton, *Against Perfection*, in *SSW*, 1:17, 20–21.

¹⁶²Throughout her works, the Spirit is designated most frequently as “the comforter,” “the sanctifier,” and sometimes “the indweller.” At several places, Dutton explicitly addressed the Spirit as “the sanctifier.” Dutton, *Against Perfection*, in *SSW*, 1:17; “Letter 14,” in *SSW*, 7:44.

¹⁶³Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:163.

¹⁶⁴Dutton, *A Letter on the Being and Working of Sin*, in *SSW*, 7:65–66.

Religion never will be *revived* amongst us, unless under the primitive Spirit it be *reduced* to the primitive pattern, both as to faith and practice. –Oh therefore, let us *all* cry mightily for the Holy Spirit, and labor after a thorough reformation, and ever one for *himself*, to reform one. This would be a great means to spread the life and power of godliness over *all*.”¹⁶⁵

The primitive pattern of Christian faith consists in the thorough reformation unto holiness by the very power of the Spirit.

Then, as to the way of sanctification, Dutton adhered to the biblical means of mortification and vivification. As she refuted Wesley’s doctrine of perfection, “having imputed the *righteousness* of his *Son* to them, for their complete *justification*,” God has then “upon this bottom, given them his *Holy Spirit*, to begin their *conformity* to Christ, in the mortification of sin, and quickening of their souls unto the heavenly life.”¹⁶⁶ These two prongs of mortification and vivification may be illustrated by the Spirit’s sanctifying influences upon Dutton’s will. She “*lost* [her] will in *God’s* . . . as corrupt, while the Holy Ghost subdued the rebellion of [her] nature” and then “*found* it, as sanctified, when he drew [her] into a sweet acquiescence with God’s good pleasure.”¹⁶⁷ The subduing or mortifying work of the Spirit was followed by the vivifying work of “the sanctifying operations of the blessed Spirit,” which resulted in the renewal of her will. Consequently, she “liked what [her] *Father* liked” and “approved of the most trying dispensations” simply “because it was *his will*.”¹⁶⁸ The outcome of vivification is the submission and conformity of her will to God’s.

Next, as for the nature of the Spirit’s sanctification, it is progressive as indicated above. True to Dutton’s salvation experience, sanctification is progressive, not positional.¹⁶⁹ In view of the being and working of sin, “the sanctifying work of the Spirit,

¹⁶⁵Dutton, *A Word of Intreaty to All Those That Name the Name of Christ, to Depart from Iniquity*, in *SSW*, 5:412.

¹⁶⁶Dutton, *Against Perfection*, in *SSW*, 1:10.

¹⁶⁷Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:53.

¹⁶⁸Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:53.

¹⁶⁹The Puritans are often blamed for propounding a progressive view of sanctification,

though it is perfect with respect to parts, as every part and power of the soul is sanctified; is yet imperfect with respect to degrees, there being no part of power of the soul that is sanctified throughout.”¹⁷⁰ The “work of sanctification in the mortification of sin and quickening us to live unto God” is “to be carried on by *degrees*” and “to advance continually with our renewed consolation under gracious influences of the Holy Ghost the Comforter.”¹⁷¹ To a great extent, the different degrees of sanctification correspond to the different levels of spiritual maturity, which are illustrated by the imageries of little children, young men, and fathers of 1 John.¹⁷² As Dutton interpreted the passage,

Some of the saints, walk as *little children*, who though fond of their father’s company, yet being weak, are but slow in their pace, and often fall. Some as *young men* arrived to a full age, are nimble in faith course; being *strong in faith*, and *in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*, to surmount all the difficulties they meet with in their way. And others there are, that walk with God in the solid wisdom of *fathers*. . . . Thus it is with different persons according to their different ages in Christianity; and so with the same soul in different times.¹⁷³

Essentially God’s children possess within them “both a *new heart*, and an *old*” and “grace and sin both dwell together in the *same soul*, yea, in the *same faculties*.”¹⁷⁴ This symbiosis of the old and the new presupposes the sinner’s sanctification to be progressive, not perfect. To assert sinless perfection in this life as Wesley did was

which is held accountable for the prolonged spiritual afflictions of the weak consciences. See Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 69–92. But in respect of biblical evidence, it seems more precise to describe their view of sanctification as progressive by the Spirit and definitive in Christ as Dutton pointed out.

¹⁷⁰Dutton, *Being and Working of Sin*, in *SSW*, 7:67.

¹⁷¹Dutton, *Being and Working of Sin*, in *SSW*, 7:82.

¹⁷²For example, in her work *A Discourse Upon Walking with God*, Dutton emphasized that this walk had to be “a continued course,” “perfect in respect of its parts,” yet not so “in respect of its degrees.” She illustrated this with the biblical imageries of “little children,” “young men” and “fathers”: “Some of the saints, walk as little children, who though fond of their father’s company, yet being weak, are but slow in their pace, and often fall. Some as young men arrived to a full age, are nimble in faith, and in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, to surmount all the difficulties they meet with in their way. And others there are, that walk with God in the solid wisdom of fathers.” Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:36.

¹⁷³Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:36–37.

¹⁷⁴Dutton, *Being and Working of Sin*, in *SSW*, 7:77.

contrary to the will and work of the Trinity and would inevitably “thwart the whole design of the gospel with respect to the saints in the present state.”¹⁷⁵ It was in terms of the progressive nature of sanctification that Dutton admonished Wesley not to be “deceived, in thinking [himself] free from actual sin daily. And so the glory of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, (and of the Spirit too, in his office, as a sanctifier) be lessened.”¹⁷⁶

Finally, as to its effect, sanctification is also related to the saints’ communion between God and assurance in his grace. In the process of sanctification, the Spirit gifts the saints with variegated spiritual gifts, such as the grace of faith, love, hope, meekness, patience, humility, godly zeal and self-denial,¹⁷⁷ which are all germane to their communion with God. The sanctification of the Spirit also enhances assurance. As “the Spirit of grace and sanctification, the Spirit of liberty and consolation, light, life, and glory,” he is “given unto us as *the earnest of our inheritance*, which guarantees the completion of the saints’ sanctification.¹⁷⁸ However imperfectly or incompletely the saints are sanctified on earth, they “do initially enter upon the possession of their inheritance” in eternity, which is further ensured by the sealing of the Spirit.¹⁷⁹

The Sealing of the Spirit

The sealing of the Spirit is a biblical concept. The saints “are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise” and even “sealed unto the day of redemption” so that they should not “grieve the Holy Spirit” (Eph 1:13; 4:30). For some Puritan writers, the sealing of the

¹⁷⁵Dutton, *A Letter from Mrs. Anne Dutton. To the Reverend Mr. G. Whitefield*, in *SSW*, 1:4.

¹⁷⁶Dutton, *Against Perfection*, in *SSW*, 1:17.

¹⁷⁷Dutton, *New-Birth*, in *SSW*, 4:164–90.

¹⁷⁸Dutton, *Inheritance of the Adopted Sons*, in *SSW*, 4:281

¹⁷⁹Dutton, *Inheritance of the Adopted Sons*, in *SSW*, 4:281.

Spirit is central to the assurance of salvation.¹⁸⁰ In Dutton's letters on the sealing of the Spirit, she quoted one such Puritan writer, Thomas Goodwin (1600–1680) who contended: "That as the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, *the Lord knows them that are his*: so answerably the sealed believer has a certain *knowledge*, an *assurance* given him *that he is the Lord's*."¹⁸¹ In addition to biblical revelation and the Puritan tradition, the sealing of the Spirit is also personal to Dutton. As she had experienced, it was the Spirit that inspired saving faith in her heart and sealed her faith according to God's promise: "such was the wonderful kindness of my God that *after I believed, I was sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise*."¹⁸² In several letters, Dutton spelled out the sealing of the Spirit concerning its time, nature, and effects.

As for its timing, Dutton conceived the sealing of the Spirit to be subsequent to salvation. Drawing on the biblical revelation in Ephesians 1:13, Dutton argued: "And as the Holy Spirit, at first, gives us a real possession of our inheritance by faith, so also *after that we have believed*, he further *seals us up unto the day of redemption*, Ephesians 1:13, by which he gives us a more sensible possession of it."¹⁸³ Even if the Greek word, "which

¹⁸⁰For the witness of the Spirit, see Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1946), 48–61. Also Joel Beeke, *Puritan Reformed Spirituality*, especially the chapters on Calvin's doctrine of assurance and the comparison between English Puritans and Dutch Reformed divines on assurance. Another introduction of the Puritan doctrine of the sealing of the Spirit is by Michael A. Eaton, *Baptism with the Spirit: The Teaching of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), especially Part 2: "Lloyd-Jones's Theological Forerunners," which include such Puritan representatives as Richard Sibbes, Thomas Goodwin, John Owen, and Jonathan Edwards.

¹⁸¹Dutton, *Letter III: On Assurance of Interest in Christ: as Belonging to the Spirit's Sealing*, in *SSW*, 5:28. Adam Embry points out two strands in the Puritan doctrine of assurance, the simultaneous that views sealing to be happening simultaneously with believing and the consequential that views sealing to be consequent to believing. Representatives of the former strand include Thomas Goodwin and of the latter John Owen and John Flavel. Adam Embry, *Keeper of the Great Seal of Heaven: Sealing of the Spirit in the Life and Thought of John Flavel* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011), 71. But from Goodwin's sermons on Eph 3:16–21, he clearly argued for the consequential position by contrasting the aorist tense of *pisteusantes* ("having believed") in Eph 1:13 with the present tense of *pisteuontes* ("believing") in 1 Pet 1:8. See Eaton, *Baptism with the Spirit*, 85–86. The latter argument of Goodwin's position well accords with Dutton's on the sealing of the Spirit and better justifies her uncritical quotations from him.

¹⁸²Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:27.

¹⁸³Dutton, *Inheritance of the Adopted Sons of God*, in *SSW*, 4:281.

is translated *after* might as well be rendered *in*” in this verse and thus convey a simultaneous sense, Dutton insisted that ‘believing and sealing would be distinct things and the former previous to the latter.’¹⁸⁴ However interlocked they may be in spiritual experience, any confounding of the two is inverting the order of believing and sealing as stated “in the sacred word.”¹⁸⁵

Then, the effects of the Spirit’s sealing reside first in the sinners’ assurance of salvation. The connection between sealing and assuring can be illustrated from “*the use of a seal*” in daily life, which “in conveyance of inheritances, is to “*assure*.”¹⁸⁶ As Dutton pointedly asked, “what can that his sealing work be, if it is not his *assuring* the heart of its *interest* in the promise as it stands in God’s book?”¹⁸⁷ As she had experienced, it had been the Spirit, the sealer, who had “revealed Christ” to her and directed her heart “into the everlasting love of the Father, and the immutability of his eternal counsel and covenant about [her] salvation, as the ground of [her] strong consolation, under all the mutations [she] felt in [her] own soul.”¹⁸⁸ Without the consequent assurance by the Spirit, the soul would have been “deeply dejected,” unable to “find the rest of triumphant joy in God its Saviour.”¹⁸⁹ Now that the Spirit seals, “the fruit” of his assuring sealing is expressed in the words of 1 Peter 1:8 as “*joy unspeakable and full of glory*.”¹⁹⁰ If the first act of faith is “the soul’s *flying to Christ for refuge* as a perishing *sinner* in the faith of his

¹⁸⁴Dutton, “Letter II: On Assurance of Interest in Christ: As Belonging to the Spirit’s Sealing,” in *SSW*, 5:25.

¹⁸⁵Dutton, “Letter III: On Assurance of Interest in Christ: As Belonging to the Spirit’s Sealing,” in *SSW*, 5:29–30.

¹⁸⁶Dutton, “Letter III: Spirit’s Sealing,” in *SSW*, 5:28.

¹⁸⁷Dutton, “Letter III: Spirit’s Sealing,” in *SSW*, 5:28.

¹⁸⁸Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:28.

¹⁸⁹Dutton, “Letter II: Spirit’s Sealing,” in *SSW*, 5:27.

¹⁹⁰Dutton, “Letter II: Spirit’s Sealing,” in *SSW*, 5:27.

being the only and all-sufficient *Savior*,” the sealing faith is “the soul’s enjoyment of the promised grace.”¹⁹¹

The second effect of the sealing of the Spirit is the sinners’ receiving him as the earnest, the warranty of their eternal inheritance in God. This is testified by the word of God: “You are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance” (Eph 1:13–14).¹⁹² While both contribute to the sinner’s security of salvation, Dutton accented assurance of salvation in the Spirit’s sealing and security of eternal inheritance in his being the earnest.¹⁹³ In the practical sense of “earnest” being the “pawn” or “pledge,” which entails the mutual agreement between two parties, the earnest of the Spirit documents the agreement between the triune God and his people: God the Savior “reciev[ing] the sinner to save him in and by and with himself forever,” God the Father “giv[ing] himself unto the believer as his time-portion and eternal all,” and the saved soul “mak[ing] an entire surrender of himself to be the Lord’s eternally.”¹⁹⁴ Different from the earnest in the worldly sense, which can be returned or retracted, “the gift of the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of grace, as the Spirit of promise, as a seal, sealer, and earnest, is a *gift of God*, that on his part is absolutely *without repentance*.”¹⁹⁵ It ensures their salvation “until the redemption of the purchased possession,” which is the saints’ “complete redemption, to the full possession of our great inheritance in the light of glory

¹⁹¹Dutton, “Letter III: Spirit’s Sealing,” in *SSW*, 5:28–29.

¹⁹²The “earnest” language can also be found in 2 Cor 1:22: “He has given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts,” and 2 Cor 5:5: “Who also has given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.”

¹⁹³The two terms of “sealing” and “earnest” were used interchangeably by both Sibbes and Goodwin with only slight differentiations at some points. Eaton, *Baptism with the Spirit*, 88–89. As will be illustrated, Dutton seemed to have followed Goodwin in terms of the nuances between these two terms when she emphasized the earnest as a part of the eternal inheritance in heaven.

¹⁹⁴Dutton, “Letter I: On the Gift of the Holy Spirit to Believers, as a Sealer, and his Being to them as such, the Earnest of their Inheritance,” in *SSW*, 5:31–32.

¹⁹⁵Dutton, “Letter I: Earnest of their Inheritance,” in *SSW*, 5:32.

as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.” In virtue of his assurance, the Spirit is fitly dubbed as “a *sure* earnest.”¹⁹⁶

Specifically, the eternal inheritance guaranteed by the earnest of the Spirit is none other than the triune God. Even as a worldly earnest is “a *part* of the whole and of the same *kind* with it,” so the “*free* earnest” the Spirit gives to the saints is “a *part* of their whole inheritance in God, in the three-one God, Father, Son, and Spirit, in the great Jehovah.”¹⁹⁷ The inheritance of the adopted children of God “is no less than God himself, as the God of all grace and glory,”¹⁹⁸ which consist in his person and work.¹⁹⁹ This inheritance entails communion with the triune God and comfort in him since the Spirit, as the earnest, “giv[es] us the fullest assurance of the inheritance, and sweetest communion with all the fulness of God as our own; to the filling us with those unspeakable joys, which are the first-fruits of glory.”²⁰⁰ In this respect, knowledge of the Spirit’s sealing is indeed “ineffably more worth than the whole world!”²⁰¹

In the end, what the Spirit puts down as the sealer and earnest is the glorification of saints. As Dutton pointed out in one letter, “That same grace, which fixed upon us in God’s eternal election, which bought us by our Lord’s great redemption; which brought us nigh to God by the Holy Ghost’s effectual vocation; which blest us with a free and full justification; and which sealed us with the Spirit of adoption; will

¹⁹⁶Dutton, “Letter II: On the Gift of the Holy Spirit to Believers, as a Sealer, and his Being to them as such, the Earnest of their Inheritance,” in *SSW*, 5:35.

¹⁹⁷Dutton, “Letter II: Earnest of their Inheritance,” in *SSW*, 5:36.

¹⁹⁸Dutton, *Inheritance of the Adopted Sons of God*, in *SSW*, 4:253–62.

¹⁹⁹In “Letter I: Earnest of their Inheritance,” Dutton wrote that “the glory of God” was displayed “in his infinite essence, in his infinite persons, in his infinite perfections, in his wise counsels and firm decrees; and in his wonderful works of creation and providence; as subservient to his more magnificent works, of redemption and grace; and all in subservience to that all-surpassing work, of eternal glory.” Dutton, “Letter I: Earnest of their Inheritance,” in *SSW*, 5:33.

²⁰⁰Dutton, *Inheritance of the Adopted Sons of God*, in *SSW*, 4:281

²⁰¹Dutton, “Letter 14,” in *SSW*, 5:133.

carry us on still, in its own almighty arms, through an increase of grace, into the ineffable bliss of eternal glorification.”²⁰² It is the fulfillment and completion of grace when saints will see “God in all his persons, Father, Son, and Spirit” and “have communion with God in all his persons, in love.”²⁰³ Although imperfect on earth by the progressive nature of sanctification, the complete holiness of saints, their complete “conformity to the divine image, and dedication to Jehovah’s praise” are guaranteed by the earnest of the Spirit.²⁰⁴ Thus, the Spirit as the sealer and the earnest has the excellent effects of assurance of salvation, eternal inheritance, and the glorification of God’s children.

The Trinity of the Father, Son, and Spirit in the Economy of Redemption

Despite the differentiated work of the Father, Son, and Spirit, the three persons of the Trinity also work in unison in the economy of redemption. The act of election, which is primarily attributed to the Father, essentially involves the Trinity. For it is “unto everlasting life by Jesus Christ, through the sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost.”²⁰⁵ Its end is “for the glory of the sacred three.”²⁰⁶ Even more clearly, the unity of the Father, Son, and Spirit is demonstrated in what Dutton termed “Jehovah’s counsels” concerning the eternal covenant of redemption. Although covenant of redemption and covenant of grace are usually distinct from each other, the former being the “pre-temporal, intra-Trinitarian mutual assent,” the *pactum salutis* between the Father and Son whereas the latter “the inter-temporal administration of the covenant,”²⁰⁷ Dutton, like Gill, merged the two into one eternal covenant of grace and set it in an explicitly Trinitarian context.

²⁰²Dutton, “Letter 16,” in *SSW*, 6:97.

²⁰³Dutton, “Letter 76,” in *SSW*, 1:307.

²⁰⁴Dutton, “Letter II: Earnest of their Inheritance,” in *SSW*, 5:36.

²⁰⁵Dutton, “Letter 11: On Election,” in *SSW*, 6:85.

²⁰⁶Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:120.

²⁰⁷Jan van Vliet, *The Rise of Reformed System: The Intellectual Heritage of William*

In her poem about “The Covenant of Grace,” it began with the two parties of the Father and the Son:

Jehovah made a covenant
Of grace with Christ his Son,
In which he made a promise-grant
of life, before time begun.
.....
The Father then engaged to give
To Christ, his numerous seed;
That through his death they all should live,
This pleased him well indeed.²⁰⁸

But the Spirit is by no means excluded. As “the spring of grace within” given in this covenant, he “then engaged in offices” to “bring us safe to heaven.”²⁰⁹ Given the immanent unity of the three persons of the Godhead, it seems all too natural to find the “three glorious persons” participating in the eternal act of election.

Likewise, God’s act of adoption is Trinitarian. The elect of God are adopted by the Father into the family of the Trinity, which Dutton referred to as the great Jehovah. Like the election of God, adoption is built upon the eternal covenant between the Trinity. As revealed in Isaiah 43:7, the call of God is “that act of God’s will, thereby he has called them [his] people, in the counsel-language that passed, and covenant-transactions which were made, between his three glorious persons, concerning the whole body of the elect before the world began.”²¹⁰ By its very nature, the Father’s adoption has much to do with his only begotten Son, who not only consented to be the Mediator of his adopted children, but also their representing head as the first-born. Through him the adopted

Ames (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2013), 30–42. The Reformed system usually considers the covenant of grace to be the work of the triune God, but the covenant of redemption to be the mutual assent “whereby the Son agrees to ratify the Father’s covenantal promise of salvation for the elect through his own temporal and mediating work as the incarnate Son.” Dutton held a more consistent view about the tri-unity of the Father, Son, and Spirit in both covenants as will be illustrated in her hymn below.

²⁰⁸Dutton, “Hymn 37: The Covenant of Grace,” in *SSW*, 2:213–14.

²⁰⁹Dutton, “Hymn 37: The Covenant of Grace,” in *SSW*, 2:214.

²¹⁰Dutton, *God’s Act of Adoption*, in *SSW*, 4:231.

children participate in the perfect intra-Trinitarian communion “held between his three glorious persons.”²¹¹

Next, the apparently Christocentric doctrine of justification also entails the conjoined work of the Trinity if only by the very unity of his being. In the *Hints of the Glory of Christ*, Dutton designated the roles of the Father, Son, and the Spirit respectively as “absolute election, particular redemption, and special vocation.”²¹² But immediately she pointed out that the Son, “as he is one in *essence* with God the Father, and with God the Holy Ghost; so he is one in *working*: in *all* [italics mine] the works, both of nature, grace, and glory,”²¹³ which certainly includes his work in justification. This unity of the Father, Son, and Spirit was heightened by a barrage of rhetorical questions Dutton asked: “Does God the *Father* impute the *obedience* of his Son to poor sinners? Did God the *Son* obey, in *life* and in *death* for them? And does God the *Spirit*, reveal and apply this *righteousness* to them, and enable them to *receive* the same, as a *free gift* of grace, unto their eternal *life* in glory?”²¹⁴ Since the implied answers are all affirmative, justification and redemption is the separate but inseparable work of the Trinity.

In particular, the faith that justifies is Trinitarian. While Dutton concurred with church fathers about the divine source of faith, she underscored it to be the gift of the Trinitarian Godhead. In principle, faith “is a work of *almightiness*” created in the soul “by the *Father*, *Son* and *Spirit*,” who all have “a joint *efficiency* in the work of faith.”²¹⁵ In terms of the distinct offices of the triune God, it is “the gift of God, the effect of Christ’s death, and the work of the Spirit.”²¹⁶ Thus, Dutton clarified,

²¹¹Dutton, *Inheritance of the Adopted Sons of God*, in *SSW*, 4:256.

²¹²Dutton, *Hints of the Glory of Christ*, in *SSW*, 4:38.

²¹³Dutton, *Hints of the Gory of Christ*, in *SSW*, 4:51.

²¹⁴Dutton, *On Justification*, in *SSW*, 4:146.

²¹⁵Dutton, *On Justification*, in *SSW*, 4:89–90.

²¹⁶Dutton, “Hymn 50: Faith, the Gift of God, the Effect of Christ’s Death, and the

When I say the principle of faith is wrought in the soul, by the *Spirit* of God, I intend thereby, *his* immediate *efficiency* therein; and not to exclude the *Father* and the *Son*, from this great work. No; all the three persons in God have a joint *efficiency* in the work of faith; and accordingly it is ascribed to them all: sometimes to the *Father*, sometimes to the *Son*, and sometimes to the *Spirit*; because all have a joint hand therein. The *Father* works it by Christ, *Christ* works it from the *Father*, and the *Spirit* works it from both.²¹⁷

Moreover, the Father, Son, and Spirit work together in the regeneration, sanctification, and sealing of the elect, all of which are primarily credited to the Spirit. The act of regeneration is Trinitarian in that the Spirit works by the word of God unto faith in Christ. On the one hand, the Spirit convicts and comforts the soul with God's revelations in Scripture. It is on this account that he is "styled the Spirit of truth, . . . not only because he is the God of *truth*, or the *true* God, and cannot lie; but also because he reveals and applies the *truth* of God in his *word*, unto us."²¹⁸ The Spirit and the word of God work together as "God's way" of salvation in that "it is through the truths we know in our *heads* that the Holy Ghost affects and attracts the *heart*, and changes the *soul* into the same image, from glory to glory."²¹⁹ To emphasize one to the exclusion of the other would result either in the spiritualistic error of the Moravian Brethren who neglected the truth of God or the Arminian error of the Sandemanians, who denied the power of the Spirit and "[le]ft room for an Arminian view of man's own initiative in salvation."²²⁰

On the other hand, the Spirit's work in regeneration is with and for Christ. The Spirit "reveals unto us the mystery of Christ" so that by "*believing in him*, we may be *saved by him*."²²¹ Essentially, the mystery that the Spirit reveals about Christ is his "*blood*

Work of the Spirit," in *SSW*, 2:228

²¹⁷Dutton, *On Justification*, in *SSW*, 4:89.

²¹⁸Dutton, *Against Perfection*, in *SSW*, 1:19.

²¹⁹Dutton, *Some of the Mistakes of the Moravian Brethren in a Letter to a Friend*, in *SSW*, 6:209.

²²⁰Dutton, *Mr. Sanddeman Refuted by an Old Woman*, in *SSW*, 5:56.

²²¹Dutton, "Letter 56," in *SSW*, 5:229.

. . . to a sin-burdened soul, in its infinite all-sufficiency to cleanse from all sin, in some one or other promise or declaration of the gospel; and enables the soul to *act* faith therein.”²²² He works “upon the heart” and “brings the soul to an entire dependence on Christ.”²²³ Indeed, as Dutton remonstrated with Sandeman, “the quickening influence of the divine Spirit, in and by the Word, unto acts of faith on Christ, love to him, and joy in him, and unto intimate communion with him, and his Father, is the spring and sum of all vital religion.”²²⁴

Like regeneration, the sanctification of saints pertains to the Trinity even as it is primarily assigned to the Spirit. Although the Spirit is designated as “the sanctifier” in the Bible, Christ also plays his role in sanctification: “Were not God my Father to forgive, Christ my Saviour *to sanctify* [italics mine], and the Holy Ghost my comforter to dictate what I may say, I should even sit down in silence.”²²⁵ This is not far-fetched since Christ is “the root of holiness,” the saints’ “root of influence,” and “the highest pitch of sanctity” so that their holiness is essentially secured in “union” with him.²²⁶ Sanctification derives from “a life of faith on the Son of God,” which “is the every day’s work of a believer.”²²⁷ Besides the Son, the Father plays his part in sanctification as well. Mortification of sin depends upon the Trinity as well as the Spirit in that the soul diseases of God’s children are to be treated with “*the grace of God the Father,*” “*the grace of God the Son,*” and “*the grace of God the Holy Ghost.*”²²⁸ Even though sinners are tainted by

²²²Dutton, *On Justification*, in *SSW*, 4:95.

²²³Dutton, “Letter 78,” in *SSW*, 1:314–19.

²²⁴Dutton, *Mr Sanddeman Refuted by an Old Woman*, in *SSW*. 5:56.

²²⁵Dutton, “Letter 23,” in *SSW*, 6:115. This corresponds well with Peterson’s argument for sanctification in the New Testament as that by Christ and in Christ. Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 27–50.

²²⁶Dutton, Hymn XXIII, “The Saints’ Holiness in the Root Christ,” in *SSW*, 2:198-99.

²²⁷Dutton, “Letter 17,” in *SSW*, 7:351.

²²⁸Dutton, “Letter II: The Soul Disease of God’s Children and their Soul Remedies,”

their soul diseases in the eyes of the Father, requite evil for the grace of the Son, and grieve the Holy Spirit, yet the “Three-One God” will not forsake them, but “dwell *forever*” within them in mercy, love and grace.²²⁹

Finally, the sealing of the Spirit is the conjoined work of the Trinity. Sealing is the work of the Spirit, who “applies the word of promise unto heart” and “*assures* the soul of its *salvation by Christ*” “according to his *sovereignty*” and “with answerable degree of *persuasion*., as to its *own salvation*, in *trusting on the Lord*.”²³⁰ The dynamics between the Father, the Spirit, and the human heart concerning its interest in Christ is vividly illustrated by their use of John 3:16. While “God in his words says, ‘he that believes in Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life,’” “the Spirit says, applying the grace of the promise with divine power to the heart, ‘*Thou, thou art the man, the soul, that believing in Christ, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.*’”²³¹ The saint under the work of the Spirit “answer[s] exactly to the Spirit’s seal, and say[s] with ineffable joy, ‘*I, I am the man, the soul, that believing in Christ, shall not perish, but having everlasting life.*’”²³² The transitions of the different pronouns from the impersonal third-person pronoun “he” to the Spirit’s direct address of the soul as “you” and to her joyful reception in the first-person pronoun “I” point to the sweet communion between sinners and the triune God and their personal appropriation of God’s promise in Christ. In the end, what the Spirit seals and pledges about the saints’ eternal inheritance is the very triune God, who has worked distinctly and conjoined in their salvation.

in *SSW*, 4:302.

²²⁹Dutton, “Letter II: Soul Disease of God’s Children and their Soul Remedies,” in *SSW*, 4:307.

²³⁰Dutton, “Letter II: Spirit’s Sealing,” in *SSW*, 5:26.

²³¹Dutton, “Letter III: Spirit’s Sealing,” in *SSW*, 5:28.

²³²Dutton, “Letter III: Spirit’s Sealing,” in *SSW*, 5:28.

CHAPTER 7
COMMUNION WITH GOD

But, that God, the glorious God, the great [I AM] who is self-sufficient to his own happiness, and needs none of his creatures to make any addition thereto, should yet, nevertheless, set his heart upon such worthless, sinful worms as we; and not only gives us leave to love him, but count himself happy in our love, *Isa.62:5*, may well fill heaven and earth with wonder!

—Anne Dutton, *Walking with God*

Introduction

Communion with God is integral to the doctrine of the Trinity. As stated in the Dissenters' confessions of faith, the doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation for "communion with God and comfortable dependence on him."¹ This has been extensively demonstrated in the last two chapters on Dutton's doctrines of the immanent and economic Trinity. Both the being and the work of the Trinity entail the extra-Trinitarian communion with saints as well as the perfect intra-Trinitarian communion among the Godhead. In this respect, the Orthodox tradition has rightly stated that the doctrine of the Trinity "is essentially a Christian understanding of divine-human communion," "rooted in the Christian affirmation of the realism of divine-human communion in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit."²

Dutton published one work explicitly on communion with God in 1735, *A Discourse Upon Walking with God*. It was prompted by a friend's request, who had "vast

¹*Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order* (1658), 2:3; *Second London Confession* (1689), 2:3.

² Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being with God: Trinity, Apophaticism, and Divine-Human Communion* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 2; 5.

desires . . . after communion with God, and conformity to him.”³ In response to his other requests, the *Discourse* came out with a Christological exegesis of Joseph’s blessings in Deuteronomy 33, a brief account of her conversion experience in addition to her expostulations of Christian walking with God. Apparently thrown together by the friend’s requests, the three parts were yet bound together by the very thread of communion. The Christological exegesis of Joseph’s blessings illustrates the way of Christ in this communion and Dutton’s abridged conversion narrative is at once the personal source for her arguments and their practical illustration.

This treatise established Dutton’s reputation as a competent writer. Although Dutton designated herself a sinful worm, her talk the babble or lispings of a baby, and thus unworthy for the lofty topic of communion with God, the *Discourse* had been widely acknowledged for its usefulness. George Whitefield, for one, wrote to her that her “book on *Walking with God* has been useful to me, and blessed to others in South Carolina.”⁴ She was commended for her scriptural and spiritual insights of the “practical daily living of the soul’s walk with God.”⁵

Already in this early work, Dutton had displayed her Trinitarian understanding of Christian faith and communion with God. The topic of Christian communion or walking with God was not unattended by Dutton’s contemporaries. Matthew Henry (1662–1714) and Philip Doddridge (1702–1751), for example, both wrote about it. But whereas they treated it as a daily spiritual discipline and tendered practical directions for it,⁶ Dutton approached it from a distinctive Trinitarian orientation. In this respect, her

³Dutton, *A Discourse upon Walking with God: in a Letter to a Friend*, in *SSW*, 2:2.

⁴Arthur Wallington, “Wesley and Anne Dutton,” *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 11, no. 2 (June 1917): 45. In the same article, Wallington also observed Dutton’s *A Discourse of Walking with God* is probably “the book” that John Wesley recorded to have read of Mrs. Dutton in his diary entry dated December 4, 1740.

⁵Watson, introduction to *SSW*, 2: ix.

⁶See Matthew Henry, *The Quest for Communion with God: Containing the Great English Bible Commentator’s Personal and Deeply Spiritual Directions for Beginning, Spending*

work came closer with John Owen's *On Communion with the Triune God*. In reality, it reiterated Owen's arguments at several places, which, though, did not prevent her from having innovations and contributions to the topic of communion.

This chapter consists of a summary, a comparison, an exegesis, and a personal illustration of walking with God by Dutton's own conversion experience. It first summarizes Dutton's main arguments of communion with God and compares it with Owen's. Then it examines Dutton's Christological exegesis of Joseph's blessings as an illustration of the person and work of Christ, who is the comprehensive way of divine-human communion. Finally, Dutton's salvation experience is consulted as it provides a personal illustration of this communion. Her salvation is her experience of communion with God both in the comprehensive way of Christ and the derivative ways of faith, worship, providence, and "conversation holiness," which is the saints' holy conduct and service for God. For the sake of fuller illustration, Dutton's other treatises will also be consulted when needed, such as her treatises on the two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, which are the chief means of grace in Christians' communion with God in the way of worship.

A Discourse upon Walking with God: A Summary

Dutton's *Discourse upon Walking with God* consists of five main arguments. They are the agreement between God and his people in the walk, their free communion, ways of walking with God, its continuity and its end, which is primarily for the glory of God and only secondarily for their good. Although this organization seems to have set up communion as a part of Christian walk with God, the two are so interlocked in biblical revelations and Dutton's salvation experience that they were also used interchangeably to

and Closing Each Day with God (London, 1712; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955); Philip Doddridge, "Directions for Daily Walking with God," in *The Emergence of Evangelical Spirituality: The Age of Edwards, Newton, and Whitefield*, ed. Tom Schwanda (New York: Paulist Press, 2016), 159–64.

denote Christian fellowship with God.⁷ As pointed out above, while some of her contemporary theologians tended to give practical directions of walking with God, Dutton followed Owen's *Communion with the Triune God* in emphasizing its Trinitarian and Christocentric nature.

This was shown right in Dutton's identification of her correspondent's spiritual concerns. From his letter, she "perceived the vast desires wrought in [his] soul by the Holy Ghost after communion with God and conformity to him." His soul was inspired by the Spirit to yearn for communion with God, which could only be satisfied by Christ "in the virtue of his redeeming blood."⁸ From the beginning of the letter, Dutton's diagnosis of his spiritual longing showed the triunity of God and the centrality of Christ in this communion, which was then elaborated in the five major arguments.

In the first part of the agreement between God and his children concerning their communion, Dutton walked through the biblical line of human history through this distinctive lens of communion. Upon creation, there was "a perfect amity and mutual friendship" between God and man in his "heights of nature-perfection."⁹ It was what shone through this communion, God's glory and man's happiness, that seized Satan with jealousy and led to his temptation of man. At man's fall, his communion with God was disrupted. In its place arose "a war," wherein God turned into "a terrible judge" and man the guilty rebel.¹⁰ It was through Christ crucified that their communion was restored and reinvigorated by the love of the triune God. The regenerated soul now walks personally

⁷One biblical evidence is 1 John 1.9, where walk is closely connected with fellowship and communion. In terms of spiritual experience, Dutton used walking and communion with God almost interchangeably in her own salvation: "it is my daily burden that I can *walk* no more with him: I find such sad interruptions of *communion* . . . and I call them unspeakably happy that are blest with a steady course of *walking* with God [italics all mine]." Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:3.

⁸Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:7.

⁹Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:4.

¹⁰Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:4–5.

“with God as a Father, . . . Christ as an husband, brother, friend, . . . [and] with the Holy Ghost as an indweller, sanctifier and comforter.”¹¹ As registered by these biblical anthropomorphic terms of Father, husband, and comforter, this walk is not only personal, but also profound in love.

The second part expounds the ways of this walk, which include the comprehensive way of Christ and the derivative ways of faith, worship, providence, and holiness. As revealed in John 14:6, Christ is *the* way both “in what he is to us, and has done for us.”¹² Saints walk with God in the person of Christ as the Mediator, “the great medium of converse between God and creatures,” and as the Redeemer, “the kinsman-redeemer,” who has ransomed humanity through his sacrifice.¹³ But scripturally, Christ is also the way in the Trinitarian sense because “the Father, Son, and Spirit dwell in [him]” (Col 2:9). The personal unity of the Father, Son, and Spirit attests generally to their economic unity and particularly to their unity in this walk so that the Godhead “not only dwell[s] in him, but also walk[s] in him, in all the paths of grace towards the chosen of God.”¹⁴ In the glory of Christ inheres the “essential” and “personal glory of all the three.”¹⁵

As for the ways derived from the way of Christ, the unity of the three persons of Father, Son, and Spirit is also discernible. Faith is the divine revelation of gospel mysteries and the soul’s beholding Christ by the light of the Spirit. In this way, “God walks with his in the sovereignty of his grace” and they “walk with him in the obedience

¹¹Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:12.

¹²Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:11.

¹³Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:8–11.

¹⁴Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:8.

¹⁵Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:10.

of faith.”¹⁶ Despite fluctuations in their sensible experiences, this way of faith is steadfast because of God’s “unchangeable grace,” his “eternal mercy,” “covenantal faithfulness,” and “almighty power.”¹⁷ The way of worship progresses from the Old Testament worship of God to the gospel worship in Christ. In both public and private or family worship, God walks with his people and “bows down a gracious ear to the chattering prayers and praises of mortal, sinful men.”¹⁸ As for the providential way of God, it has been so fundamentally transformed by Christ’s mediation that both the prosperous and afflictive providences are essentially his “*mercy and truth*.”¹⁹ Lastly, the way of conversation-holiness, which “extends itself to thoughts, words, and actions,” derives from the “heart-holiness . . . in the souls of the saints, communicated out of Christ’s fullness by the Holy Spirit.”²⁰ God and his children walk in this way of holiness by imputing the holiness of Christ to their obedience and service, which can never be perfect.²¹ Thus, whether in the comprehensive way of Christ and its derivative ways of faith, worship, providence, and holiness, Dutton underscored the Trinitarian as well as Christocentric nature of this walk.

All these ways are further illustrated in the continuity of this walk. Even though Christians may experience interruptions in this walk because of their lingering sins, it is continuous “in respect of God’s gracious acceptance of their general course.”²² In the comprehensive way of Christ, God initiates his walk with sinners and will continue to walk with them “according to his unchangeable heart-love.”²³ In particular, this

¹⁶Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:13.

¹⁷Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:13–14.

¹⁸Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:14–16.

¹⁹Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:20.

²⁰Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:21.

²¹Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:21.

²²Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:35–36.

²³Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:25.

continuity is warranted by the advocateship of Christ (1 John 2:1), which the apostle John brings in for the “very purpose to strengthen the faith” of his correspondents.²⁴ As advocate of the redeemed sinners in the heavenly court, Christ defends them before God by his merit against all the charges brought against them by Satan.

Likewise, the saints continually walk with God in the lesser ways comprehended in Christ. Faith holds unto divine revelation and promise in the darkest dispensations of life even to the point of losing it. Its significance to communion is summarized in Dutton’s remark that “God’s continual walking with us is our safety, the faith of it our comfort.”²⁵ Sinners also continue to walk with God in worship through the ministry of word, prayer, and praise. As for the way of providence, the secret of “this heavenly skill of walking with God in the way of divine providence” is captured by Paul’s confession that “I have learnt in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content” and “I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.”²⁶ The great Apostle is also the great master of the art of walking with God in providence. This is a continual walk toward holiness as well since sinners “receive all their directions from [God’s] word, and conform their actions herein to his holy precepts.”²⁷ Considering the imperfections and spiritual immaturity of believers, the continuity of their walk or communion with God is nothing but the wonder of “God’s everlasting and unchangeable love to this loveless rebellious creature.”²⁸

Still, the fullest display of Dutton’s Trinitarianism is seen in the fourth part about “the free communion and mutual fellowship” between God and his children. This

²⁴Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2: 26–27.

²⁵Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:29.

²⁶Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:34.

²⁷Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:34–35.

²⁸Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:38.

communion, as Dutton defined it affectionately, “consists in a free opening of hearts, and a mutual delight in each other’s company; as is oft found in persons walking together in agreement.”²⁹ The relationship between the triune God and man is identified in accordance with biblical revelations “as *father and children*, 2 Cor 6.18, as *bridegroom and bride*, Isa 62.5, as *comforter and comforted*, Jn 14.16. Acts 9.31.”³⁰ Again these biblical anthropocentric imageries of father, bridegroom, and comforter typify the personal and loving nature of this communion. Being “exceeding sweet; and their mutual love-delights in each other very intense,” this “communion with the Father in love, with the Son in grace, and with the Holy Ghost in consolation, is the high and unspeakable privilege of all the saints.”³¹ Specifically, they enjoy communion with God in “the love of God our Father in election, of Christ our husband in redemption, and of the Holy Ghost our comforter in special vocation,” all of which “as co-equal wonders of grace, are gloriously opened to the saints in their walk with God.”³²

The divine-human communion is then illuminated by the comprehensive way of Christ and all the distributive ways of faith, worship, providence, and holiness. To walk in the way of Christ, the Father contrived the Son as the Mediator, who assumed human nature in the fullness of time to become “a fit *medium* for all our converse with God” by the “anointing” of the Holy Spirit.³³ Despite their different offices, the three persons of Godhead unanimously express their love for the soul by the call in the book of Jeremiah: “I have loved thee,” to which the soul responds first by conviction of its wretchedness and then comfort and communion with God as to “go on rejoicing and

²⁹Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:40.

³⁰Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:40.

³¹Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:40.

³²Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:40.

³³Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:41.

glorying” in his “distinguishing, free, full, and eternal” love.³⁴ As in Bunyan’s spiritual autobiography, grace is the resounding cry of the soul in her walk with God in Christ.

In the four derivative ways of faith, worship, providence and holiness, God and his children also “sweetly commune together.”³⁵ The way of faith is the way of gospel knowledge, which is also “fellowship-knowledge” of God befriending the sinner in Christ.³⁶ They “sweetly walk and talk together as friends” in the way of faith as God reveals the gospel mystery and applies it personally to the individual soul.³⁷ Whether in public or private worship, God and his people enjoy sweet and mutual opening of their hearts. The former happens through preaching, prayer, and praise. Besides, “sweet and mutual intercourse is held between God and his children in all divine ordinances,” where they “*know Christ’s voice*” and are satisfied.³⁸ In the latter private way, their close walk is exemplified by Jacob in his wrestling with God and by Abraham in his pleading for the promised Son and petitioning for the cities of destruction.³⁹ In the way of providence, God opens his heart to the afflicted souls in adversities as well as to the happy souls in prosperities. Underneath the apparently different manifestations of God’s providence, his “heart-love” is “the fountain cause of their afflictions” as well as their abundance, which should suffice to draw them ever closer to God with thanksgiving and for comfort.⁴⁰ This sweet communion is also seen in the way of holiness, wherein God graciously accepts the weak services of his children and they gratefully admit their unworthiness, rejoicing in

³⁴Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:41–44.

³⁵Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:45–48.

³⁶Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:44.

³⁷Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:44.

³⁸Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:45–46.

³⁹Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:46–47.

⁴⁰Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:48–50.

God as their portion and root of sanctification and looking forward to “the full glory of communion and mutual love delights” in heaven.⁴¹

Finally, as to the end of this walk, it is ultimately the glory of God and only subordinately the good and salvation of his people.⁴² This holds true in all the ways noted by Dutton in the divine-human walk. In the words of Ephesians 1:6, “whatever God has done, or does do for us in Christ is *to the praise of the glory of his grace*” and then to our salvation.⁴³ The saints walk with God in the way of faith “not only for their safety, but also for his glory” since what faith leads them to seek is not their glory, but God’s.⁴⁴ In the way of worship, it is the glory of God that “holds the hearts of God’s people to walk with him in ordinances and duties” even when “they find no sensible benefit thereby to themselves.”⁴⁵ As for the way of conversation holiness, its end is expressed by 1 Corinthians 10:31 that whatever they do, they *do all to the glory of God*. This primary end of glorifying God does not preclude the good or salvation of his people, but rather, “the glory of God and the good of those that love him . . . *always* [italics mine] go together.”⁴⁶ The glory of God is magnified in the salvation of his people and his good purpose in all the turns of their life. It is in glorifying God that they derive their good.⁴⁷

Owen and Dutton on Communion with God: A Comparison

As mentioned above, Dutton was not entirely innovative in the Trinitarian and Christocentric outlook of communion with God. Owen, whom Dutton often quoted, had

⁴¹Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:50–53.

⁴²Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:53.

⁴³Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:53.

⁴⁴Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:54.

⁴⁵Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:55.

⁴⁶Andrew Fuller, *Sermons and Sketches*, in *Works* 1:133.

⁴⁷Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:56.

written about this communion as Trinitarian and Christocentric in a far more systematic and extensive way than Dutton.⁴⁸ In *Communion with the Triune God*, he contended that saints' communion with God is by nature reciprocal and Christocentric, "consist[ing] in [God's] communion of himself unto us, with our return unto him of that which he requires and accepts, flowing from that union which in Jesus Christ we have with him."⁴⁹ The matter of this communion resides in close fellowship with the three persons of the Trinity, with the Father in love, the Son in grace, and the Spirit in comfort as dictated by Paul's Trinitarian farewell in 2 Corinthians 13:14. On their part, Christians respond to the Trinity with love, trust, and obedience. In this communion with God, Christian faith life is depicted relationally as responding to God's love in Christ. Given Owen's emphasis on communion with the triune God, it was highly probably that he had been responsible for the statement in the *Savoy Declaration of the Faith and Order* that linked the Trinity explicitly with the believers' experience of communion.⁵⁰

Dutton showed a general acquaintance with Owen's works and particular knowledge of his work on communion. In her *Letter on the Divine Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ*, she quoted from Owen: "The *Holy Spirit*, as Dr. Owen well observes, is the next and immediate of all divine communications unto us."⁵¹ She was also conversant with his very work on communion: "And to this purpose Dr. Owen speaks in his book *Of Communion with God*: where setting forth the excellencies of Christ, as the husband of

⁴⁸ For a summary of Owen's view of communion with God, see J. I. Packer, "The Spirituality of John Owen," in *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 191–218.

⁴⁹ John Owen, *Communion with the Triune God*, ed. Kelly M. Kopic, and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 94.

⁵⁰ This was also made plausible by the publishing dates of Owen's treatise on communion in 1657 and the *Savoy Declaration of Faith* in 1658. See Kelly M. Kopic, *Communion with God: The Divine and the Human in the Theology of John Owen* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 156.

⁵¹ Dutton, *A Letter on the Divine Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ . . . By One Who Has Tasted That the Lord Is Gracious*, in *SSW*, 5:37.

the church, he has these words.”⁵² She proceeded to quote the passage about the fullness of grace in the human nature of Christ, which is yet “inseparably united to the infinite, inexhaustible fountain of the deity” and thus warrants the sufficiency of his grace for sinners. Given Dutton’s knowledge of Owen and her echoes of his arguments of communion, it seems imperative to compare their works so that her innovations as well as imitations may be unfolded.

On the part of convergence, Owen’s arguments are reiterated by Dutton at several places. In the main points of her *Discourse*, Dutton seemed to have replicated some of Owen’s observations about “the skill of walking with God.”⁵³ The necessity of general agreement between God and man she noted in their communion was one of these. Even the biblical evidence Dutton adduced for it was identical with Owen’s, namely Amos 3:3.⁵⁴ She also echoed Owen’s emphasis on the way of Christ in this walk as testified by John 14:6.⁵⁵ Similarly, the end Dutton noted in this walk, which is primarily the glory of God, had already been remarked by Owen.⁵⁶ Even more strikingly, Dutton seemed to have echoed Owen verbatim when she characterized “God’s love as a father, Christ’s as an husband, and [the Spirit’s] as an indweller and comforter,”⁵⁷ and

⁵²Dutton, *Inheritance of the Adopted Sons of God*, in *SSW*, 4:256.

⁵³Owen’s arguments appeared in Section C of the second part of communion with Christ: “True wisdom and knowledge consist in the skill of walking with God,” which is then developed by six arguments: agreement is required; acquaintance is required; a way is required; strength is required; boldness is required; aiming at the same end is required. Owen, *Communion with the Triune God*, 215–20.

⁵⁴Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:4. Owen likewise pointed out that “until agreement be made, there is no communion, no walking together.” Cf. Owen, *Communion with the Triune God*, 215.

⁵⁵Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:8–12. Owen likewise pointed out that “until agreement be made, there is no communion, no walking together.” Cf. Owen, *Communion with the Triune God*, 218.

⁵⁶Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:53–56. Owen also pointed out that “two cannot walk together unless they have the *same design* in hand, and aim at the same *end*,” which he pinned down as “the advancement of [God’s] own glory.” Cf. Owen, *Communion with the Triune God*, 220.

⁵⁷Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:7. Owen interpreted the *Canticles* allegorically to describe the conjugal love between Christ and his people. Cf. Owen, *Communion with the*

reproduced his allegorical exegesis of the “whiteness” and “redness” of Christ in another of her treatise on the *Hints of the Glory of Christ*. Some of Owen’s most common epithets for the love of God, such as “free,” “eternal,” “distinguishing” and “unchangeable” abounded in Dutton’s descriptions. Her differentiations of communion with the Father in love, the Son in grace, and the Holy Ghost in consolation constituted the three major parts of Owen’s work.⁵⁸ Given Dutton’s knowledge of Owen’s works and especially her knowledge of his work on communion, these echoes seemed to have undermined the ingenuity of her work, if not its total value as would have happened in our plagiarism-phobic age.

Still, these echoes may be justifiable on biblical or confessional grounds. While it is plausible that Dutton had “borrowed” from Owen, it seems as plausible that both authors had built up their arguments from Scripture. Their designations of the triune God’s relationship with Christians as father, husband, and comforter were biblical. So was their understanding of the Trinitarian and Christocentric nature of this communion. Their identical end of the glory of God was biblical too, which had been laid down in the first article of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* and would have been well-known to Owen, and probably to Dutton as well. Her husband, Benjamin Dutton, identified the *Assembly’s Shorter Catechism* as one of the literatures he studied at the society of young men at Peirce’s church.⁵⁹ Rather than casting doubt upon the integrity of the authoress or her work, Dutton’s echoes of Owen might well point back to the same biblical wellspring of their doctrinal splashes.

Triune God, 153–58. He also focused on the Spirit’s function of consolation in this communion and described his function of sanctification as consisting in the saints’ passive receiving. Cf. Owen, *Communion with the Triune God*, 365–67.

⁵⁸Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:40. Cf. Owen, *Communion with the Triune God*, 153–55, 359–67.

⁵⁹Benjamin mentioned the society also studied Mr. Thomas Vincent’s *Explanations of the questions in the Catechism*. Benjamin Dutton, *The Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God’s Free-Grace* (London, 1743), 68.

On the part of divergence, Dutton's doctrine of communion with the triune God distinguished itself by its rich experiential spirituality and practical orientations. While Owen depicted this communion affectionately, Dutton did it even more elaborately. A comparison between their definitions of communion would make this clear. Owen defined it as "consist[ing] in [God's] communion of himself unto us, with our return unto him of that which he requires and accepts, flowing from that union which in Jesus Christ we have with him."⁶⁰ His was theologically dense in spelling out the dynamics between union with Christ and communion with the triune God.⁶¹ Dutton put this communion in more common, yet affectionate terms as "consisting in a free opening of hearts, and a mutual delight in each other's company."⁶² Even though inferior to Owen in theological rigor and systematization, Dutton's "heart and delight" language enhanced the experiential warmth and personal piety of the communion. After all, whereas Owen attempted a systematic and theological formulation of the communion, Dutton wrote the *Discourse* as a personal correspondence with a friend, which was itself reflective of the heart-to-heart personal communion between God and humanity.

Moreover, what Dutton lacked in theological depth and width had been largely made up by her practical orientation of this communion. Even though the final publication of Owen's work retained the pastoral flavor of its original text, "offer[ing] insights into the relevance of Trinitarian theology for the life of the church and human experience,"⁶³ Dutton's seemed to have surpassed his in its practical relevance to

⁶⁰Owen, *Communion with the Triune God*, 94.

⁶¹Kapic anatomizes Owen's definition of communion into the three containments: "God communicates himself unto us. Union with Christ establishes our relationship to God. The resulting overflow of union is our returning unto God what is both required and accepted by him." Kapic, *Communion with God*, 157. In his introduction, Kapic also points out that "Owen maintains an essential distinction between union and communion." While union with Christ is "a unilateral action by God," which is unchangeable, communion resides in God's giving of his love and the saints' "respond[ing] to God's loving embrace," which "can fluctuate." Kapic, introduction to Owen, *Communion with the Triune God*, 21.

⁶²Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:40.

⁶³Kapic points out that the material of the book "grew out of [Owen's] sermons

Christian faith. This could be illustrated by their treatments of the way(s) in Christians' walking with God. The one way of Christ Owen exemplified in communion with God was multiplied by Dutton into the four derivative ways of faith, providence, worship, and holiness, which are all integral to Christian faith experience. Rather than Owen's tripartite division about communion with the Father in love, with the Son in grace, and with the Spirit in comfort, Dutton wove her arguments together with these practical ways of Christian experience and even intensified the unity of the Trinity. Derived from and subservient to the way of Christ, they illuminate God's ways with humanity in his communion with them.

In addition, Dutton's practical orientation was underscored by the conversion narrative she appended to the work. Although it was included at the request of her correspondent, who desired "to hear how [the] Lord dealt with [her],"⁶⁴ what Dutton highlighted in the abridged autobiography was the very personal communion she enjoyed with the triune God in her salvation. All the ways of Christ, faith, providence, worship, and holiness are integral to her spiritual walk with God. In this respect, it might be taken to function as a practical illustration as well as a personal source of her arguments. Thus, while mimicking Owen's work of communion in its Trinitarian and Christocentric framework and in some of its main points of argument, Dutton's *Discourse* retained its unique emphases on affection and practical application in Christian experience of walking with God.

preached some years earlier" and kept its pastoral heart in the published form. Kapic, introduction to Owen, *Communion with the Triune God*, 19–20.

⁶⁴Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:69.

Joseph's Blessings in Deuteronomy 33:13–17: A Christological Exegesis

Responding to the second request of her correspondent, Dutton gave “a few hints” to the blessings upon Joseph in Deuteronomy 33:13–17, which was essentially a Christological exegesis about the person and work of Christ. This typological approach is warranted by the narratives of Joseph in the book of Genesis. As Dutton observed, “*Joseph* was raised up of God to be a type of Jesus Christ in his sufferings and glory.”⁶⁵ The life trajectory of Joseph from rejection, betrayal, sufferings, to eventual honor at Pharaoh’s court parallels that of Christ from humiliation, sufferings, death to his resurrection glory and ascension to the Father in heaven. However turbulent their lives might appear, both unfold under the providential design of God. Besides, both Joseph and Jesus play an important role in relation to their brothers. Just as Joseph is “*the shepherd, the stone of Israel,*” who supplies his brothers’ need in famine, so Jesus is “*the shepherd, the stone of Israel,* really,” the “friend and brother,” who gives life to his brethren.⁶⁶ Thus, right in her typological approach, Dutton registered the “mediatorial” role of Joseph and Christ in dealing with their brothers, which involves forgiving their sins, restoring relations, and giving them life.

Then, Dutton’s verse-by-verse exegesis in the allegorical sense lends itself to illuminating the comprehensive way of Christ. The first few verses focus on the gospel grace of Christ, which has been planned by the Father’s sovereign will and love. The “dew” in verse 13 is “the heavenly distillations of Christ’s spirit and grace” that “refreshes” the soul while “the deep” water typifies “the infinite, unfathomable deep of divine love through the crucified flesh of Jesus.”⁶⁷ The love of God is demonstrated in the incarnation and crucifixion of Christ. But this is not all clear to the sinners immediately.

⁶⁵Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:58.

⁶⁶Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:60–61.

⁶⁷Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:61.

As signified by the luminaries of “moon” and “sun” in the next verse, the gospel of Christ is revealed progressively from the Old to the New Testament.⁶⁸ The two images in the next verses, “the ancient mountains” and “the lasting hills” trace back the gospel origin even further. Given that the word “ancient” evokes “the everlasting settlement” of the triune God in eternity and “mountains” its “firmness,” they situate Christ’s work steadfastly in eternity and within the conjoined work of the Trinity.⁶⁹ The “things of the lasting hills” are the blessedness of saints in Christ with respect to their “adoption, justification, sanctification, and glorification,”⁷⁰ to which are added “all the precious things of the earth” in the next verse.⁷¹ All this is planned by the will of God, which is both free and good. As the one “that dwelt in the bush,” God manifests his “high freedom of will” and his “great condescending love” to the sinner.⁷² The will of Jehovah is “goodwill,” good “for the exceeding kindness of it,” will “for the absolute freedom of it,” and goodwill “as the highest love was clothed with the highest freedom.”⁷³ Through allegorical and typological exegesis, Dutton illustrated the way of Christ in his love and work within a definitive Trinitarian framework.

The next few verses focus on the person of Christ as the Mediator. Just as “blessings come upon the head of Joseph,” so saints are blessed in the head of Christ. As revealed in Ephesians 1:3, “*the Father has blessed us with all blessings in Christ,*” the God-man Mediator:

And as we are blest in him in respect to right, so also in respect of communication. God communicates all grace and glory, with every good thing, to the man Christ

⁶⁸Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:62–63.

⁶⁹Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:63–64.

⁷⁰Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:63–64.

⁷¹Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:64.

⁷²Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:64–65.

⁷³Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:64–65.

first, and then through him to all his seed. And our highest blessedness is but a derivation out of his fullness, which heightens it yet the more. And as all blessings come first upon Christ, and then upon us, in and through him, so in this way, coming they come, freely, fully and perpetually.⁷⁴

Making much of the “head” of Joseph and his “separation from his brethren” in the next verse, Dutton highlighted Christ as the “Mediator” in the eternal covenant of grace, who is at once the representing head of his brethren and separated from them for atonement. In the latter sense, the blessings in Christ not only consisted in “the right of his being the alone Mediator,” but also “in the right of his mediatorial obedience unto death.”⁷⁵

In addition, Christ is separated from his brethren in terms of glory. The last verse highlights the glory of Christ in his person and work. Just as Joseph’s “glory is like the firstling of his bullock,” so Christ’s glory resides in his mediatorial office of offering himself up for sinners.⁷⁶ His glory is crucicentric in that “there’s no glory Christ possesses now in heaven at God’s right hand, but what he employs in his Father’s honour” on the cross.⁷⁷ While his glory is strong as “the horns of unicorns,” its strength will increase as his kingdom expands with more spiritual seeds, who respond to in faith to the divine love. The “ten thousands of Ephraim” and “the thousands of Manasseh” not only refer to the dramatic increase of God’s children in number, but also the abundant growth of their fruitfulness in faith, grace, and good works.⁷⁸ Thus, even if it was included in the treatise by the friend’s request, Dutton’s Christological exegesis of Joseph’s blessings yet served to illustrate her prior observations about the comprehensive way of Christ in his person and work of redemption.

⁷⁴Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:65.

⁷⁵Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:65–66.

⁷⁶Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:66.

⁷⁷Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:67.

⁷⁸Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:68–69.

Salvation Experience as Communion with God: A Personal Illustration

At the last implicit request of her correspondent, Dutton recounted her conversion experience, which could be counted as a personal illustration of her prior argument of walking with God. Dutton remembered to be “favour[ed] with frequent visits, and much communion with” God after her regeneration.⁷⁹ Although it was interrupted by the fluctuations in her spiritual senses of God, Dutton was sealed by the Spirit, established in grace of Christ, and liberated to go to God “as [her] own God and Father in Christ.”⁸⁰ Specifically, the sealing of the Spirit led to her “frequent communion” and “sweet fellowship” with God “in his three glorious persons.”⁸¹ This communion was continuous under God’s “everlasting arms of kindness,” which sustained her for the full glory of God in eternity. In this respect, Dutton’s salvation was also her experience of walking with the triune God. While agreement and continuity of the walk are already presupposed by her writing the spiritual autobiography, which is her means of communion with God and remembering his grace, the five ways of this walk will be illustrated from Dutton’s salvation experience.

Communion in the Way of Christ

Christ stands out in Dutton’s conversion narrative as the comprehensive way of communion, both in his person and his work. The way of Christ in his person was scattered throughout her conversion narrative, but may be most clearly shown in how Dutton encouraged those poor sinners, who were yet not certain of Christ’s ability to save. She addressed their fears by hammering out the nature of the Savior, which ensured his ability and willingness to save:

⁷⁹Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:69.

⁸⁰Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:70–71.

⁸¹Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:72.

The *Saviour is God*: and as such he calls poor sinners to look to him for salvation. He is the eternal *Son* of the eternal *Father*, that has all the essential glories of the *Godhead* in him; and therefore *he* is an *overmatch* for all our spiritual enemies. And *he* is *Emanuel*, *God with us*, *God* in our nature; and as such *he* is a *fit* Saviour, the *anointed* Saviour, and *able to save to the uttermost*, even all *them that come unto God by him*.⁸²

Because of the two natures of the Son, God “can maintain the freest converse with that low thing, man.”⁸³

By the generic nature of conversion narrative, however, Dutton’s walking with God in the way of Christ mainly revolve around his work of redemption. Before her saving conversion to Christ, Dutton was separated from Christ even though her soul longed for his “gracious presence” and desired “that communion” others had with him.⁸⁴ But she was eventually brought to venture on Christ by the extremity of her illness: “I came to Christ, just as I was, a guilty, filthy, undone sinner: Christ received me: I trusted my soul with him, believing, that in infinite grace and faithfulness, he would in no wise cast *me* out!”⁸⁵ Anticipating Charlotte Elliot’s hymn *Just as I Am* over a century later, Dutton expressed identical humility and faith in God’s saving acceptance. This leap of faith initiated her communion with Christ in grace, who delivered her from physical as well as spiritual jeopardies. Since Christ is “infinitely lovely in himself” and “infinitely loves [her],” Dutton’s communion with Christ was indeed “the highest affection of [her] soul.”⁸⁶

Walking in the way of Christ was also communing with the triune God. In the vision Dutton had during her illness, it was the Spirit who led her to the cross of Christ,

⁸²Dutton, *A Brief Account of the Gracious Dealings of God, with a Poor, Sinful, Unworthy Creature, in Three Parts*, in *SSW*, 3:41.

⁸³Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:9.

⁸⁴Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:17.

⁸⁵Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:19.

⁸⁶Dutton, *Hints of the Glory of Christ: As the Friend and Bridegroom of the Church: From the Seven Last Verses of the Fifth Chapter of Solomon’s Song. In a Letter to a Friend*, in *SSW*, 4:64.

where she saw “the infinity of grace . . . both in the Father’s and Christ’s heart” to save her.⁸⁷ The Holy Spirit took her off “old Adam’s bottom of self-dependence and doing for life” and laid all her “hopes of eternal happiness, upon a new foundation, even the free grace of God in Christ.”⁸⁸ It was laid with the very “blood of Christ,” which had wrought “a perfection of peace, pardon, life and glory . . . to [her].”⁸⁹ After her initial experience of the grace of the Trinity, the establishment of her interest in Christ and communion with God was much attributable to the sealing of the Spirit. He “opened God’s heart in the declarations and promises of grace” and “set upon a powerful impression of his love upon [her] soul in its sovereignty, freeness, fulness, and eternity in particular to [her].”⁹⁰ The Holy Spirit set her feet “upon Christ the rock,”⁹¹ whose steadfastness and strength were further demonstrated in being the “supporting rock” to preserve sinners, the “defending rock” to protect them from dangers, and the “advancing rock” to lead them into eternal glory.⁹² Thus, even though “all divine communications were first made unto Christ as head of nature, grace, and glory-relations,”⁹³ they essentially involve the conjoined love and work of the Trinity.

The Trinitarian and Christocentric character of salvation and communion was reinforced by Dutton’s evangelical use of her salvation experience. At the end of her conversion narrative, Dutton urged the openly profane ones to heed to the ministry of the gospel, which “exalts the free grace of God alone, as the foundation of a sinner’s salvation, the righteousness of Christ alone, as the matter of his justification, the blood of

⁸⁷Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:21–22.

⁸⁸Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:13.

⁸⁹Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:22.

⁹⁰Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:70.

⁹¹Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:70.

⁹²Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:34.

⁹³Dutton, *Inheritance of the Adopted Sons of God*, in *SSW*, 4:278.

Christ alone, for the satisfaction of divine justice, and cleansing the sinner from all sin, and the Spirit of Christ alone, as the applier of this great salvation.”⁹⁴ Her Trinitarian and Christological emphases transformed the sixteenth-century Reformation slogans into the quadrilateral of free grace of God alone, righteousness of Christ alone, blood of Christ alone, and Spirit of Christ alone. Without mitigating the central importance of Christ, the sinners’ communion is with the triune God, upon whose love and work their salvation depends.

Communion in the Way of Faith

Derivatively, faith was a crucial way for Dutton to walk with God. It evolved from believing by sight to believing by God’s promise. In the first two years after her new birth, Dutton’s communion with God fluctuated by “the unsettled state . . . of the faith of [her] interest,”⁹⁵ depending on whether she could sense the presence of God or not. As the new-born, she “knew not how to *believe* without *sight*”⁹⁶ and relied on subjective senses rather than the sure promise of God for faith. As she later came to understand, faith built upon the word of God, not her sensible experience. God’s promise was so crucial that Dutton identified the way of faith as “the way of divine revelation.”⁹⁷ In the sealing of the Spirit, what sealed her faith was nothing but the Spirit’s bearing testimony to God’s faithfulness in keeping his promise.⁹⁸ In retrospect, Dutton presented a clear comparison between the two states of believing by sight or sensation and believing by the word of God:

⁹⁴Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:37.

⁹⁵Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:69.

⁹⁶Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:26.

⁹⁷Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:13; 32.

⁹⁸Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:70–71.

Oh then, learn to *believe thy salvation* upon Christ's *naked word*: And stay not to see the *effects* of faith in thy heart and life, before thou wilt *credit* the word of Christ, and the testimony of his Spirit therein. For though *saving faith* is always attended with its *fruits*; yet it's not the *fruit* of thy faith, but the *faithfulness* of Christ in the word, that ought to be the *first*, and *principal* ground of thy persuasion of life and safety in him. And if thou art helped to believe thy salvation, in looking to Christ, merely because he hath said it, thou wilt soon find the blessed effects thereof in thy soul. Let but *faith* look to Christ, and salvation in him, and *love* will straightway be upon the flow; and *every grace of the Spirit* will be answerably exercised, which in the Holy Ghost's light, will become a *subordinate* evidence, and serve to *corroborate* thy faith. But put not that *first*, which ought to be *second*. The grace and faithfulness of Christ in his word, is a *firm basis* for thy faith to rest on, amidst the greatest *shakings*.⁹⁹

With her emphasis on the fruitfulness of faith, the witness of the Spirit, and God's sure promise of Christ, Dutton's reflection on faith coincided with the tendency in English Puritanism's conception of faith from "a Christological to a Trinitarian framework."¹⁰⁰

This evolution of faith was also captured by what Dutton characterized as the two acts of faith: the direct act and the reflex act of faith. Dutton did not invent this classification. These two acts of faith were "the Scripture doctrine of truth" preached by "popular preachers" of her time.¹⁰¹ But even before then, Puritan preachers like Anthony Burgess (1600–1663) and John Flavel (1628–1691) had propounded the two acts of faith either in view of the "spiritual and rational" nature of human soul or its God-given power of "self-intuition and judgment."¹⁰² In Dutton's view, the sinner attempted "an *immediate*

⁹⁹Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:31.

¹⁰⁰As Beeke compares English Puritanism and the Second Dutch Reformation on the assurance of faith, he observes that "in a meticulous addition to early Reformation doctrinal principles, English Puritan and Second Reformation divines decided that assurance was more complex than simply resting on the promises of God in Christ. When properly set in the context of Scripture, Christ, and the Trinity, the inward evidences of grace and the witness of the Spirit have a valid place as secondary grounds in the believers' assurance." As a result, these divines moved the doctrine of assurance by faith "from a Christological to a Trinitarian framework." Joel R. Beeke, *Puritan Reformed Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2004), 294–95.

¹⁰¹Among the errors Dutton indicted Sandeman, one was his "deriding the Scripture doctrine of faith in its direct and reflex acts," which were propounded by "popular preachers" of her time. Dutton, *Mr Sanddeman Refuted by an Old Woman: . . . In a Letter from a Friend in the Country to a Friend in Town*, in *SSW*, 5:51.

¹⁰²Burgess wrote of the nature of assurance: "The soul of a man, being rational and spiritual, acts in two ways. First, there are direct acts of the soul whereby the soul immediately and directly responds to some object. Second, there are reflex acts of the soul, by which the soul considers and observes what acts it does. It's as if the eye is turned inward to see itself. The Apostle John expresses this fully, saying, "We know that we know." (1 John 2:3). So, when we

flight to Christ” or “a fresh venture on Christ” in a direct act of faith, which was attended with a reflex act of faith, “a full persuasion of [her] eternal safety in him, as having fled for refuge to lay hold on this hope set before [her].”¹⁰³ In step with the Reformed and Puritan emphasis on the promise of Christ, this reflex act of faith essentially resided in “taking up persuasion hereof upon the infinite truth and faithfulness of Christ’s word,” “a taking of Christ at his word,” and learning “to believe thy salvation upon Christ’s naked word.”¹⁰⁴ Both acts of faith were “venturing, casting, trusting [her] soul in the hands of Jesus,”¹⁰⁵ differing only in degrees of assurance built upon God’s promise. The reflex act constituted the assurance of faith, “the soul’s laying claim to the Saviour as being received according to the offer,” whereas the first act received Christ “as held forth by the gospel.”¹⁰⁶ This assurance in the reflex act of faith upon God’s promise of Christ was aptly summarized by Dutton’s reasoning: “I have received Christ: unto me, God gives

believe in God, that is a direct act of soul; when we repent of sin because God is dishonored, that is a direct act; but when we know that we do believe and that we do repent of our sin, that is a reflex act. . . . To believe, then, is more than probable conjectures and human certainty, which the Roman Catholics plead for.” Anthony Burgess, *Faith Seeking Assurance* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2015), 170. For analysis of Burgess’s doctrine of assurance, see Joel R. Beeke, “Anthony Burgess on Assurance,” in *Puritan Reformed Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2004), 170–95. John Flavel also expounded the two acts in terms of human power of “self-intuition and reflection” that was endowed by God. By this “the soul hath not only power to project, but a power also to reflect upon its own actions; not only to put forth a direct act of faith upon Jesus Christ, but to judge and discern that act also, 2 Tim 1:12. I know whom I have believed.” John Flavel, *Pneumatologia: A Treatise of the Soul of Man*, in *The Works of John Flavel* (London, 1820; repr., Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), 2:330.

¹⁰³Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, SSW, 3:29.

¹⁰⁴Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, SSW, 3:29–31.

¹⁰⁵Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, SSW, 3:29.

¹⁰⁶This was demonstrated in Dutton’s refutations of *The Gospel-Mystery of Sanctification* by Walters Marshall (1628–1680). Dutton distinguished the two acts and attributed assurance to the reflex act as shown in her rhetorical argument: “But is not the opening of the heart to Christ, by the consent of the will, to receive him, as held forth by the gospel to be received, an act of faith, that is distinct from, and previous to, the soul’s laying claim to the Saviour as being received according to the offer? If it is: This is all I contend for.” Dutton, *Letter I on Assurance of Interest in Christ*, SSW, 5:15. For Marshall’s full argument of sanctification, see Walter Marshall, *The Gospel-Mystery of Sanctification Open’d in Sundry Practical Directions. Suited especially to the Case of those who labour under the Guilt and Power of In-dwelling Sin. To which is Added, a Sermon on Justification* (London: J. L., 1714).

power, to become his child, his heir: his promise assures me, that I have a right to, and shall have the enjoyment of him forever.”¹⁰⁷

Besides the importance of the word, Christ is central to the way of faith, which after all is a derivative way of the Lord. As Dutton defined it, faith or believing, “is the soul’s looking to Christ for life, as the only Saviour of God’s providing, lifted up in the gospel.”¹⁰⁸ By looking, Dutton conveyed the biblical connotations of knowing Christ, which was an “experiencing, a becoming acquainted with,” and communing with him.¹⁰⁹ The Son is the redeemer, the Savior who has “an infinite *ability* . . . to save,” “an infinite fulness in his *righteousness* for justification,” “an infinite fulness of *grace and holiness*” in his “person, to present [sinners] unblameable before the presence of Jehovah’s glory,” and an “infinite willingness of his heart” to save to the utmost whoever comes to God by him.¹¹⁰ In respect of his infinite love and power to save, Dutton was certainly true when she observed that “though saving faith is always attended with its fruits; yet it’s not the fruit of thy faith, but the faithfulness of Christ in the word, that ought to be the first, and principal ground of thy persuasion of life and safety in him.”¹¹¹ Faith does not reside in the sanctification of saints, but Christ’s faithful promise to save.

Thus, the way of faith is fundamentally a way of communion in the free grace of God even as it is a required duty upon saints. Admittedly, walking in the way of faith is bilateral, or in Dutton’s words, the mutual opening of hearts. While “God walks with his in the sovereignty of his grace,” they “also herein walk with him in the obedience of

¹⁰⁷Dutton, *Letter I on Assurance of Interest in Christ*, in *SSW*, 5:15.

¹⁰⁸Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:31.

¹⁰⁹Dru Johnson, *Scripture’s Knowing: A Companion to Biblical Epistemology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), 14.

¹¹⁰Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:40–41.

¹¹¹Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:31.

faith.”¹¹² But the two parties do not contribute to faith equally. Although “a required duty,” the obedience of faith to God is not “our work,” but “a free gift of his infinite bounty both as to principle and act.”¹¹³ Instead of being mere mental consent, faith is wrought by “the quickening influence of the divine Spirit, in and by the word, unto acts of faith on Christ, love to him, and joy in him, and unto intimate communion with him, and his father.”¹¹⁴ Hence it is termed “the grace of *faith*,” and “a *fruit of the Spirit* in the souls of believers.”¹¹⁵ Like the way of Christ, the way of faith in Christian communion with God is a way of grace.

Communion in the Way of Worship

God walks with his people in the way of worship, both in public and private worship. Specifically, divine-human communion is perpetuated by gospel preaching or teaching, praise, prayer, and partaking of the church ordinances.¹¹⁶ The importance of the way of public worship was shown right in Dutton’s ecclesiological focus of God’s providential dispensations of her life. The events recounted in the providence section of her spiritual autobiography revolved around those that related to her “being *planted in the house of the Lord* in order to [her] *flourishing in the courts of our God*.”¹¹⁷ In this way of worship, the purity of the gospel was so crucial to Christian communion with God that Dutton was compelled to protest at her first church where it was lacking and to leave when her protest came to no avail. This concern for gospel grace also led her to denounce the Church of England of her day because “the doctrines of the gospel and of the

¹¹²Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:13.

¹¹³Dutton, *Letter II: On the Gift of the Holy Ghost to Believers as a Sealer*, *SSW*, 5:35.

¹¹⁴Dutton, *Mr Sanddeman Refuted by an Old Woman*, in *SSW*, 5:56.

¹¹⁵Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:13.

¹¹⁶Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:14–16; 32–33; 45–47.

¹¹⁷Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:45–158.

Reformation have so generally been banished out of the established church.”¹¹⁸ Thus, even though Dutton was denounced for her critical spirit, it was recognized “in her defense . . . that her surviving correspondence shows that she loved the doctrines of grace and that she was ready to acclaim those who preached them.”¹¹⁹

Corporate worship and fellowship were also held dear by Dutton as her duty and privilege of communion with God and his people. Some of Dutton’s most agonizing spiritual struggles arose when she was “separated from [her] sweet enjoyments in the house of God and from the company of the dear saints.”¹²⁰ Communion with God and his people under her favorite minister, William Grant, was likened to enjoyment in “the land of promise,” whereas removal from his ministry resembled “going into captivity” or spiritual exile.¹²¹ In the last days of Dutton’s life, what added to her physical torments was her incapability to “attend the public worship of God,” which had “so frequently edified, strengthened, and comforted, and happy she [*sic*].”¹²² Her spirituality was never individualistic or passive, but developed through active communion with God and with his saints.

Moreover, the church ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper were also important venues of communing with God in the way of worship. As Dutton exclaimed, “what sweet and mutual intercourse is held between God and his children in all divine ordinances; while strangers know nothing of this inside glory of worship and content

¹¹⁸Dutton, “Letter 3,” in *SSW*, 6:11.

¹¹⁹Peter Naylor, *Picking up a Pin for the Lord: English Particular Baptists from 1688 to the Early Nineteenth Century* (London: Grace Publications Trust, 1992), 58.

¹²⁰This was what Dutton communicated to John Skepp when the couple was taken away from London by the husband’s business needs. Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:54–55.

¹²¹Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:120.

¹²²John Andrew Jones, *A Memoir of Mrs. Anne Dutton*, in *SSW*, 2:103.

themselves with a bare external form! The saints *know* Christ's *voice*."¹²³ Dutton was no stranger to this sweet and mutual communion. Right in her first church pastored by Hunt, she "often sought for and found [her] beloved both in his more general, and special ordinances."¹²⁴ In her spiritual distress, she also sought God "in public ordinances."¹²⁵ Pointing out the errors of the Moravian Brethren, she reminded them that "the ordinances of Christ are his appointed means, for the conveyance of life into the souls of his dear sheep and lambs;" so "to be without the life-giving presence of Christ, in his public worship; ought to be esteemed by us, as one of his rebukes."¹²⁶

In keeping with the Baptist ecclesiology, Dutton recognized two church ordinances appointed by the Lord: baptism and the Lord's Supper.¹²⁷ While baptism is "the *first* and *immediate* duty of a believer" to "be performed but *once*," his/ her next duty is to join a church and partakes the Lord's Supper, "which is to be repeated" to nourish his/ her faith in the crucified Christ signified therein.¹²⁸ As for baptism, Dutton endorsed believer baptism as mandated in the Bible, which might accounted for her baptism at the church of Moore instead of the first church pastored by Hunt remembered as a paedobaptist. Her husband, Benjamin Dutton, held to believer baptism as well. Upon his joining the Presbyterian church pastored by Peirce, Benjamin asked Peirce to baptize him by immersion, with which the pastor readily complied.¹²⁹ Administered via immersion, baptism is "a *representation* of the *death, burial and resurrection of Jesus*

¹²³Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:46.

¹²⁴Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:27.

¹²⁵Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:55.

¹²⁶Dutton, "Letter 14," in *SSW*, 7:250–51.

¹²⁷Anne Dutton, *Brief Hints Concerning Baptism: of the Subject, Mode, and End of this Solemn Ordinance* (London: J. Hart, 1746), 24.

¹²⁸Dutton, *Brief Hints Concerning Baptism*, 25.

¹²⁹Benjamin Dutton, *The Superaboundings of the Exceeding Riches of God's Free-Grace* (London, 1743), 69.

Christ and our *union* and *communion* with him therein.”¹³⁰ When a believer professes his faith in Christ and submits himself to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit, he also professes “to *take* the three-one *God* for *his God* . . . and *gives up himself* to be the *Lord’s*, to walk with *God* in all relations with suitable dispositions.”¹³¹ In this respect, baptism portrays the gospel of Christ, seals the redemption of believers, and initiates their walking with God in the newness of their life.

This divine-human communion is continued and renewed by the other ordinance: The Lord’s Supper. Dutton published her treatise on the Lord’s Supper in 1748.¹³² As signified in the title, the treatise dealt with the nature, subject, and right partaking of the Lord’s Supper with her additional reflections on these three aspects. The nature of the Lord’s Supper is three-fold, “to represent, to communicate, and to confirm or seal” the salvific effects of Christ’s death.¹³³ The ordinance is “a representation . . . of the *body* and *blood* of Christ, *broken* and *shed* for the worthy receivers,” through which the Lord communicates, “or give[s] himself . . . together with all the benefits of his death to his disciples,” and at the same time seals all the gift and benefits promised.¹³⁴ Like baptism, the Lord’s Supper embodies the gospel of Christ. But distinct from the Roman Catholics’ transubstantiation and the Lutherans’ consubstantiation, the Lord “is *spiritually present* [italics mine] in his own ordinance,” not physically present, even as he “doth actually communicate, or give himself” to worthy partakers.¹³⁵ This was achieved

¹³⁰Dutton, *Brief Hints Concerning Baptism*, 12–13.

¹³¹Dutton, *Brief Hints Concerning Baptism*, 22.

¹³²Anne Dutton, *Thoughts on the Lord’s Supper, Relating to the Nature, Subjects, and right Partaking of this Solemn Ordinance. Written at the Request of a Friend, and address’d by Letter to the tender Lambs of Christ. With a short Letter relating to it prefixed. By One who is Less than the Least of all Saints* (London: J. Hart, 1748).

¹³³Dutton, *Thoughts on the Lord’s Supper*, 1.

¹³⁴Dutton, *Thoughts on the Lord’s Supper*, 2–5.

¹³⁵Dutton, *Thoughts on the Lord’s Supper*, 4.

through the faith of the partakers. They “are called to the immediate exercise of faith on Christ as *spiritually present* [italics mine] in his own appointment.”¹³⁶ This faith connects them to the spiritual presence of Christ in that “while [their] natural eyes behold the signs, [they] should look with the eye of faith unto the things thereby signified” so that they “feed upon Christ crucified” in eating the broken bread and “drink [their] Saviour’s blood” in taking the cup.¹³⁷ With her emphases on the spiritual presence of Christ, Dutton’s view on the nature of the Lord’s Supper aligned more with Calvin’s “spiritual presence” view than the “memorial” or “commemorative” view that had come to predominate among the Particular Baptists in the nineteenth century.¹³⁸

Dutton’s emphasis on Christ’s presence in turn set off the communion between God and his people in the Lord’s Supper. Upon their partaking of the ordinance, God’s people not only remember the Lord’s commandment and redemption, but also enter into a sweet communion with him in love:

And as he thereby calls into his presence-chamber, so to honour and delight us there, the *king* is pleased to *sit* with us, *at his table*, to call us to *eat* as his *friends*, of his royal dainties, and to *drink abundantly* as his *beloved*, of the wine which he hath mingled, while he here sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which excites and increases all our graces whereby he prepares us for and gives us a foretaste of glory.¹³⁹

The loving communion between the triune God and his people is illustrated by the familial scene of sitting, eating, and drinking together over the table of “Supper,” which filled their hearts with the condescending love of the Lord. Divine love begets love. It motivates partakers to “give up [themselves]” to God “in all the love [they] are capable

¹³⁶Dutton, *Thoughts on the Lord’s Supper*, 25.

¹³⁷Dutton, *Thoughts on the Lord’s Supper*, 27.

¹³⁸Michael A. G. Haykin, “Anne Dutton on the Lord’s Supper” (lecture, The Southern Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, Winter, 2014), 19.

¹³⁹Dutton, *Thoughts on the Lord’s Supper*, 21.

of” to be “entirely and forever *his!*”¹⁴⁰ Even though neither their love nor their communion is perfect, the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper is “a foretaste” and “an earnest” to the perfect and glorious communion prepared for them at “the marriage supper of the Lamb” in eternity. In this respect, the ordinance is vital for increasing Christian faith, love, and hope as it inclines partakers to anticipate the conjugal love of Christ in eternity as well as to remember his sacrificial love on the cross. Thus, rather than keeping themselves away from the ordinance, the weak in faith should draw near to the table and be strengthened in love and hope.

As for the way of private worship, Dutton walked with God by praising him and praying to him. One chief means of her praise and prayer was through hymns. This began from her childhood when, in addition to Scripture and other good books, Dutton had taken pleasure in singing Psalms and hymns and committing them to memory, which proved comforting in her spiritual struggles.¹⁴¹ One hymn from the *Penitential Cries* by Thomas Shepherd (1665–1739), for example, articulated her soul’s longing for communion with God and personal appropriation of his grace in her struggle for conversion grace.¹⁴² Likewise, some hymns written by such well-known writers as Isaac Watts or John Bunyan expressed her faith and strengthened it during God’s providential leading of her life.¹⁴³ But anticipating her later publications, Dutton also composed her own hymns to pray to God.¹⁴⁴ This communion via hymns was strengthened by the fact

¹⁴⁰Dutton, *Thoughts on the Lord’s Supper*, 29.

¹⁴¹Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:6.

¹⁴²Dutton transcribed three hymns. One was from the *Penitential Cries* by Thomas Shepherd (1665–1739), and the other two were composed by John Mason (1646?–1694). See Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, *SSW*, 3:16–18, 21, 25.

¹⁴³Dutton demonstrated her knowledge of both well-known hymn writers and not so well-known ones. For example, during her brief stay away from London, she recalled Bunyan’s verse to convey her trust in tribulations: “If gall and wormwood they give me, / Then God does sweetness cast, / So much thereto, that they can’t think / How bravely it does taste!” Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:62.

¹⁴⁴Some examples of Dutton’s hymns could be found in her spiritual autobiography:

that Dutton believed some of them were directly inspired by God, “as if dictated to [her] by the Lord himself.”¹⁴⁵

This communion through hymns came to fruition in Dutton’s religious poem, *A Narration of the Wonders of Grace* and many of her sixty hymns.¹⁴⁶ Although by no means outstanding in poetic artistry or harmony, Dutton’s poem and hymns were replete with praise and prayer of the triune God. Her hymns often paid tribute to the work of the triune God, the “blessed One in Three” for “each of their respective works” in salvation.¹⁴⁷ Many of them ended with praises of the Trinity, “Let’s praise the Father, and the Son, / And bless the sacred Dove.”¹⁴⁸ Her religious poem of *Wonders of Grace* ended with an even more exuberant praise of the Trinity:

And then we shall *adore* the Three in One,
For all that each of them for us have done.
Now then let’s *praise* the Father and the Son,
Who jointly sent the Holy Spirit down.
And let’s *adore* the Spirit’s boundless love,
Who, by his work, fits us to dwell above.
Let’s *shout salvation* unto One in Three!
From this time forth, and to eternity.¹⁴⁹

see Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:88, 73, 91–92, 113.

¹⁴⁵Dutton made this claim for the one composed during her spiritual exile at Whittlesay: “Now I’ll contend no more; / In anger I’ll not smit: Because of love that was before, / in which I do delight. / My kindness on thee fixed, / Like rocky hills to *me*: / And I can never forget / The *love* I bear to thee.” Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:131.

¹⁴⁶The *Narration* and 61 hymns by Dutton are reprinted in the second volume of Watson’s edition. As Watson explains in the introduction, Dutton first published *A Narration of the Wonders of Grace* in 1734. It was one of her early works that established her literary and religious reputation and proved useful to such evangelicals as Whitefield. Quoting from Whitebrook’s biography of *Ann Dutton*, Watson notes six editions of this work: “1734, 1734, 1735, 1818, 1831, and 1833.” Watson’s reprint is the 1833 edition with a preface by the editor, John Andrews Jones, and his *A Memoir of Mrs. Anne Dutton*. As for the sixty-one hymns of Dutton included in the volume, Watson, based upon the notes of Stephen Stein and John Julian, who was the editor of *A Dictionary of Hymnology*, observes that in all probability they appeared later in Dutton’s “sixty-Four *Hymns Composed on Several Subjects*” published in London in 1743. Watson, introduction to *SSW*, 2: viii.

¹⁴⁷Dutton, “Hymn 15: The Revealing Work of the Spirit,” in *SSW*, 2:190. Another representative hymn in praise of the Trinity in salvation is “Hymn 39: The Saints’ Freedom from Wrath,” in *SSW*, 2:217.

¹⁴⁸Dutton, “Hymn 14: The Revealing Work of the Spirit,” in *SSW*, 2:190.

¹⁴⁹Dutton, *Wonders of Grace*, in *SSW*, 2:174. All italics are mine.

This exuberant adoration testified to the fact that “the study of the doctrine of the Trinity readily tips over into worship.”¹⁵⁰

In addition to hymns, Dutton’s spiritual autobiography abounded with her communion with God in the private way of prayer. Many of Dutton’s journal entries, which recorded the publishing of some of her works, repeated the cycle of her feeling unworthy and praying for God’s will, and God responding her with assuring promises and providential grace to put it to print. Mediated through her prayer and Gods’ promise, Dutton’s publications were the very product of her communion with God, which was then communicated to their Christian readers. Likewise, prayer played an important role in Dutton’s struggles with God’s providential dispensations of her life. During one of her prolonged prayer struggles between surrendering to God’s leading her away from the ministry of Grant and holding unto what she took to be God’s “promise” and “mercy” for her to stay under his, Dutton experienced fully the Pauline struggles of the two selves. If communion is the opening hearts of God and his children, her prayer struggles uncovered the faithfulness of God’s heart and the treacherousness of hers before its total surrender to God.¹⁵¹ In the end her heart was brought to agreement with “the absolute grace of [God’s] *heart*,” which was typified by its utterance of the timeless truth of faith that *it is well*:

¹⁵⁰Tim Chester, *Delighting in the Trinity: Why Father, Son and Spirit are Good News* (New Maiden, England: The Good Book Company, 2010), 8.

¹⁵¹Dutton recorded the minute details of her prayerful struggles. She cherished this mercy and promise of God as “the dear babe” and child of her soul, “the beautiful birth,” which she deemed “the fruit of [her] *own* prayers” as well as “the offspring of the Father’s grace, the fruit of the Son’s death and glorious intercession for [her].” Hence her misery when God the Father appeared “as if he was about to take it from [her],” which drove her to agitated prayers, “run[ning] to [the] Father’s bosom and prayed him to have *compassion* on [her]” and intreating the mercy of Christ to spare the “child” of her soul. Her pleading in time boiled down to “two requests of the Lord:” one was that God would enable her to “*glorify him* by giving up the mercy into his hands” and the other that “he would *glorify himself* in giving it again if *he* pleased.” Whereas God answered her first request by reminding her of “his giving *his only Son for [her]*,” which made her willing to give her “*only child, the dearest and nearest* of outward favours” for the glory of God, it took further prayers for her to resign “any *peremptoriness* in [her] requests for the re-obtaining of it.” Even though she seemed to have “sweetly resigned into the will of God,” Dutton yet found herself “very *unwilling*” when the day finally came for her to leave and “prayed Christ” to prevent it and to keep his mercy for her. When all her prayers came to no avail, her soul sank into dark depression, fearing that she was cast out of God’s favor. But it was right in her spiritual nadir that the triune God opened his heart to her, encouraging her to look to the transcendent glories of God and the Spirit directing her heart to the love of God and leading her to

It's *well* for us, that there is something more *stable* than our *own frames* to rejoice in; even that substantial, unchangeable, never-failing goodness of *Jehovah*, which is secured for us in his everlasting covenant; all the blessings of which are *sure*, because they stand upon the absolute grace of his *heart*, and the immutable good pleasure of his *will*. And as the laying up of his great goodness *for us* was according to his *own heart*, so also the dispensing of it *to us*. For *not by thy covenant*, says he, when he bestows any special favour upon his dear children.¹⁵²

Indeed, prayer was crucial to reconciling God's providence with his promise. Like the two biblical prayer warriors, Jacob and Abraham, whom Dutton used to illustrate walking with God in private worship, she wrestled with God in prayer and surrendered to God her heart-love, her child of Isaac, which is "most near and dear to [her]."¹⁵³

Communion in the Way of Providence

Providence was prominent in Dutton's walking with God, which comprised the second part of her spiritual autobiography. Divine-human communion was integral to the question of providence, for "to ask how God is related to what goes on is also to ask how we are to relate ourselves to it, and through it, to God."¹⁵⁴ Walking with God in the seven providential moves of her life,¹⁵⁵ Dutton eventually exhibited total surrender to God's sovereign will through all the trials and errors. Whether in prosperous or afflictive

Christ. Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:105–16.

¹⁵²Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:116.

¹⁵³ Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:46. In a letter to Whitefield, Dutton noted God's trying of his children over their Isaac, which was "most near and dear to [them]": "when the Lord winds up the love of his children to an high pitch, he delights to try it. And try us he will in our Isaacs, in that which is most near and dear to us." Dutton, "Letter 1," in *SSW*, 7:3.

¹⁵⁴Charles M. Wood, *The Question of Providence* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 57.

¹⁵⁵The seven providential moves recorded in Dutton's spiritual autobiography are in the following order: First was Dutton's removal from the church of her first minister John Hunt to the church under the ministry of John Moore. The second move was necessitated by her marriage and took her from Northampton to London under the ministry of John Skepp. The third was her move back to Northampton following the death of her first husband. The next move was to Wellingborough after her second marriage to Benjamin Dutton to sit under the ministry of her favorite minister William Grant. The fifth move was to Whittlesey near Peterborough by Benjamin's business needs, which was taken as a spiritual exile for Dutton. But the couple was brought back to Wellingborough some time later and stayed there for about three more years. The final move of the couple was to Great Gransden, where Benjamin was called to serve. See Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:45–158.

providences, both the primary end of God's glory and the related good for Dutton were revealed, which were all the clearer in retrospection.

Dutton had her share of prosperous providence. In the first move from the church of Hunt to the church under the ministry of Moore, his preaching established Dutton's judgment in the doctrines of the gospel, which was the theological foundation for her communion with God and with the corporate church.¹⁵⁶ Her second move to London necessitated by her first marriage brought her under the ministry of John Skepp, whose gospel ministry radiated with the "enkindling influences of the Holy Spirit."¹⁵⁷ When she later remarried Benjamin Dutton, he was eventually called to minister at Great Gransden, which turned out to be a fruitful place for them both. Thus, even though "the saints are indeed for the most part *a poor and an afflicted people*," God the Father is yet "pleased to afford to all his children" some measures of prosperity, for which they "honour the Lord" and "give thanks to the glory of his great name."¹⁵⁸

Nevertheless, most of the providential ways by which Dutton walked with God belonged to the afflictive type. Externally, her life was characterized by constant moves and losses. Every move in Dutton's life brought its own challenges, among which separation from her favored ministers probably posed the greatest. Personally, Dutton suffered disease, deaths of two husbands, and difficulties in publishing religious treatises as a woman. Added to these were internal afflictions, which were sometimes exacerbated by external life difficulties. The tragic death of Benjamin, for instance, grieved her not only because of the loss of her dear yokefellow, but also the intensified critique of her publishing ministry.

¹⁵⁶Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:49–50.

¹⁵⁷Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:51.

¹⁵⁸Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:16–18.

Although these afflictive providences were trying at the time, they remained no less blessings than prosperity when God walked with Dutton all the way. In this way of afflictive providence, “God walks with his people in covenant-faithfulness . . . as a wife[sic], tender, gracious father,” “working all things after the counsel of his own will for the good of his children . . . and the glory of his own name.”¹⁵⁹ Looking back on her trials, Dutton was confident that “all the *cross lines of providence*, are drawn exactly *correspondent* to the *counsel of Jehovah’s will*; all working together, and unanimously carrying on the vast design of his *glory*, and the *good* of his chosen, in a glorious *order* of infinite wisdom.”¹⁶⁰ Even when God’s love “runs underground out of sight,” it “keeps a steady course, in that channel infinite wisdom has ordained; in order to its triumphant rise above ground ere long with a more glorious display than ever.”¹⁶¹ Despite the mystery of God’s afflictive providence, it is sweetened by the three principal elements of his “covenantal faithfulness,” his sovereign will, and his glorious good purpose.

These elements were all at play in the tribulations of Dutton’s life. Upon the death of her first husband, Dutton was yet moved to “adore infinite wisdom that ordered the most minute circumstances of [her] trial” and to look forward to the fully opening of the mysteries of providence as “having been all subservient, . . . to the glory of God, and [her] highest advantage.”¹⁶² Despite her loss, Dutton persisted in faith of divine favor by appealing to the hidden purpose of God underneath the outward “*face of things in providence*” as in Job’s case.¹⁶³ The providence of God imparted a definitive purpose to the otherwise haphazard and tragical occurrences of Dutton’s life. As for her publication,

¹⁵⁹Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:18. The “wise” in the original manuscript was wrongly transcribed as “wife” in Watson’s edition.

¹⁶⁰Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:59.

¹⁶¹Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:73.

¹⁶²Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:64.

¹⁶³Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:238–39.

the very issue of gender did not stand in its way because of God's distinguishing favor upon her, his sovereign call, and providential management for the publication of her works. Her "unwomanly" and "unchristian" defiance of social and gender boundaries was justified on divine ground. As in Calvin's doctrine of the providence, the knowledge of God's providence, which entails his sovereign rule, meticulous care, and good purpose is indeed the most "profitable," "sweetest," and "the highest blessedness" for afflicted souls.¹⁶⁴

On her part, Dutton exhibited an increasing readiness to submit to God. As During one of her spiritual afflictions after she moved to London, Dutton recorded her willing submission to God's sovereign will:

The faith of God's *love* has many a time made me, with unspeakable pleasure to submit to his *will* when he crossed *mine*. I have delightfully lost my will in *God's*, and *there* also I have found it. I *lost* it as corrupt, while the Holy Ghost subdued the rebellion of my nature; and I *found it* as sanctified, while he drew me into a sweet acquiescence with God's good pleasure. Under the sanctifying operations of the blessed Spirit, I have liked what my *Father* liked, and have well approved of the most trying dispensation, because it was *his will*. And his will, in this respect, I took to be, not a mere act of *sovereignty*, but an act of his *good pleasure*, flowing from and founded *upon* his boundless love, and infinite wisdom, in his eternal counsels about the glory of this grace, in my happiness and salvation.¹⁶⁵

The words that denoted happiness, such as "unspeakable pleasure," "delightfully," "a sweet acquiescence," and "happiness" all signified Dutton's submission as joyful trust rather than joyless stoicism. The sovereignty of God demanded it, the love of Christ sweetened it, and the sanctifying power of the Spirit empowered it. The afflictive

¹⁶⁴In the section on divine providence, John Calvin commended the doctrine at several places: "Nothing is more profitable than the knowledge of this doctrine;" "From this we may receive the best and sweetest fruit;" "Ignorance of providence is the ultimate of all miseries; the highest blessedness lies in the knowledge of it." John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 1.16.5; 1.16.11.

¹⁶⁵Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:53.

appearance of providence indeed could not deprive her of “sweet communion” with God.¹⁶⁶

Along with Dutton’s joyful submission was her total commitment to exalting his glory in all his dealings with her life. She was so bent to it that she judged it “far *better* to glorify God than *merely* to enjoy him” and counted “*his* glory *our* highest happiness, whatever he does with us.”¹⁶⁷ In practice, it was the clear vision to advance God’s glory that propelled her to move with Benjamin to Great Gransden.¹⁶⁸ At his death, it was still the glory of God that had tided her through internal and external turmoil:

And amidst my sorrows, in my greatest depressions, I rejoiced that whatever fell, God’s glory, by all would rise. I loved the glory of God above all things; I earnestly longed actively to glorify him in all; and with my utmost strength, attempted to give him praise. I dreaded nothing so much as casting dishonour upon my good God, by any unmeet dejection of spirit, when cast by providence into the depths of trial. . . . And meanwhile, to give my God a little glory by the trial, oh, it was joy in sorrow, ease in pain, life in death to my spirit!¹⁶⁹

Just as she had exchanged her sins with Christ’s righteousness in her justification, so Dutton exchanged her happiness with his glory in the way of providence: “Christ and I *changed*: I gave him my sweet enjoyments, and he gave *me* his glorious service, something to *do* for him.”¹⁷⁰ It was a mutual opening of hearts for the other, God for the good of his people and they for his glory: “As God communes with his people, opening his heart to them in the ways of his providence, as all things are for their sakes, whether prosperous or afflictive; so this abundant grace opens their hearts to him again *in many thanksgivings, which redound to the glory of God.*”¹⁷¹ Fixing her eyes upon the glory of

¹⁶⁶Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:48.

¹⁶⁷Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:108.

¹⁶⁸Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:150.

¹⁶⁹Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:243.

¹⁷⁰Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:150.

¹⁷¹Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:50.

God's grace, Dutton walked comfortably with God even in the most trying circumstances.

In summary, Dutton's communion with God in the way of providence might be communicated by the little poem she composed on the topic:

The Lord makes *darkness*; and it's *night*.
And he doth make the darkness *light*.
Blest are the men that *trust him so*;
His power, and goodness, they shall know.
His glory, and *their life* secure;
Bound up in his *covenant* most sure:
He'll slay their foes, and he their friend,
Will give them *an expected end*."¹⁷²

Although not as well-known as the enduring poem on divine providence by William Cowper (1731–1800): “God Moves in a Mysterious Way,” Dutton yet anticipated his sense of awe at the “mystery way” God moves in and his faith in God's goodwill when he “hides a smiling face” “behind a frowning providence.” At the same time, her conception of God as the “friend” to his people in all his majesty probably rendered God more personable and his providence less daunting than those invoked in Cowper's, where God remains “his own interpreter” in the end. Dutton's trust in God is well-grounded, “secure,” and even “most sure” in his covenantal grace and faithfulness.

Communion in the Way of Writing

The last derivative way of divine-human communion in Dutton's conception is conversation-holiness. It is distinguished from “heart-holiness, or the new nature,” from which “it proceeds,” but “extends itself to thoughts, words, and actions.”¹⁷³ The term itself is taken from 1 Peter 1:15: “But as he that has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.” Rather than limited to modern understanding of verbal talk, conversation generally referred to the conduct of God's people and particularly their

¹⁷²Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:88.

¹⁷³Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:21.

service for God. In this way, God walks with them “as a tender, gracious father, pitying all [their] weakness, pardoning all [their] sinfulness, and continually accepting all [their] services.”¹⁷⁴ Since Dutton regarded writing and publishing as her primary service to God and her private conversation with his people, this section will focus on her walking with God in her publication ministry. Dutton’s journals in the third part of her spiritual autobiography highlighted her communion with God, “what passed between God and [her] soul” in writing and publishing specific tracts.¹⁷⁵ Her service via publishing religious tracts fulfilled the criteria of this way of conversation-holiness, whose principle is “love to God,” with “his word [as] the rule and his glory the end.”¹⁷⁶

First, Dutton’s writing ministry was prompted by her love to God. She longed to love God “for *herself*, and everything else, the most delightful *for his sake*” and to being “*loyal* to Christ, to live upon *him* as [her] *all* in the *enjoyment* as well as in the *want* of sensible comforts.”¹⁷⁷ Even though she still sinned, yet she spoke “*the truth in Christ*” that “[*her*] *soul loves him!*”¹⁷⁸ It was this love that motivated Dutton to write “for the *feeding of his tender lambs* and the *conversion of souls*.”¹⁷⁹ This was clearly an echo of the dynamics of loving the Lord and feeding his lambs in the Lord’s command of Peter in John 21. God did bless her works for the feeding of his lambs as testified by their usefulness in the conversion, evangelism, and spiritual counseling of the flock.

Still, it was not so much Dutton’s love to God as his love to her that had accounted for her publication success. First of all, it was owing to God’s distinguishing

¹⁷⁴Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:22.

¹⁷⁵Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:160.

¹⁷⁶Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:21.

¹⁷⁷Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:182.

¹⁷⁸Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:175.

¹⁷⁹Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:231.

love that had “distinguished [her] from most of [her] sex” for the service of writing.¹⁸⁰ Being “a poor *barren* creature,” she was yet chosen “to *keep house* and be a *joyful mother of children*,”¹⁸¹ namely, mother of her books. The “transgressive” or unnatural act of writing and publishing,¹⁸² by the sovereign wisdom of God, fulfilled Dutton’s natural obligations to procreate. More than a mother, his love even elevated her to be “a great nation,” which was achieved through the far and wide distribution of her books. God’s love also sanctified Dutton’s work in that “Christ’s blood cleansing [her] and [her] performances from all sin” and “presenting them acceptable to the Father in his own perfections.”¹⁸³ Moreover, God’s love in Christ comforted her amidst the external discouragements and internal distresses she endured for her publication. In the love languages of the Canticles, Dutton was addressed as the “beloved,” the “sister” and “spouse” of the Lord so that “*whoever* might not desire communion with [her] *Christ* would.”¹⁸⁴ It is “right in *that service*” of writing that Christ would give her “*his loves*, the various displays and flows of his infinite *favour* in *blessing* [her] poor book for the good of souls.”¹⁸⁵ Thus, the love of God in Dutton’s writing not only demonstrated the mutual opening of hearts in their communion, but also registered “the teleology of grace” in her spiritual autobiography and other writings.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁰Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:168.

¹⁸¹Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:194.

¹⁸²Vivien Jones, ed., *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 140.

¹⁸³Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:175.

¹⁸⁴Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:177.

¹⁸⁵Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:233.

¹⁸⁶Tom Webster, “Writing to Redundancy: Approaches to Spiritual Journals and Early Modern Spirituality,” *The Historical Journal* 39, no. 1 (March 1996): 43. This teleology of grace was a spiritual heritage of Paul’s conversion narrative. It held true for Dutton’s autobiography, which, as she stated explicitly in the “Preface,” “was to bear a testimony, as one of God’s witnesses, to the exceeding riches of his grace in the salvation of [her] soul.” Dutton, preface to *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:5.

Then, Dutton walked with God in writing by the rule of his word and promise. Like Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*, Dutton's spiritual autobiography was interwoven with biblical texts.¹⁸⁷ Illuminated by the Spirit, the word of God assumed a Bunyanian type of "personified force" in Dutton's salvation experience.¹⁸⁸ Only it played more the role of the encourager than the adversary in her service of writing. Dutton's journals teemed with instances when at her earnest supplications for his direction, God's words and promises "dropped sweetly on her heart" or "to her mind," which were his confirmations to her literary endeavors. The words of God dictated her publication and facilitated it: "When the Lord makes it apparent by his providence to any of his servants, that there may be an opportunity of doing service to his cause by publishing their thoughts to others, he calls upon them by his word so to do; and by his spirit also, when, according to the dictates of his word, he inclines them to engage in the work."¹⁸⁹

Among others, the promises that most frequently strengthened Dutton were those assuring God's presence with her (Isa 43), his power to make her a great nation (Gen 12), and Christ's loving acceptance of her as his sister and his spouse in the language of the Canticles.¹⁹⁰ By her allegorical approach, Dutton identified herself with Sarah in hanging unto God's promise of child, which were books in her case. Even though there were "often very great deaths" between God's making promises and

¹⁸⁷Jayne Elizabeth Lewis ed., *Religion in Enlightenment England: An Anthology of Primary Sources* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 380.

¹⁸⁸Owen C. Watkins highlights the way Scripture worked in Bunyan's religious experience, which could well be applied to Dutton's: "In Bunyan's story, Scripture is more than simply a medium of revelation; it assumes the role of a protagonist with whom he argues and struggles, which has a complex life of its own: mysterious, powerful, unpredictable, searching him out with desolating efficiency, but ultimately consistent and working for his good. It is a strange, almost personified force, and it is a measure of Bunyan's commitment that his dealings with them are almost as dramatic as those with Satan himself." Owen C. Watkins, *The Puritan Experience: Studies in Spiritual Autobiography* (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1972), 110.

¹⁸⁹Dutton, "Letter 16," in *SSW*, 1:125,

¹⁹⁰ Some instances of these promises can be found on the following pages: Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:170, 177 179, 185, 206, 226, 230, 231, 233, 236.

fulfilling them, they would surely come to pass by the very name of God as Jehovah, “a covenant-keeping, promise-fulfilling God, . . . the great I AM that is unchangeably *the same of one mind* and infinitely *strong* in performing what he has spoken.”¹⁹¹ He was the “prayer-hearing, promise-fulfilling, and all-performing God” to her.¹⁹² While Dutton’s books were her dear children, they were conceived and brought forth by the love and promise of God.¹⁹³ Thus, throughout her life, she was “tried” by providences, but “supported” by promises.¹⁹⁴

Finally, the end of Dutton’s publications was outspokenly for “the glory of God and the good of souls.”¹⁹⁵ As the love of God that had opened way for her publications and his word that had dispelled her uncertainties, the glory of God steadied Dutton against internal disconsolations and external oppositions. This could be glimpsed from her journal entry dated August 7. When tempted about the uselessness of her writings, Dutton withstood waves of despair by the conviction that “the *glory of God* is a *great thing*.”¹⁹⁶ When accused of seeking outward things, she replied that the “*outward things*” she desired was “the usefulness to others” for God’s “*outward glory*,” to which would be added “*inward things* for his *internal glory*.”¹⁹⁷ When belittled, Dutton admitted only too readily to be “a *little worm*,” who would rejoice if only “God will be *greatly glorified* and his people *edified*.”¹⁹⁸ The glory of God alone was her shield against external attacks and internal charges. It so consumed her that she “would [even] do [her]

¹⁹¹Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:189–90.

¹⁹²Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:207.

¹⁹³Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:205.

¹⁹⁴Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:241.

¹⁹⁵Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:161.

¹⁹⁶Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:174.

¹⁹⁷Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:174.

¹⁹⁸Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:174.

utmost to promote the kingdom and glory of Christ” were she “sent to *hell* at last.”¹⁹⁹

Although she admitted elsewhere that “it never yet was presented to my mind that God would be more glorified in my damnation than in my salvation,”²⁰⁰ Dutton’s exaltation of the glory of God was unmistakable.

Connected with the primary end of God’s glory was Dutton’s dedication of her writings to evangelism and edification of God’s children. This was shown clearly in the composition of her letter to the believing negroes. Although she set out to write to the converted negroes only, her “bowels [yet] yearned towards the poor *negroes* that were yet in *unbelief*” so that she would not wind up the work “without saying somewhat to *them*.”²⁰¹ When convinced of God’s will to put both parts to print, her exhortations to the converted and her evangelical call to the unconverted, Dutton was especially overwhelmed by the glorious vision of the triune God working upon unbelievers with her “*feeble work*.” As she recorded in the journal, “he would *thunder* from *Sinai’s Mount* upon secure sinners; and make *lightenings* with *rain*, enlighten their minds in the knowledge of *Christ*, and refresh their souls with the showers of his grace; and bring froth the *wind* of his *Spirit* out of his upon dry-boned sinners *treasures*, unto their conviction and consolation, their life and joy.”²⁰² Her published letter contained her encouragement of the converted negroes in faith and sanctification, but it also conveyed Dutton’s her “bowels,” her consternations at the prospect of the poor unconverted negroes, who would suffer eternal misery plus their current misery if they persisted in unbelief. After presenting to them the gospel of Christ, she issued a gospel call: “And

¹⁹⁹Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:175.

²⁰⁰In one letter, Dutton seemed to have rejected this idea of being damned for God’s glory: “I cannot say that I ever was content to be damned if God might be glorified thereby, as it never yet was presented to my mind that God would be more glorified in my damnation than in my salvation.” Dutton, “Letter 20,” in *SSW*, 1:138.

²⁰¹Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:199.

²⁰²Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:201.

what say you now, souls, are you *willing* to look to *Christ?*”²⁰³ In her evangelical concerns and passions for the least of God’s little children, Dutton manifested her zeal for the kingdom of God and the good of his people. Even at the end of her life when she could neither write or sit up, she still conversed with her visitors, which “was so cheerful, edifying, spiritual and refreshing as filled the hearts and eyes of many that visited her with wonder.”²⁰⁴

Thus, it was with respect to her love to God, whose promise she held unto as the rule and whose glory she valued above all things that Dutton walked steadily with God in the way of writing. After all her defensive arguments for her writings and publications, Dutton asked her prosecutors pointedly:

Once more, since *women* are *allowed* the liberty of the *press*, and some have used it about *trifles*, and as it is to be feared under the dictates of Satan, to the propagation of his kingdom: shall none of that *sex* be suffered to appear on *Christ’s side*, to tell of the wonders of his *love*, to seek the *good* of souls, and the advancement of the redeemer’s *interest*?²⁰⁵

Compared with some women’s use of that freedom to publish the trifles, which were probably sentimental fictions,²⁰⁶ how much more should she be allowed to publish her work, which was committed to no trivial purpose whatsoever but the glory of God and the good of his children? In opposing her publication, her critics were actually instigated by Satan “to hinder the rising glory of Christ’s kingdom, and the knowledge of him, spreading itself over all the earth.”²⁰⁷ Rather than engaging herself in the endless struggles against her critics, Dutton committed those to God’s will, who were still “not

²⁰³Dutton, *A Letter to the Negroes Lately Converted to Christ in America. . . . By a Friend and Servant of Theirs in England*, in *SSW*, 5:376–79.

²⁰⁴Dutton, *Walking with God*, in *SSW*, 2:105.

²⁰⁵Dutton, *A Letter to Such of the Servants of Christ, Who May Have Any Scruple about the Lawfulness of Printing Any Thing Written by Women: To Show, that Book-Teaching Is Private, with Respect to the Church, and Permitted to Private Christians; Yea, Commanded to Those, of Either Sex, Who Are Gifted for, and Inclined to Engage in This Service*, in *SSW*, 3:256.

²⁰⁶Jones, *Women in the Eighteenth Century*, 11.

²⁰⁷Dutton, *Letter to Such of the Servants of Christ*, in *SSW*, 3:256.

willing to communion with [her],” and committed herself to continual communion with them, even if through prayers.²⁰⁸ The love of Christ she demonstrated in this exemplified her holiness by conforming to God’s will and his image of grace. In this respect, Dutton’s communion with God in the way of writing is indeed her journey toward holiness.

²⁰⁸Dutton, *Letter to Such of the Servants of Christ*, in *SSW*, 3:257.

CHAPTER 8

COMFORTABLE DEPENDENCE ON THE TRINITY: DUTTON'S EPISTOLARY COUNSELING OF THE AFFLICTED

Yea, my sister, view all your trials, and this, descending on you from the love of God through the blood of Christ, and under the sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost, as so many choice blessings, as part of the appointed means of your preparation by grace for your prepared glory; and you will see cause in everything to give thanks, and to joy and glory even in tribulation.

—Anne Dutton, *Letters on Spiritual Subjects*

I bless and praise the Lord that I ever knew and corresponded with her; I never knew her equal. So able to advise—so ready to assist—so kind, faithful, constant; always the same; unwearied in diligence; a real pattern of Christian friendship; a true mother in Israel! Blessed be God for shewing me such a pattern of himself, through the power of his sovereign grace!

—John Andrews Jones, *A Memoir of Mrs. Anne Dutton*

Introduction

Dutton enjoyed a vibrant epistolary ministry with friends and relatives.¹

Among her correspondents were Evangelical leaders of her time, such as George Whitefield, Howell Harris, and John Wesley.² As noted by one of her early editors,

¹In the introduction to the seventh volume of her edition, Watson gives a brief history of the publication of Dutton's letters. Apart from "the seven-volume set of 1740-1749 bearing the title *Occasional Letters upon Spiritual Subjects*," her letters were published as follows: *Letters on Spiritual Subjects and Diverse Occasions* (1749), edited by George Keith; *Spiritual Subjects and Diverse Occasions; Sent to Relations and Friends . . . to Which Are Prefixed, Memoirs of the Dealings of God with Her, in Her Last Sickness* (1769), compiled by George Keith; *Letters on Spiritual Subjects* (1823-1824), edited by Christopher Goulding; and *Selections from Letters on Spiritual Subjects* (1884) edited by James Knight. Watson, introduction to *SSW*, 7: xvii-xviii.

²For a brief summary of Dutton's correspondence with Whitefield and Wesley, see Watson, introduction to *SSW*, 1: xxiii-xxxiii; 7: ix-xvi. Given her Calvinistic convictions, Dutton's correspondence with Whitefield was on more friendly terms than hers with Wesley. Where she differed with Wesley, she did not hesitate to refute his errors, such as his theology of perfection and his Arminianism. But according to Stein, Dutton's relationship with Whitefield was not without tensions or conflicts either. The great Evangelist "felt the sting of her pen in private," namely the boldness and polemical spirit she exhibited in some of her writings. Stephen J. Stein, "A Note on Anne Dutton: Eighteenth-Century Evangelical," *Church History* 44, no. 4 (December 1975): 491.

Dutton’s “epistolary correspondence was most extensive, throughout England, Scotland, Wales, Holland, America,” which was testified by the “many volumes of *letters*” she published, “full of the sweet savour of Jesus.”³ Her epistolary ministry was distinguished not only by its extensive correspondents, but also by its depth of gospel grace. Its prevalence was reiterated by Sciretti when he remarked that most of Dutton’s publications “fall into the genre of epistolary correspondence and even her tracts are often in this same form, as most were originally written for and sent to specific individuals who solicited her counsels on specific issues.”⁴ Dutton’s spiritual wisdom and grace conveyed through these letters is so exceptional that she has been commended as a competent spiritual director in the tradition of Catholic and Protestant spiritual direction.⁵ Despite the geographical and gender confines of her time, writing letters provided Dutton a venue to minister to those that God brought into her life.

Beyond her immediate correspondents Dutton reached many more through the publication of her letters. In the third part of her spiritual autobiography, Dutton noted the publication of seven volumes of her letters.⁶ In the process of compiling her letters and putting them to the press, she invariably sought God’s will by his promises in the Bible. Unworthy of the task, she submitted her writings to be cleansed by the blood of the Son and approved by the Father so that they might fulfill the practical purpose of comforting

³John Andrew Jones, *A Memoir of Mrs. Anne Dutton*, in *SSW*, 2:109.

⁴Michael D. Sciretti Jr., “‘Feed My Lambs’: The Spiritual Direction Ministry of Calvinistic British Baptist Anne Dutton During the Early Years of Evangelical Revival” (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 2009), 3.

⁵According to Sciretti’s historical review, spiritual director is characterized as “wise and discerning, loving and empathetic, holy and spiritually mature, and learned in scripture and theology.” He also proposes a working definition of private spiritual direction as that which “takes place when one who is struggling through a transcendence crisis receives guidance and direction from another who is perceived to be holy, wise, loving, experienced, knowledgeable, and sensitive to the Spirit with the aim of healing and freeing the soul through a deeper understanding and surrender to the Divine in daily life.” Sciretti, “Feed My Lambs,” 46–47.

⁶Dutton, *A Brief Account of the Gracious Dealings of God, with a Poor, Sinful, Unworthy Creature, in Three Parts*, in *SSW*, 3:193–95, 202, 214–16, 224–25, 227, 230–32.

and edifying her readers. Her purpose was indeed accomplished by God's grace. He "so attended her letters with his blessing, that the accounts she frequently received of their use for instruction, strength, comfort, and joy, animated her heart always to abound in the work of the Lord."⁷ One of her readers actually came to faith upon reading her work probably "on *that very day*" when she prayed for God to convert some souls by them.⁸

While Dutton corresponded on a variety of issues with her friends and relatives, her epistolary ministry was particularly orientated toward uplifting the weak in faith. Among her letters, a considerable number of them were sent to comfort afflicted souls. As one of her editors commented, "The authoress considered herself called upon to labour in behalf of the young and weak of the flock, more particularly than to old established Christians."⁹ This was echoed by another editor when he observed that Mrs. Dutton "considered herself more particularly called upon to labor for the benefit of the young and timid of the Lord's flock, rather than for old and established Christians."¹⁰ Watson likewise commends Dutton to be "a fervent spiritual encourager and guide through this season of darkness," whose letters contained "words of grace addressed to uplift the recipients in their life of faith, pursuit of holiness, and growth into Christlikeness."¹¹ She ends up titling her seventh edition of Dutton's works as "Words of Grace."

These editors' observations were confirmed by Dutton's own words. In one of her letters to "an honourable gentleman," Dutton confided to him,

⁷Jones, *A Memoir of Mrs. Anne Dutton*, in *SSW*, 2:109.

⁸Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God*, in *SSW*, 3:194–95.

⁹Christopher Goulding, preface to Anne Dutton, *Letters on Spiritual Subjects*, in *SSW*, 6:58.

¹⁰James Knight, preface to Anne Dutton, *Selections from Letters on Spiritual Subjects*, in *SSW*, 1:86.

¹¹Watson, introduction to *SSW*, 7: xx–xxii.

The Lord gives me peculiar bowels to his needy children. And sometimes I have prayed him, “That if any of his were sick and weak, pained and wounded, he would send them to me; and out of his own infinite fulness, minister relief to them by me. . . . And from the inward workings of my heart towards the weak of the flock, when I compassionate them in the bowels of Jesus Christ, and rejoice to succor them; I have thought with pleasure, upon the infinite tenderness of Christ’s heart towards his sheep and lambs, and especially towards the weak and diseased of his flock.”¹²

As it turned out, God answered her prayer by utilizing her letters to succor his “sick and weak, pained and wounded” flock.¹³

Depending on their causes, the afflictions of Dutton’s correspondents largely fell into two main categories. One might be termed the external, which were caused by what Dutton designated as “the cross providence of God,” such as diseases, death, unfulfilled desires, and difficulties in life and ministry. Dutton had experienced this kind first-hand, not least the tragic loss of Benjamin to the sea.¹⁴ But more intriguing was the internal or spiritual type, caused by the saints’ lack of assurance of salvation. While sometimes the external and internal afflictions remained distinguishable, mostly they conflated and acted upon each other. Having had her fair share of both, Dutton was convinced that “the present state is a state of trial to all God’s people. . . . Sin has entered, and sorrows must be expected from indwelling corruptions, Satan’s temptations, the world’s snares, dark dispensations, the hidings of God’s face, the seeming denial of our prayers, and the delay of promised mercies; various afflictions in soul, in body, in name, in circumstances, in relations and friends, in employments for God—natural and

¹²Dutton, *Letters Sent to an Honourable Gentleman, for the Encouragement of Faith. By One Who Has Tasted That the Lord Is Gracious*, in *SSW*, 6:50–51. In another letter to Mrs. B—r, Dutton also communicated her love for the weak: “I can say, to the glory of free grace, that in my Lord’s bowels, I love his weak and tender lambs; and gladly would I minister to their necessities from his fulness, if he would please so to favour me.” Dutton, “Letter 58,” in *SSW*, 5:233.

¹³As Goulding noted, “Her letters, therefore, are in general very encouraging to such as are quickened by the Holy Spirit to feel their lost estate, and are earnestly seeking after the knowledge of their interest in the Saviour; also to such of the Lord’s family as are in trying circumstances, whether of a temporal or spiritual nature, there is much wholesome instruction and good counsel given.” Goulding, preface to Dutton, *Letters on Spiritual Subjects; Sent to Relations and Friends*, in *SSW*, 6:58.

¹⁴Dutton communicated her grief as well as faith over this trial in several letters, such as Letters 36 and 46 in vol. 1 and Letters 52, 54, 57, 67, 71 in vol. 5.

spiritual—in the church and in the world.”¹⁵ This was as perceptive and comprehensive a picture as could possibly be envisioned of Christian afflictions.

Notwithstanding other feature characteristics of Dutton’s counseling for the afflicted, it is essentially Trinitarian and Christocentric. Designed by the sovereign hand of the Father, sweetened by the grace of the Son, and applied by the Spirit through the promises of God, sufferings serve the divine purpose for God’s glory and the good of his children. The following will examine Dutton’s Trinitarian counseling from her letters reproduced in the volumes 1, 5, 6, and 7 of Watson’s editions.¹⁶ Although by no means exhaustive and in some cases overlapping,¹⁷ they provided adequate numbers of letters for this study. In the following they will be explored by case-study approach. But first the general features of Dutton’s epistolary counseling are presented.

General Features of Dutton’s Epistolary Counseling

As varied as her correspondents’ afflictions were, Dutton’s epistolary counseling exhibited some general features. One was its personal and experiential nature. Dutton had experienced spiritual darkness from lack of assurance in her own conversion, which constituted a great part of her correspondents’ trials. Having gone through illnesses and losses of two husbands, she could identify with those in the throes of life crises. As she had been a minister’s wife, friend to many of her contemporary Evangelicals, and a religious writer in the service of God, Dutton was also privy to ministerial and evangelical difficulties. In one of her letters to Whitefield, she compassionated the great

¹⁵Dutton, “Letter 59,” in *SSW*, 1:229.

¹⁶Some of these letters were published during Dutton’s lifetime, but others were compiled by her admirers and published posthumously. See Watson, introduction to *SSW*, 7: xvii–xviii.

¹⁷Some of the same letters were reproduced in different volumes from different editions of Dutton’s work. For example, there was one letter to “a dear sister,” who was identified as a J. M. in vol. 7 reproduced from the 1740 edition, but not identified in vol. 1 reproduced from a reprint of her letters in 1884. The letter was an exegesis of 1 Cor 4:17 about the nature of suffering. Dutton, “Letter 7,” in *SSW*, 1:104–7. Cf. Dutton, “Letter 33,” in *SSW*, 7:213–19.

Evangelist because she knew “his trials from within and without,” which were cast in the way of his service.¹⁸ To another of her frequent correspondent, a Mr. L—s, Dutton comforted him by comparing his ministerial crosses, which were light and momentary, with the cross of Christ.¹⁹ Her counsel was not theoretical, but tested by the gritty truths of her own life and ministry.

This led to the second character of Dutton’s spiritual counseling: it was compassionate. Many of Dutton’s letters opened with compassion for her afflicted correspondents before she offered them any advice. To one gentleman, Dutton wrote that she was “much affected with [his] afflicted case, in mind, body, and family.”²⁰ If she had not experienced their particular kind of afflictions, she would still be able to sympathize with them in terms of the collective body of church, where all kinds of trials had already been endured.²¹ There is “nothing new under the sun,” not even new trial. It was in respect of this bond of suffering that Dutton often used the inclusive “we” to address her correspondent’s sufferings as “all our sufferings.”²² Her compassion and the purpose of her correspondence was clearly stated:

And I love to hear your complaints, and the causes of your grief. Not that I take pleasure in your *grief*, but in your pouring out the same into *my bosom*. Oh that our dear Lord Jesus would give me a *large heart*, like his *own*, that may have *room* enough in it for all your sorrows, and a *quick sensation* of all your griefs! And oh, that while I *suffer* together with *you*, as a dear fellow-member in the body of Christ, my Lord would pour his *Spirit* upon me, that like *him*, in my *little measure*, I might know how to *speak a word in season to your weary soul!*²³

¹⁸Dutton, “Letter 3,” in *SSW*, 7:6.

¹⁹Dutton, “Letter 8,” in *SSW*, 7:239.

²⁰Dutton, “Letter 85,” in *SSW*, 1:338.

²¹Dutton, “Letter 32,” in *SSW*, 7:283.

²²Dutton, “Letter 29,” in *SSW*, 1:160.

²³Dutton, *Letters Sent to an Honourable Gentleman*, in *SSW*, 6:78.

As shown above, Dutton's compassion originated from without above her rather than from within her. The way Dutton designated her sympathy, "my bowels of compassion," linked it to "the bowels of Jesus Christ," which permeated her writings. Christian compassion springs from the love of Christ, emulates his love, and points back to it. Even though the tempted might find compassion from Dutton or the collective church body, ultimately their comfort was found in Christ because "a *collection*, and *all* of temptations was painfully felt by Christ, the dear head of the church; to fit him for a most intense sympathy with every of his *particular members*, in every of their *particular temptations*; himself having felt the same."²⁴ Charity or Christian compassion, which is "that queen of graces" and "the glory of Christianity," is "in conformity to the God of love," "the distinguishing livery of Christ's disciples," and "a fruit of the Spirit."²⁵ Christian compassion draws from an alien fountainhead in the love of the triune God.

Moreover, Dutton's counseling for the afflicted was biblical. As she wrote in one letter, "no man can speak to the case of any weary soul, unless Christ puts a word into his mouth for that person. And when men have spoken to the case, they cannot speak to the heart, unless Christ takes the words from their mouth, and conveys them into the inmost soul, by his own almighty breath."²⁶ It is the word of God applied to the weary heart by the Spirit of Christ that lifts it up. Therefore, when a brother asked whether the "persuasion" she offered him about the Lord's mercy sprang from the Lord himself and not from her "favour and goodwill to [him]," Dutton assured him that her persuasion was from the Lord, "not by way of immediate impulse, but from his word."²⁷ In this respect, Dutton may well be counted among the precursors to contemporary biblical counseling.

²⁴Dutton, "Letter 32," in *SSW*, 7:283–84.

²⁵Dutton, "Letter 94," in *SSW*, 1:361.

²⁶Dutton, "Letter 42," in *SSW*, 7:314.

²⁷Dutton, *Letters to an Honourable Gentleman*, in *SSW*, 6:45.

The word of God reveals the nature and meaning of human sufferings. Verses like 2 Corinthians 4:17 and Romans 8:17 remind Christians not to find sufferings “strange,” which, by nature are light “if compared with what we have deserved . . . [and] what Christ once bore,” short “if compared with a vast eternity,”²⁸ and pertained to the curse-free “filial sufferings” in contrast to the “penal sufferings” Christ endured on the cross.²⁹ It testifies to his love, such as Christ’s mercy for the weak, who are symbolized by the “bruised reed and smoking flax” in Isaiah 42:3.³⁰ The word of God also affirms the meaning of sufferings as they work for the glory of God and sanctification of saints by weaning them of creaturely enjoyments and compelling them to the glory of the Creator and the infinite fullness in the Godhead.³¹

Besides these biblical verses directly addressing sufferings and divine comfort, Dutton skillfully adduced other scriptures for spiritual comfort. In one of her letters, beginning with the biblical promise in Psalms 92:12: “The righteous shall flourish as the palm-tree” and relating it to Hebrews 12:11, Dutton pointed out the significance of trials for the flourishing and fruit-bearing of the righteous:

Naturalists observe that the palm-tree flourishes most when most oppressed. And this is certainly the case with the righteous. For what are trying providences but given opportunities for the exercise of our graces? Without them many of our graces would have little room for exercise. “They are not at present joyous (but grievous to our weak flesh); but to them that are exercised thereby they afterwards yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness.” We are like heirs under age, put to the school of affliction to be trained up and fitted there for the honour of a high throne.³²

Integrating natural knowledge with spiritual truth, literal interpretation with the allegorical, Old Testament and the New, Dutton’s counseling of afflictions was informed

²⁸Dutton, “Letter 7,” in *SSW*, 1:106–7.

²⁹This exposition of the nature of sufferings was found in Dutton’s exegesis of Rom 8:17. See Dutton, “Letter 59,” in *SSW*, 1:231–32.

³⁰Dutton, “Letter 73,” in *SSW*, 5:259–71.

³¹Dutton, “Letter 7,” in *SSW*, 1:106–7; “Letter 63,” in *SSW*, 1:248–49.

³²Dutton, “Letter 3,” in *SSW*, 1:97.

by and saturated with biblical wisdom. To a certain extent, it resembles the “active reading,” “biblical imagination,” and “exegesis by concordance” in the monastic culture.³³

Still, Dutton used Scripture wisely. This was shown in her counseling a brother, who was apparently afflicted with “fear of falling, of denying [the] Lord with oaths and curses.”³⁴ As Dutton sensed, his fear was partly attributable to the Puritan typological reading of the Scripture, which had led some credulous ones to identify themselves indiscriminately with biblical characters. One such uncanny type made memorable by Bunyan was Esau the reprobate.³⁵ In this brother’s case, the biblical type that haunted him was Peter. For like the apostle, the brother desired to serve the Lord to the point of laying down his life, but at the same time, he was keenly aware of the body of sin and haunted by the failure of Peter recorded in the Bible. Dutton affirmed his desire. Even if it was weak, the Lord would “not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, but bind up and strengthen [his] weak grace and nourish and increase it into a pure flame.”³⁶ She dismissed his fear as “fruitless fear,” which flew from his unbelief and self-dependence. In addition to Christ’s mercy, she pointed him to the right source of his strength “in the Lord Jehovah,” “the creator,” and “Jehovah-Jesus.”³⁷ If Peter’s fall was ever to teach him anything, it was to point him to depending on the power and grace of the Godhead rather than relying on his fallible self. Like her Puritan

³³Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, trans. Catharine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), 72–77.

³⁴Dutton, “Letter 30,” in *SSW*, 1:161.

³⁵Although by no means the sole source of Bunyan’s fear, those verses from the book of Hebrews about the reprobate Esau are yet “repeated enough that they soon become a refrain” and even typify Bunyan’s treatment of other biblical characters of backsliding or reprobation. Kathleen Lynch, *Protestant Autobiography in the Seventeenth-Century Anglophone World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 180.

³⁶Dutton, “Letter 30,” in *SSW*, 1:161.

³⁷Dutton, “Letter 30,” in *SSW*, 1:161.

predecessors, the remedy Dutton prescribed to the afflicted was often “a mixture of the application of Scripture and practical advice.”³⁸

This led to yet another characteristic of Dutton’s counseling: uplifting the afflicted in faith and hope. As one of her editors remarked, Dutton’s letters were “much adapted to comfort and build up the weak, the tempted, those that are in trying circumstances, and such as are earnestly seeking after the knowledge of their interest in the Savior.”³⁹ Except for the purposes of evangelism or spiritual discipline where she openly rebuked the profane and urged them to repentance, Dutton’s exhortations were predominantly uplifting and hopeful. Even in case of discipline, hope was still discernible as in her four letters to “a dear brother,” who backslided into sin.⁴⁰ She held onto this hopeful approach so much that she would not retract it even when it was mistaken and rejected as presumptuous triumphalism by a “Madam.”⁴¹ The hope in Dutton’s letters accounted much for their enduring appeal and usefulness over centuries.

To uplift the afflicted in hope, one way that Dutton used was the paradox of spiritual affliction. In reality, an afflicted soul may well be the spiritually alive and well. When one gentleman complained that “I feel a strange disease; and absent God, a careless heart, and rest without release,” Dutton was quick to pick up the two words, “I feel,” which she believed warranted his “diseased soul to be a quickened soul, blessed with spiritual life, for without this life there could be no sensation of those deaths he complains of.”⁴² Likewise, for a brother tortured by sin-consciousness, Dutton reminded

³⁸Derek Tidball, *Skillful Shepherds, Explorations in Pastoral Theology* (Leicester, UK: Apollos, 2003), 200.

³⁹Knight, preface to Dutton, *Selections from Letters on Spiritual Subjects*, in *SSW*, 1:86.

⁴⁰Dutton, “Letters 22–25,” in *SSW*, 7:364–72.

⁴¹Dutton, “Letter 42,” in *SSW*, 1:191.

⁴²Dutton, “Letter 80,” in *SSW*, 1:328.

him of Paul's post-conversion struggle in Romans 7 and comforted him that his very agony testified to his regeneration whereas the unregenerate man was "all of a piece, an utter stranger to this conflict."⁴³ After all, the sense of conviction could be ambiguous as "both a precondition—in so far as it is God-given—and a sign of conversion,"⁴⁴ among which Dutton often waged on the converted side.

The other way Dutton infused hope into the afflicted was turning their eyes from within to the grace of God without. As she commented on the nature of faith, it "has to do with *a great* God, with a great *Saviour*, and with *great, exceeding great and precious promises*; all irreversibly confirmed by the *great* sacrifice of atonement [*sic*], and for their fulfilment in the hand of the *great and almighty comforter!*"⁴⁵ In maneuvering her correspondents from introspective scrutiny to what God has accomplished for them, Dutton reaffirmed what Luther had learned from his spiritual *Anfechtungen*: "This is the reason why our doctrine is certain: because it carries us out of ourselves, that we should not lean to our own strength, our own conscience, our own feelings, our own person, and our own works, but to that which is without us, that is to say, the promise and truth of God which cannot deceive us."⁴⁶ Only as shown above, this was given a Trinitarian stress by Dutton. While her editors from past or present attributed the grace and hope in her letters mainly to Christ,⁴⁷ Dutton's spiritual counsel was as Trinitarian as Christocentric.

⁴³Dutton, "Letter 9," in *SSW*, 6:27–28.

⁴⁴ Beth Lynch, *John Bunyan and the Language of Conviction* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 69.

⁴⁵Dutton, "Letter 5," in *SSW*, 6:15.

⁴⁶Quoted in Galen K. Johnson, *Prisoner of Conscience: John Bunyan on Self, Community, and Christian Faith* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2003), 84.

⁴⁷James Knight, in his preface to the 1884 reprint of some of Dutton's letters, wrote that "her letters are therefore much adapted to comfort and build up the weak, the tempted, those that are in trying circumstances, and such as are earnestly seeking after the knowledge of their interest in the Saviour." Knight, preface to Dutton, *Selections from Letters on Spiritual Subjects*, in *SSW*, 1:86. Watson makes a similar remark that Dutton "offers safety and hope in Christ;" "Her words of encouragement and spiritual direction are offered to souls to fill them with Christ's

In effect, Dutton's Trinitarian emphasis encompassed all the compassionate, biblical, and uplifting features that characterize her counseling. It is compassionate in emulation of the Trinitarian love and hopeful because of its witness of the covenantal faithfulness and immutable love of the Trinity, both of which are evidenced by Scripture. Given that the mystery of the Trinity is that of "a God-in himself and a God-for-us in his Trinitarian existence,"⁴⁸ it is only natural for God's children to suffer afflictions when he seems absent and hidden from them. If their spiritual doubts and darkness spring from the concealed God of sovereign wisdom, they are overcome by their faith in the revealed God of redemptive love. In this respect, Dutton's counseling for the afflicted souls boils down to a call for comfortable dependence on the triune God.

Comfortable Dependence on the Father, Son, and Spirit

Dutton's Trinitarian counseling will be illustrated by her letters addressing trials from within and without. Characteristically, she exhorted her afflicted correspondents to trust in and depend on the Father, Son, and Spirit either distinctly or more often, jointly. The typical trials she counselled, such as lack of assurance, ministerial trials, and disease or death are not unknown to many Christians today. In this respect, Dutton's counseling shall speak to Christians now as it did then about the comfortable hope they have in the sovereign grace of the triune God.

Dependence on the Father

In counseling the afflicted, Dutton often exhorted them to submit to the sovereign will of the Father and to trust his love. On the one hand, by his very nature, God works sovereignly and freely in his children's life, even in their deprivations and

grace." Watson, introduction to *SSW*, 7: xxii.

⁴⁸Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 45.

difficulties. At the loss of Benjamin, Dutton recognized the sovereignty of God in that “all things in providence are wrought according to the counsel of Jehovah’s will; for the glory of God, and the good of his dear children.”⁴⁹ She defined the providence of God as “the best expositor of his promise” and its execution according to his will and in his way.⁵⁰ It would indeed be “a great shame” “for a soul blest with fellowship with God to have a contrary will” and “a contrary interest to his.”⁵¹

God’s sovereignty over human life, however, does not turn him into a capricious tyrant. Rather, his supreme will is “founded upon his counsel, and his abounding wisdom and prudence, towards us, being according to the exceeding riches of his grace,” which displays the glory of an “all-wise and all gracious God.”⁵² God’s sovereignty goes hand in hand with his grace, even though the latter might not be immediately discernible to finite humanity. As Dutton allegorized the eyes of the wheels in the book of Ezekiel, God’s good purpose is “a wheel within a wheel” in “every turn of providence” according to his omniscience and infinite wisdom.⁵³ All the wheels and the seemingly haphazard turns of human life are regulated under the one wheel of God’s providence, which orientates unfailingly toward his glory and the good of his people. Just as Dutton labelled one sister’s lameness of hands as “a love-stroke of God your Father,”⁵⁴ so the mishaps of believers’ life are nothing but the “love-strokes” from the Father in his infinite love, wisdom, and sovereign rule. In this respect, he is fittingly designated as God the Father, who is as gracious as authoritative.

⁴⁹Dutton, “Letter 26,” in *SSW*, 7:372.

⁵⁰Dutton, “Letter 55,” in *SSW*, 5:222.

⁵¹Dutton, “Letter 26,” in *SSW*, 7:373.

⁵²Dutton, “Letter 19,” in *SSW*, 7:355.

⁵³Dutton, “Letter 38,” in *SSW*, 5:179.

⁵⁴Dutton, “Letter 98,” in *SSW*, 1:376–77.

The comfortable dependence on God the Father in terms of his sovereign love could be illustrated by two of Dutton's letters. One was her handling of the lack of assurance and sin consciousness of "an honourable gentleman," with whom Dutton corresponded frequently.⁵⁵ The gentleman showed genuine desire for serving the Lord, but suffered internal and external trials in his faith and service. In one letter, Dutton affirmed God's love to him and "God's hand" in all his trials so that "all that your enemies may do against you shall be overruled by the *Lord* your friend, *for you*."⁵⁶ As regards the furnace of his external trials, God the Father was in control of it as "the refiner," who adjusted the degree and duration of the fire to be just "*needful* to purge away [his] dross."⁵⁷ Contrary to the bitterness he felt at heart, his trials were the "many blessings" of God, who has a "*heart as a Father* to [him] in *Christ* in every stroke of his *hand*; as *infinity of grace*, in every *affliction* that befalls [him]."⁵⁸ As for his internal guilty conscience over sins, the heart of God the Father was open to him. In Christ, his sins were forgiven so that now God "only chastise[d] [him] as a *Father*, from the *love* of a Father, in the *bowels* of a Father, from the *care* of a Father, and with the gracious *design* of a Father, to make [him] a *partaker of his holiness* thereby."⁵⁹

In another letter to a "dear sister," who claimed to be suffering "very uncommon" and prolonged affliction,⁶⁰ Dutton also exhorted her to trust the sovereign

⁵⁵Eighteen of the letters Dutton wrote to the gentleman are included in the sixth volume of Watson's edition under the title of *Letters Sent to an Honourable Gentleman*. According to the list of her publications listed in the third part of her spiritual autobiography, Dutton altogether wrote three volumes of letters to the gentleman, who seemed to be well acquainted with George Whitefield. These eighteen letters originally appeared in the second volume of her letters. See Watson, introduction to *SSW*, 6: vii.

⁵⁶Dutton, *Letters Sent to an Honourable Gentleman*, in *SSW*, 6:36.

⁵⁷Dutton, *Letters Sent to an Honourable Gentleman*, in *SSW*, 6:36.

⁵⁸Dutton, *Letters Sent to an Honourable Gentleman*, in *SSW*, 6:36.

⁵⁹Dutton, *Letters Sent to an Honourable Gentleman*, in *SSW*, 6:37.

⁶⁰Dutton quoted the sister claiming: "My affliction is very uncommon, has lasted a great while, and it is likely to endure so long as I am in this world." Dutton, "Letter 7," in *SSW*, I:104.

wisdom and love of God the Father. Despite her anguish, spiritual affliction “was the means infinite wisdom pitched on for the display of boundless love to [her],” by which she would be “made conformable to Christ in sufferings and meetened for a conformity to him in glory.”⁶¹ As in the brother’s case, it was “an instrument in the hand of God the Almighty agent” and the “refiner” to work upon his children for their “future crown.”⁶² Even though unknown to her at the moment, “the secret springs of boundless love, infinite wisdom and Almighty power” of God the Father has “ordained, managed, and overruled every scene of providence for the glory of God and [his saints’] advantage.”⁶³ Instead of being overwhelmed by her affliction, the sister should rely on the Father’s sovereign will and grace to “live by faith and labour after an increasing submission to the divine will under the sorest rebukes.”⁶⁴ In light of the lightness, shortness, and benefits of sufferings as revealed in 2 Corinthians 4:17, Dutton finally challenged the sister to put “all the afflictions of a believers’ life . . . in one scale and glory in the other and see if that do not definitely outweigh them.”⁶⁵ However uncommon and prolonged her affliction might be, it was infinitely lighter and shorter when compared with the exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Dependence on the Son

In Dutton’s Trinitarian counseling, the mercy and grace of Christ is the efficacious remedy of afflictions. This could be demonstrated by the several images Dutton adopted to depict the Son. Some images are biblical, such as those of bowels, husband, and brother or friend. In respect of the two natures of his person, the Son is at

⁶¹Dutton, “Letter 7,” in *SSW*, 1:104.

⁶²Dutton, “Letter 6,” in *SSW*, 1:101.

⁶³Dutton, “Letter 7,” in *SSW*, 1:104.

⁶⁴Dutton, “Letter 7,” in *SSW*, 1:104.

⁶⁵Dutton, “Letter 7,” in *SSW*, 1:107.

once “a man of bowels” and “the God of bowels” so that “he has an ability of bowels to pity us, and an ability of strength to help us.”⁶⁶ The image of husband or bridegroom aptly denoted the Son’s binding love in the covenant of grace. The biblical allegory that “my maker, is my husband” (Isa 54:5) reveals his love for his beloved and brings seasonable consolation to the widows, who are mourning over the loss of their husbands.⁶⁷ In addition, the Son is a brother, and more than a brother to the lonely in that “in nature and grace” he would “stick closer to you” than any blood brother.⁶⁸ For those feeling deserted in their troubles, Christ is the “friend,” whose “wisdom and kindness, power and faithfulness . . . will overrule the want of friendship in creatures and all unkindnesses and disappointments you meet with from them.”⁶⁹ But other images may not be as biblical, such as that of the nurse. As Dutton had often been tried by sickness and visited by Christ amidst it, she was led to proclaim that “Jesus has been my nurse when afflicted!”⁷⁰ He is “a tender nurse,” who yet “has omnipotence in himself, and will put strength into” the weak of his flock.⁷¹ Although it clearly conveyed his caring and comforting character, the image of the nurse still sounded extraneous and excessive.

Then, the mercy of Christ is also highlighted by his gracious dealings with “the bruised reed” and “the smoking flax.” Like Richard Sibbes (1577–1635), Dutton

⁶⁶Dutton, “Letter 6,” in *SSW*, 1:103.

⁶⁷At the death of her husband, Dutton declared that “I am in widowhood; yet glory unto God in the highest, I am not a widow. My maker, is my husband, and my redeemer, the *Lord* of hosts is his name. Creature die; but *Jesus lives: lives as my husband.*” Dutton, “Letter 7,” in *SSW*, 5:216. This was also the counseling Dutton offered to a lady in her distress of losing husband. Dutton, “Letter 49,” in *SSW*, 5:209. As for the predominant significance of this verse, “Thy maker is thy husband” in preaching and conversion during the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival, see Thomas S. Kidd, *George Whitefield, America’s Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), especially chapter 8, “Thy Maker Is Thy Husband”: Whitefield Goes to Scotland.”

⁶⁸Dutton, “Letter 17,” in *SSW*, 6:53.

⁶⁹Dutton, “Letter 47,” in *SSW*, 1:200.

⁷⁰Dutton, “Letter 13,” in *SSW*, 6:43.

⁷¹Dutton, “Letter 16,” in *SSW*, 6:52.

registered the mercy of the servant of the Lord in Isaiah 42:3, which she explored to comfort a brother. Convicted of his own sinfulness, the brother was desirous of God's grace, but despaired of his share in the divine grace or the happy company of God's children.⁷² But Dutton drew him into the company by her affirmation and God's promise of his mercy for the bruised reed and the smoking flax. Contrary to his disconsolation, he was one of "[God's] jewels, one of his saints" by his very sense of conviction and faith in Christ,⁷³ which are "the two main hinges upon which the soul turns from a state of nature to a state of grace."⁷⁴ Even though he might be "the very *weakest soul* that belongs to [God], the greatest *weakling* in grace that ever was, the compassionate *Jesus* will not *despise* you, but *pity* and *strengthen* you, until he has made you *perfect*."⁷⁵ This is confirmed by God's promise in the very verse that the brother desired her to explain, namely Isaiah 42:3.

Like the well-known treatise by Sibbes, *The Bruised Reed and Smoking Flax*, Dutton's exegesis of the verse aimed at uplifting the weak and languishing believers in faith.⁷⁶ Following Sibbes's, Dutton's exegesis was Trinitarian,⁷⁷ even as both authors

⁷²Dutton, "Letter 73: On the Gracious Dealings of Christ with Weak and Languishing Believers from Isa 42:3," in *SSW*, 5:260.

⁷³Dutton, "'Letter 73,'" in *SSW*, 5:260.

⁷⁴Dutton, "Letter 67," in *SSW*, 1:277.

⁷⁵Dutton, "Letter 73," in *SSW*, 5:260.

⁷⁶Very probably Sibbes was on Dutton's mind when she advised the brother to "look for the answer of [his] desire unto "him," whom "the Lord God *has given the tongue of the learned*." Dutton, "Letter 73," in *SSW*, 5:261. As for the treatise by Sibbes, see Richard Sibbes, *The Bruised Reed and Smoking Flax*, in *Works of Richard Sibbes*, (Edinburgh, 1862–1864; repr., Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2001), 1:33–102.

⁷⁷Sibbes's Trinitarianism was established right at the beginning of the *Bruised Reed* when he observed that "the Father gives a commission to Christ; the Spirit furnishes and sanctifies to it; Christ himself executes the office of a Mediator." Sibbes, *Bruised Reed*, 1:43. Dutton, likewise, noted the joint work of the Trinitarian Godhead in comforting the weak in faith because it is the *Holy Ghost the Comforter*" who "persuades them of their *interest* in Christ and his salvation and comforts their *hearts* by the powerful application of the precious *promises* and *declarations* of the *gospel*." Dutton, "Letter 73," in *SSW*, 5:267.

correctly identified Christ as “the servant” of God in the covenantal sense.⁷⁸ The Father, Son, and Spirit work together to strengthen the weak in faith. Then, both Dutton and Sibbes explored the spiritual meanings of the bruised reed and smoking flax to address the reality of spiritual weakness. Sibbes made the nuanced observations about the bruised reed being believers who were broken by “sin and misery”⁷⁹ and the smoking flax being those in the beginning stage of conversion with “but a little measure of grace,” which is still “mixed with much corruption.”⁸⁰ Concurring with Sibbes generally, Dutton yet added her own insights into spiritual dilemma when she viewed the smoking flax as both young Christians, whose “grace is mixed with much sin” and seasoned Christians “under a sad *decay* . . . through the suspension of divine influence and the prevalence of sin.”⁸¹ The “restless desire to have supply from another”⁸² that Sibbes noted about the bruised reed was clarified by Dutton to be its desperate need for the very “communication and fresh supplies of grace from Christ.”⁸³ In this respect, Dutton reinforced the mercy of Christ to be the life-giving nourishment for the broken and weak.

Given that spiritual afflictions were common and continual, Dutton followed Sibbes in underscoring Christ’s “gracious dealings” or his “mercy” toward the weak and languishing believers. While both authors noted the compassion of Christ toward the bruised, who were despised by the world as worthless, Dutton traced this compassion distinctly to the person and work of the Son, which provided solid doctrinal ground for

⁷⁸Sibbes pointed out at the very beginning that “Christ was God’s servant, . . . ; a chosen, and a choice servant: he did and suffered all by commission from the Father.” Sibbes, *Bruised Reed*, 1:42. Dutton identified the “he” in the verse as Christ and even “the Father’s Christ . . . provided in God’s *everlasting covenant* and sent by him in the *fulness of time* for the *salvation of lost sinners*.” Dutton, “Letter 73,” in *SSW*, 5:261.

⁷⁹Sibbes, *Bruised Reed*, 1:43.

⁸⁰Sibbes, *Bruised Reed*, 1:49.

⁸¹Dutton, “Letter 73,” in *SSW*, 5:263.

⁸²Sibbes, *Bruised Reed*, 1:43.

⁸³Dutton, “Letter 73,” in *SSW*, 5:262.

his mediation and spiritual comfort. The two natures of the person of Christ comfort the bruised reed in that he has “all the perfections of the *Godhead* in him” in his divine nature and is “a *man of bowels*” in his human nature.⁸⁴ The union of the two natures counts for the reality that “the *heart of Christ* is a boundless, bottomless, inexhaustible *sea of flowing compassions* towards poor, miserable, helpless sinners and oppressed, distressed, weak, and languishing souls.”⁸⁵ He “has a heart that is touched with a fellow-feeling of and full of compassionate sympathy with his most weak, dejected, helpless *reeds*, under all their oppressions and dejections.”⁸⁶ As regards his saving office, Christ does not quench “the weak beginnings of grace in the most weak soul that believes in him, but *maintain[s]* and *increase[s]* it until it is made *perfect* or till the *smoking desires of grace* are kindled up into the *pure flame of glory*.” Nor does he quench the languishing light of old believers, but “instantly with his kind hand suppl[ies] them with fresh *oil*, cause[s] them to *renew their strength*, to increase their flame, and to shine forth with a brighter light.”⁸⁷ His name, nature, and work all signify him to be the Savior that believers shall trust, which is “an act of recumbence,” of dependence and persuasion of interest in him.⁸⁸ Thus, Dutton exhorted the brother to trust the “compassionate Saviour” and looked forward to his “*judgment unto truth and victory*.”⁸⁹

Finally, the mercy of Christ is shown right in his suffering with those who suffer. In a letter to a brother, Dutton cautioned him not to have any illusion about the present state, which was “a state of trial to all God’s people . . . [with] troubles of various

⁸⁴Dutton, “Letter 73,” in *SSW*, 5:262.

⁸⁵Dutton, “Letter 73,” in *SSW*, 5:262.

⁸⁶Dutton, “Letter 73,” in *SSW*, 5:263.

⁸⁷Dutton, “Letter 73,” in *SSW*, 5:265.

⁸⁸Dutton, “Letter 73,” in *SSW*, 5:269.

⁸⁹Dutton, “Letter 73,” in *SSW*, 5:271.

kinds from within and without.”⁹⁰ But she hastened to add that they were to *suffer with Christ* [emphasis mine], which utterly transformed the nature and experience of sufferings. Suffering with Christ is to suffer the curse-free filial suffering by his redemptive grace. Given that Christ has suffered the penal suffering and borne all the wrath of God for sinners on the cross, he has removed the curse of human affliction by his substitutional death. Now his grace “sweetens [Christians’] bitterest portions” of it.⁹¹ As God’s own, the saints’ “greatest afflictions, from the love of God’s heart, through the blood of Christ, and under the influence of the Spirit of grace, divested of the curse, come streaming down to us, as so many choice blessings.”⁹²

Suffering with Christ is also to follow his example in enduring it. He was empowered by the Spirit to “discern his Father’s hand, and to submit to his will in love to him in all his sufferings, with all holy confidence in him, and earnest supplication to him for deliverance and with meekness and patience till the full time of it.”⁹³ As the co-heirs of God in Christ, Christians should suffer with him by emulating his meekness and trust in God. In addition, to suffer with Christ is to be glorified with him. Through the crucible of suffering, not only will God be glorified, but Christians will attain the crown of glory “together” with Christ, which “puts a glory upon glory itself” as “the once-suffering head and the once-suffering members glorified together!”⁹⁴ In this respect, rather than suffering, it is sin that should be dreaded, which “dishonours God our Father, wounds our Lord-Redeemer, and grieves the Lord our Comforter.”⁹⁵

⁹⁰Dutton, “Letter 59,” in *SSW*, 1:229.

⁹¹Dutton, “Letter 59,” in *SSW*, 1:234.

⁹²Dutton, “Letter 7,” in *SSW*, 6:73.

⁹³Dutton, “Letter 59,” in *SSW*, 1:232.

⁹⁴Dutton, “Letter 59,” in *SSW*, 1:232–33.

⁹⁵Dutton, “Letter 59,” in *SSW*, 1:235.

Dependence on the Spirit

Throughout her epistolary ministry, Dutton repeatedly designated the Spirit as the “the Comforter,” which aptly summarized the consolations he endowed upon the afflicted. As the Spirit of truth (John 16:13), the Spirit comforts first by registering the promise of God upon their hearts. For those afflicted by lack of assurance, the Spirit applies to their hearts opportunely “some of those many *exceeding great and precious promises*, unto which [they] have a universal and indefeasible right for [their] refreshment and consolation.”⁹⁶ He is “the Holy Spirit of promise” that imparts “a steered assurance of faith” in their hearts.⁹⁷ The Spirit also comforts by communicating the love of God to the afflicted. He is “a fruit of the Father’s love, and of the Son’s grace.”⁹⁸ His gift is to “shed abroad the love of God in our hearts” and he functions as “an earnest of that eternal love-communion we shall have with him when sin, sorrow and time shall flee away.”⁹⁹

Moreover, the Spirit comforts as the sanctifier, whose work of sanctification upon sinners is progressive. This was applied by Dutton to address the spiritual afflictions of a “dear madam,” which were caused by her sense of the residual plague of heart and even its deterioration. As the madam described, “the issue of sin” was “not dried up within [her],” making her heart “a painted sepulcher, full of rottenness and putrefactions.”¹⁰⁰ To this Dutton pointed out two distinctions: one between her righteousness in Christ and her unrighteousness in herself,¹⁰¹ and the other between the work of justification and that of sanctification. While her “issue of sin was clean dried up

⁹⁶Dutton, “Letter 8,” in *SSW*, 5:121.

⁹⁷Dutton, “Letter 70,” in *SSW*, 1:291.

⁹⁸Dutton, “Letter 26,” in *SSW*, 5:159.

⁹⁹Dutton, “Letter 11,” in *SSW*, 1:114.

¹⁰⁰Dutton, “Letter 78,” in *SSW*, 1:315.

¹⁰¹Dutton, “Letter 78,” in *SSW*, 1:316.

and gone, upon [her] first act of faith on Christ's blood and righteousness for [her] justification," the Spirit's work in sanctification was "perfect as to kind and in respect of parts," but "still imperfect in degree and is to be increased by his almighty influence unto a perfection of holiness."¹⁰² It was the symbiosis of the two selves and the progressive sanctification of the Spirit that had given rise to the plague of her heart. Instead of despairing over it, she should trust that "that same almighty power [of the Spirit] which begun [*sic*] in [her] this holy work, in conformity to Christ, the Father's first-born Son, will carry it on unto absolute perfection" in eternity.¹⁰³ As for her other concern about the deterioration of her heart, Dutton dismissed it flatly because in principle her heart had already had "such a fullness of evil . . . that it cannot admit of greater degree."¹⁰⁴ But she proceeded to assure the sister of her victory "by the same almighty power" of the Spirit, "the triumphant captain of salvation," "God the redeemer," and "Jehovah's almighty and covenant-engaged power."¹⁰⁵

Finally, the Spirit comforts the afflicted souls by sealing their salvation in Christ. Rather than turning to the self and senses for assurance, the fearful saints should look to the Spirit for his sealing upon their hearts about their eternal interest in Christ:

But oh, rest not in present experiences. You are to see greater things than these. Follow hard after the sealing of the Spirit. He can open such clear, satisfying, soul-ravishing views of your interest in Christ to you in a moment as will far transcend all that the creatures by discourse or argument can give you in an age. Oh, when the Holy Ghost comes in; the great power of God to seal upon your heart your eternal interest in Jesus, unbelieving fears and carnal reasonings shall fly before Him as the shades of night or glooms of day before the rising morn, the out-breaking sun, in his clear meridian-shine. And straightway, in full assurance of faith and rapture of joyful spiritual sense, you will cry out with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰²Dutton, "Letter 78," in *SSW*, 1:316.

¹⁰³Dutton, "Letter 78," in *SSW*, 1:317.

¹⁰⁴Dutton, "Letter 78," in *SSW*, 1:317.

¹⁰⁵Dutton, "Letter 78," in *SSW*, 1:318.

¹⁰⁶Dutton, "Letter 67," in *SSW*, 1:281.

As has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, the sealing of the Spirit is crucial to the comfortable assurance of God's children. In this respect, the Spirit is indeed "ineffably more worth than the whole world!"¹⁰⁷

Dependence on the Triune God

As already revealed in the work of the Father, Son, and Spirit, the triune God work together for the comfort and assurance of his afflicted children. In many of her letters, Dutton encouraged her correspondents to feast on the grace of the Trinity, which was the remedy of their sin-consciousness, spiritual bitterness, and general lack of assurance. For those gripped by guilt, the grace of God offered them the "forgiving love of God, the cleansing blood of Christ, and the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit."¹⁰⁸ In case of "bitterness of spirit," the grace of God should sweeten it with "the heart and arms" of God and Christ, and the comfort of the Spirit. In a letter to one lady, who was "often in bitterness of spirit," Dutton encouraged her with the warm embrace and comfort of the Godhead in languages and imageries reminiscent of the Parable of the Prodigal Son:

The heart and arms of Christ, and of God thy Father, are open to receive thee, and welcome thee into their everlasting embraces, with a come in thou blessed of the *Lord!* And lo, God thy comforter calls thee, come in thou blessed of the *Lord!* O stand not without, my dear sister, starving with hunger and apprehended nakedness, when there are such rich provision of a royal robe, and royal dainties provided for you, to be put upon, and given to you in your Father's house; and your coming in, to partake of all freely, is and will be the joy of Father, Son and Spirit, and of saints and angels, through time and to eternity!¹⁰⁹

In her own affectionate spirituality, Dutton reproduced the Parable in a Trinitarian framework and with an inclusive invitation for the prodigal daughters and sons to feast with the Father, Son, and Spirit.

¹⁰⁷Dutton, "Letter 14," in *SSW*, 5:133.

¹⁰⁸Dutton, "Letter 26," in *SSW*, 1:155.

¹⁰⁹Dutton, "Letter 48," in *SSW*, 5:207.

Then, the Trinitarian God also sustained those suffering in the dark providences of their life. In external trials, the insuperable love of God, of “the Father’s, Son’s and Spirit’s love, their infinite bounty” toward the saints should suffice to compel them to give honor to “all the three persons in God” by “cheerful compliance with the divine will.”¹¹⁰ Whereas afflictions were common to all humankind as the natural fruit of sin and curse, they became the fatherly rebukes God reserved for his very children, which “flowing from his love, through the blood of Christ, are made choice blessings by his Holy Spirit.”¹¹¹ The saints’ communion with the triune God consisted not only in enjoying his apparent blessings in prosperity, but also in receiving his disguised blessings in adversities for their sanctification.

This sustaining power of God’s sovereign love in life adversities was more than verbal exhortations for Dutton. It had tided her through the death Benjamin, upon which Dutton was less reticent than she had been on the death of her first husband. In one short letter to a Mr. T—y, a “very dear and honoured brother,” Dutton related to him not only how she received the news of Benjamin’s death from a letter by Whitefield, but also her responses to it. In a vivid and personal way, she expressed her sorrow at this great stroke, which “almost *overcome* [her] weak nature” and drove her “ready to *sink* in deep waters,” an image evoking the sea that engulfed her husband as well as conveying the depth of her depression. At that point, she felt “*the everlasting arms underneath [her]*” and was given the cordial of God’s promise for her good in the eternal security of his love.¹¹² From this Dutton was reminded of “a sweet glance of the *joy, the exceeding joy*” a few days before when she was presented before the presence of the Lord’s glory. In the sovereign grace of God’s providence, this taste of joy unspeakable superseded her

¹¹⁰Dutton, “Letter 40,” in *SSW*, 5:186.

¹¹¹Dutton, “Letter 43,” in *SSW*, 5:193.

¹¹²Dutton, “Letter 54,” in *SSW*, 5:220–21.

sorrows and delivered her from the furnace of her affliction: “And a drop of heavens [*sic*] joy, coming down into my soul, I ascended on its *wings*, and *rejoiced* with Father, Son, and Spirit, and with saints and angels, at my dear husband’s safe *arrival in glory*.”¹¹³ The heart love of the Father and the bleeding Savior of Christ had removed the curse of death and transformed it into a blessing, an occasion for her to rejoice with the Three-One God at Benjamin’s glorious arrival in eternity. She was indeed “the sorrowful [yet] rejoicing sister in Christ”¹¹⁴ and her joy rested upon nothing but the promise and eternal love of the triune God.

In addition, the triune God also provided strength and hope for those caught in ministerial or evangelical difficulties. Affliction is inherent to gospel ministry. As Dutton observed in one of her letters to Whitefield:

*Afflictions, and the gospel, are inseparable. Not a soul that knows, and bears witness to the gospel, in the life and spirit of it, but must endure affliction, in a degree proportionable to his appearance for Christ, and labours in his Gospel. Opposition from the prophane world, from carnal professors, aye, and from believers themselves, under one prejudice or other, cast into their minds by the Prince of Darkness, must the witnesses of Christ, his gospel-labourers meet with.*¹¹⁵

Suffering was an inherent part of the minister’s life, especially so in a time when God’s people were plagued with “that general decay of love and bitterness of spirit” so that they divided and persecuted one another.¹¹⁶ These lamentable decay and divisions are still with Christian today, which renders Christian ministry as difficult now as then and Dutton’s Trinitarian counseling as pertinent and precious as ever.

For those caught in ministerial difficulties or despair, Dutton invariably exhorted them to depend on the triune God. The one who has called them to ministry will supply all the graces needed for them and crown them as conquerors through many

¹¹³Dutton, “Letter 55,” in *SSW*, 5:221.

¹¹⁴Dutton, Letter 55,” in *SSW*, 5:221.

¹¹⁵Dutton, “Letter 17,” in *SSW*, 7:61–62.

¹¹⁶Dutton, *Letters to an Honourable Gentleman*, in *SSW*, 6:12–13.

dangers, toils, and snares. Ministerial trials start right from the minister's call from God. In one letter, Dutton counselled a brother, who was all willing to follow the call but not all certain about it: What if I am inadequate for the call? Even if I were, what if God had not called me and I presumed it out of my own will? Even if God had called me and I were adequate, what if I were to be cast away after all my preaching gospel to others?¹¹⁷ Even though these were all legitimate concerns, Dutton uncovered the root of unbelief and self-reliance in these fears and exhorted the brother to depend on the strength and truth of God. The "servants of Christ in the ministry," as Dutton declared, "were clad in Jehovah's might" rather than "go[ing] to that great work in their own little strength." They "abide in Christ by faith for the continual supplies of his Holy Spirit to fit them for and carry them through all their appointed service to the glory of God, the good of souls, and their own present and eternal bliss."¹¹⁸ Rather than self-reliance, they depend on the triune God for the strength and grace for their service in his ministry. The true ministers of Christ also build up their call upon "God's word and will" rather than falling for the suggestions by the tempter and his unbelief that he was not called.¹¹⁹ Instead of fidgeting over their own salvation, the true ministers of Christ are "the favourites of his special grace," those "he counts faithful," who are "now counted by him and shall hereafter be owned of him, before all, as his good and faithful servant[s], and called to enter into the joy of [their] Lord."¹²⁰ Right from their ministerial call from God, true ministers depend on the strength, faithful promise, and grace of God.

Then, ministerial difficulties may rise from spiritual emptiness or fruitless labor. For one minister who apparently felt empty, "a lifeless frame of soul" that

¹¹⁷Dutton, "Letter 61," in *SSW*, 1:237–40.

¹¹⁸Dutton, "Letter 61," in *SSW*, 1:238.

¹¹⁹Dutton, "Letter 61," in *SSW*, 1:238–39.

¹²⁰Dutton, "Letter 61," in *SSW*, 1:239.

sometimes came after phenomenal evangelical success, Dutton reminded him of the constant love of God. The “Three-One *God*, the God of all grace in Christ” was his “God forever and ever; and is and will be the *God* of love, the God of life unto [him].”¹²¹ In another case the minister was experiencing “an awful stoppage of the Lord’s work” as “the dead in sins are not quickened and that living souls are asleep.”¹²² Dutton instructed him by the Parable of the Ten Virgins, where “most of the virgins, the wise as well as foolish, if not all universally, in some degree slumber and sleep” while the Bridegroom tarries.¹²³ But when the Bridegroom comes and “the Spirit is poured down from on high,” the sleeping virgins “shall be thoroughly roused . . . under a rich supply of the spirit of life from Jesus.”¹²⁴ Meanwhile, the church “is the Lord’s care, the care of his providence, and the object of his special grace,” which “shall be preserved safe” under greatest deadness and thickest darkness” and “for a perfection of life of endless continuance.”¹²⁵

Still, even with great evangelical success by great evangelists, such as Whitefield, God’s servants are not exempted from trials from without or within. In several of her letters to Whitefield, much as Dutton rejoiced with him over the fruit of his labor, she cautioned him about “meet[ing] opposition from every quarter” as the “highly favoured” of God who did great work for God.¹²⁶ Oppositions he did meet. As George Marsden has noted in his biography of Jonathan Edwards, “while Whitefield struggled to maintain friendships with fellow evangelicals such as Edwards and Wesley, he had no

¹²¹Dutton, “Letter 3,” in *SSW*, 5:111.

¹²²Dutton, “Letter 84,” in *SSW*, 1:336–38.

¹²³Dutton, “Letter 84,” in *SSW*, 1:336–37.

¹²⁴Dutton, “Letter 84,” in *SSW*, 1:337.

¹²⁵Dutton, “Letter 84,” in *SSW*, 1:337.

¹²⁶Dutton, “Letter 5,” in *SSW*, 7:14. In another letter, Dutton recognized that Whitefield might well suffer “trials within and without” and encouraged him to “press through all.” Dutton, “Letter 3,” in *SSW*, 7:6.

such difficulties with his skeptical friend Benjamin Franklin.¹²⁷ The gospel ministry of God contained both “the *mount*” and “the *valley*” experience,¹²⁸ both moments of soaring high in communion with God and sinking low in isolated self-dejection. But as Dutton explained, it was the divine will and wisdom that “the Lord prepares us by *great comforts*, for *great trials*: And by *sore trials*, for *strong consolations*.”¹²⁹ This was no Confucius golden mean or middle way to endure sufferings. Rather, Christ has participated and known human sufferings by his incarnation, and by his suffering and sacrifice, he has removed “the *curse* of them” and “*sanctified* them.”¹³⁰ Christ alone “can have compassion according to the *measure* of our distress” since he has taken our nature and been tried by the world, the flesh, the devil, and even “the most severe trials from his own God and Father.”¹³¹ He “well knows what it is to be tempted in all respects by *Satan*, to be both flattered and reproached by the *world*, reviled by *professors*, slighted by *countrymen*, despised by *relations*, betrayed by *professed friends*, opposed and disregarded by *real ones*, yea, and to be tried by *God* himself,”¹³² all of which Whitefield very likely had endured. Difficulties, discouragements, and oppositions in ministry are to be overcome by resting on Christ, who is “the God of boundless compassions,” Saviour, Brother, Lamb of God, Lover, High Priest, Prince of Grace, and Prince Immanuel.¹³³ As

¹²⁷Thomas S Kidd, *George Whitefield: America’s Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 129. This is an amplification of George Marsden’s observation about the more spontaneous and intimate relationship between Whitefield and Franklin than that between Whitefield and Edwards, which the biographer of Edwards considers as “one of the most striking paradoxes of American history” and attributes it to the medieval root of Edwards. George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 212–13.

¹²⁸Dutton, “Letter 1,” in *SSW*, 7:3.

¹²⁹Dutton, “Letter 1,” in *SSW*, 7:3.

¹³⁰Dutton, “Letter 3,” in *SSW*, 7:8.

¹³¹Dutton, “Letter 3,” in *SSW*, 7:6–8.

¹³²Dutton, “Letter 3,” in *SSW*, 7:8.

¹³³Dutton, “Letter 3,” in *SSW*, 7:6–9.

Dutton elsewhere urged her husband Benjamin not “to be distressed when things seem to make most against us,” God’s servants “are brought to God by the Lamb’s blood . . . into a communion of interest,”¹³⁴ which make all things well for his glory and their good.

Finally, saints derive comfort and hope from the triune God in their dying and death. In a time when death was an everyday presence, Dutton did not shy away from it or euphemize it, but almost exuberated over it as the entrance to eternal life and communion with God. In several letters to her parents, Dutton constantly reminded them of their “infirmities of an advanced age” and their inevitable “death.” Her words may sound blunt to modern ears, but they were filled with the grace of God and hope of eternal glory. The Lord would be their “helper” and “refuge” when death came.¹³⁵ Through death they would be “at home, . . . to be forever with the Lord” in perfect holiness and communion.¹³⁶ In a letter to a dying saint, Dutton expressed her sympathy toward him, but presented before him the glory and joy of the Trinity upon his triumphant arrival in eternity:

When the *Lamb*, that is in the midst of the throne, presents you faultless, before *Jehovah’s* face, before the presence of his glory; Father, Son, and Spirit, the three-one *God*, will rejoice over you, and your glory, with exceeding joy! *God* the Father will rejoice, to see you, as the fruit of his electing love, brought safe to him by Christ. *God* the Son will rejoice to see you, as the fruit of his purchase, brought safe to him by the Holy Ghost, in immortal bliss. And *God* the Spirit will rejoice to see you, as his workmanship, completed in grace, and brought safe by him, unto him in glory. For lo, when you are brought to heaven, you shall be blest, with full and endless love-communion, with the eternal three-one!¹³⁷

¹³⁴In the whole collection of her letters, this seems to be the only one she wrote to Benjamin Dutton. Just as she encouraged her friends, so Dutton urged him to trust the Lord, learn humility, and not to lost heart in adverse circumstances. See Dutton, “Letter 49,” in *SSW*, 1:202.

¹³⁵Dutton, “Letter 28,” in *SSW*, 1:158.

¹³⁶Dutton, “Letter 18,” in *SSW*, 1:134.

¹³⁷Dutton, “A Letter to Comfort a Dying Saint Under the natural Grievs of Approaching Death, with a Joyful Entrance into Eternal Life,” in *SSW*, 5:317–18.

Compared with Luther's cruci-centric counseling on dying well,¹³⁸ Dutton's Trinitarian kind envisioned a personal homecoming filled with joy and glory. Death is not the end, but the entrance to the heavenly bliss of communion with the triune God. Since communion with God is proportionate to the holiness of the saints, the soul "at death . . . is made perfect in holiness" and "immediately enters into that perfect, uninterrupted, and eternal communion with God."¹³⁹ In this sense, "never to die" is indeed "never to be happy" as said by "a Scotch divine,"¹⁴⁰ or in Dutton's words, never to enjoy the perfect communion with the Father, Son, and Spirit. So, it was all too fitting that the sermon preached over her funeral was from 1 Thessalonians 4:17: "So shall we be ever with the Lord."¹⁴¹

¹³⁸Martin Luther, "A Sermon on Preparing to Die," in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy F. Lull and William R. Russell (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 392–402.

¹³⁹Dutton, *Letters to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley: against Perfection: as Not Attainable in This Life*, in *SSW*, 1:21.

¹⁴⁰Dutton, "Letter 81," in *SSW*, 1:329.

¹⁴¹Jones, *Memoir of Mrs. Anne Dutton*, in *SSW*, 2:109.

CHAPTER 9
CONCLUSION

Perhaps very few, if any, of the children of God, or servants of the Lord, in our days, are favoured to walk so close with God as she did, or to have such frequent communion with God in Christ as she had; and, as she was enabled in the most minute thing and circumstance to acknowledge the Lord, so he, always to her safety, profit, and joy, directed her path. She was amazingly ready at both doctrinal, casuistical, and practical divinity; and her conversation the most spiritual and profitable of any I ever heard.

—John Andrews Jones, *A Memoir of Mrs. Anne Dutton*

Having detailed the contours of Dutton’s Trinitarian spirituality, this conclusion will ponder the “so what,” its implications to current studies on the Trinity. If the seventeenth-century Trinitarian controversy has “warn[ed] all future attempts to provide intelligible accounts of the immanent Trinity . . . by solving the problem of individuation with regard to the three divine persons” and instead pointed to the essential task of outlining what means to have a “personal knowledge of the triune God,”¹ Dutton’s Trinitarian spirituality has presented several ramifications of that knowledge in Christian experience, doctrines, practice, and ministerial service. These ramifications can be elaborated on Jones’s concluding remarks about her spirituality in general.²

First, to know the triune God is fundamentally to communion with him. Rather than mere intellectual assent, Dutton’s knowledge of the Trinity was birthed from her exceptionally “close” and “frequent” communion with the Father, Son, and Spirit, and furthered as this communion deepened. This accords well with Vickers’s advocacy for

¹Jason E. Vickers, *Invocation and Assent: The Making and Remaking of Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 193.

² John Andrew Jones, *A Memoir of Mrs. Anne Dutton*, in *SSW*, 2:109.

Christians “to encounter, to know, and to love their God in prayer, baptism, worship, and the like.”³ Moreover, Dutton had highlighted the affectionate nature of this divine-human communion or encounter by locating it in the believer’s heart.⁴ Notwithstanding all the suspicions upon the heart and experience after the seventeenth-century Roman Catholic mysticism, the unbridled enthusiasm of English radicals of the mid-seventeenth century, and the “feeling-centered” approach to God in late eighteenth-century Protestant liberalism, it must still be asserted that personal knowledge of the Trinity resides in full-hearted communion with him, which stays in line with “the religion of the heart movement.”⁵ After all, “the religion which consists only in heart-knowledge [*sic*] without heart-influence, is little worth. Nor is that religion which exalts inward sensation to a neglect of outward revelation much better.”⁶

Second, Dutton was convinced that to know the triune God was to trust him in all his providential dispositions of life. While Dutton was enabled to acknowledge the Lord, the triune God, even “in the most minute thing and circumstance,” he on his part always directed her path “to her safety, profit, and joy.” Even in her painfully slow death from throat tumor, she was convinced and comforted that her affliction was “a fruit of my Father’s love, my Saviour’s blood, and the grace of the Holy Spirit,” and rejoiced over the prospect that “after my long natural *fast*, I should shortly have a most delightful,

³Vickers, *Invocation and Assent*, 192.

⁴In her treatise on *Walking with God*, Dutton wrote that communion with God “consist[s] in a free opening of hearts, and a mutual delight in each other’s company.” Dutton, *A Discourse upon Walking with God: in a Letter to a Friend*, in *SSW*, 2:40

⁵In “the religion of the heart movement,” the heart that “denot[es] the will and affections (or ‘dispositions’) is the central point of contact between God and humankind. Ted A. Campbell, *The Religion of the Heart: A Study of European Religious Life in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 3. Likewise, J. I. Packer also underscores communion with God to be “the very heart of Puritan theology and religion,” which is “essentially an experimental faith, a religion of ‘heart-work’, a sustained practice of seeking the face of God,” and laments the neglect of this communion among evangelicals today. J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 201–18.

⁶Dutton, “Letter 32,” in *SSW*, 1:165.

spiritual, and eternal *feast*” in God’s kingdom.⁷ Her comfortable trust in the God of providence retained well the vitality of the doctrine with all its emotional intensity and practical relevance in the seventeenth century.⁸ But she characteristically restored a Trinitarian focus to the doctrine of providence as “from the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit.” This had been integral to the first Christians’ experience of God’s dealings with the world. But marginalized by modern biblical scholarship and the expansive human knowledge of the universe accorded by scientific endeavors from seventeenth century onwards, it has been “appropriated” to the Father in later systematic theology, “largely uninformed by Christological or pneumatological considerations.”⁹ In the words of Gregory of Nyssa, “whatever occurs, whether in reference to God’s providence for us or to the government and constitution of the universe, occurs through the three persons, and is not three separate things.”¹⁰ The triunity of God must be related to all of Christian doctrines, including that of providence

Third, to know the triune God is to worship him. In a century when the doctrine of the Trinity became marginalized amidst all the “nice and hot disputes” surrounding it, Dutton yet showed exceptional readiness “at both doctrinal, casuistical, and practical divinity” in her theology of the Trinity as well as in other theological matters. One practical use of the Trinity Dutton shared with Charles Wesley was to praise him in hymns. With her focus on the mystery and glory of the Trinity, Dutton virtually

⁷ Jones, *Memoir of Mrs. Anne Dutton*, in *SSW*, 2:105.

⁸ Charles M. Wood identifies the seventeenth century to be “a boom period for the doctrine of providence” much due to the “theological, political, and social unrest” ensued after the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation. This century produced a group of influential treatises on providence, including John Wilkens’s *A Discourse Concerning the Beauty of Providence* (1649), Thomas Crane’s *Prospect of Providence* (1672), John Flavel’s *Divine Conduct, or the Mystery of Providence* (1678) and William Sherlock’s *A Discourse Concerning the Divine Providence* (1694). Charles M. Wood, *The Question of Providence* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008).

⁹Wood, *Question of Providence*, 55–72.

¹⁰Quoted in Wood, *Question of Providence*, 80.

achieved in her hymns what Isaac Watts was competent at doing, “to raise worshippers’ eyes to the *majesty and ineffability of God* [italics mine].”¹¹ Since hymns have served as “one of the most effective mediums of religious thought and feeling, second only to the Bible in terms of their influence,”¹² contemporary worship songs may well follow the lead of eighteenth-century Particular Baptists and Methodists to praise the triune God, which has often been overshadowed, if not totally lost by overabundant subjectivity and emotion.

Besides the doxological use of the Trinity in her hymns, Dutton also put the Trinity to the casuistical use in her epistolary ministry when she comforted afflicted souls with the sovereign rule of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the comfort of the Spirit.¹³ Trinitarian counseling has not been overlooked by contemporary Christian counselors as shown in Virginia Todd Holeman’s conception of the counselor exemplifying the triune God’s love for her clients and Eric L. Johnson’s perspective of the triune communion of persons as the archetype of the personal and social form of human life and the therapeutic resources for his glory and human flourishing,¹⁴ Still, Dutton preceded and exceeded them in her practical orientation to comfort afflicted souls with the love and covenantal faithfulness of the Trinity.

In addition to pastoral counseling, Dutton’s integrative approach may even stimulate application of the Trinity to other Christian endeavors, such as Christian education, which is currently often depicted as Christo-centric. From a Trinitarian

¹¹J. R. Broome, *A Bruised Reed: The Life and Times of Anne Steele*, quoted in Janet Wootton, *This Is our Song: Women’s Hymn-Writing* (London: Epworth Press, 2010), 48-49.

¹²Isabel Rivers and David L. Wykes, eds., introduction to *Dissenting Praise* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1.

¹³See Chap. 8: “Comfortable Dependence on the Triune God: Anne Dutton’s Epistolary Ministry.”

¹⁴Virginia Todd Holeman, *Theology for Better Counseling: Trinitarian Reflections for Healing and Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012). Eric L. Johnson, *God and Soul Care: The Therapeutic Resources of the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017).

vantage-point, Christian education could have built upon a *truly* biblical foundation and have drawn its strength and comfort from the sovereign grace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ Thus, even as the doctrine of the Trinity has reclaimed its centrality in Christian theology, beginning with Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, its vitality should by no means be limited to theology *per se*.

Finally, to know the triune God is to serve him. Jones noted that Dutton's conversation was "the most spiritual and profitable of any [he] ever heard,"¹⁶ for she had been used greatly by the Lord through personal conversation, and incomparably more so through her publications. Her zeal to serve the triune God had been such that it was neither arrested by hyper-Calvinism, nor thwarted by the social and religious restraints placed on her gender. It led her to overlook different judgments in matters of less moment and to recognize Moravians as "close walkers with God" in their "love and diligence" for the Lord.¹⁷ As Dutton knew by personal experience, serving God is itself a way of communion with him as well as an outcome of it. The two are so intertwined that, in the dying words of Matthew Henry: "a life spent in the service of God, and communion with

¹⁵ For example, Duane Litfin conceives Christian education to be "Christ-centered," which, as he sees it, is justified by biblical revelations and does not pose contraries to Christian Trinitarian faith. Duane Litfin, *Conceiving the Christian College: A College President Shares his Vision of Christian Higher Education* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 34–63. Still, a Trinitarian conception would have done justice to the Father and the Spirit in Christian education and explored the implications of their roles as the authoritative Father and the Spirit of revelation and truth to the nature of teachers and the nature of learning. Another example of the Christo-centric rather than Trinitarian conception of Christian education can be found in George R. Knight's acclaimed work, *Philosophy and Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2006). Knight identifies the primary aim of Christian education to be "leading young people into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ," which could have been more faithful to the biblical revelation of the joint work of the Trinity in salvation if put in a Trinitarian conception. The sovereign rule of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the counseling and sanctifying influences of the Spirit would also have comforted the teacher and learners for all their frustrations and difficulties accrued from doing Christian education in a secularized world.

¹⁶ Jones, *Memoir of Mrs. Anne Dutton*, in *SSW*, 2:109.

¹⁷ Dutton believed them to be "close walkers with God." She admitted that "though they may not *come up* to our measures of faith and light; yet may they *excel us* in love and diligence." Dutton, *Letters Sent to an Honourable Gentleman, for the Encouragement of the Faith. By One Who Has Tasted That the Lord Is Gracious*, in *SSW*, 6:25.

him, is the most comfortable and pleasant life that anyone can live in this world.” Dutton certainly knew the joy and comfort of such a life.

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ABSTRACT

COMMUNION WITH GOD AND COMFORTABLE DEPENDENCE ON HIM: ANNE DUTTON'S TRINITARIAN SPIRITUALITY

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This dissertation seeks to retrieve a crucial aspect of the spiritual heritage of Anne Dutton, her Trinitarian spirituality as it was developed in the historical context of eighteenth-century Trinitarian controversies in England and especially the Particular Baptists' defense of the Trinity. It argues that Dutton's Trinitarian spirituality is not only doctrinally orthodox, but also full of doxological devotion and practical comfort. It typifies the *1689 London Baptist Confession's* statement about the Trinity being the foundation of "communion with God and comfortable dependence on him."

The first three chapters serve introductory and biographical purposes. Chapter 1 introduces the purpose of the thesis, the primary sources to be examined, and the organization of the dissertation. Chapter 2 presents a historical literature review of Dutton and her works. Chapter 3 sketches a portrait of Dutton in the four biblical images of the sinner, sojourner, servant and saint.

Chapter 4 supplies the historical context for Dutton's Trinitarian spirituality. It attends to both the Trinitarian controversies in eighteenth-century England and the defense of the Trinity by such Particular Baptist ministers as John Gill, Benjamin Beddome, Benjamin Wallin, and Andrew Fuller.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the nature and work of the Trinity. Chapter 5 presents Dutton's thought about the ontology of the Trinity, which highlights the co-deity

and co-equality of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Chapter 6 studies her doctrine of the work of the Trinity. In addition to the tripartite work of the Father in election, the Son in redemption, and the Spirit in particular application, attention is also given to Dutton's expostulations of the adoption of the Father, advocateship of the Son and the sealing of the Spirit. Both the distinctive work of the triune God and their unity are underscored in the economy of human salvation.

Chapters 7 and 8 deal with Dutton's application of the Trinity in Christian experience. Chapter 7 examines her view of communion with the triune God primarily from her work, *Walking with God* and from comparison with John Owen's work on the topic. The ways of this communion, which entail the primary way of Christ and the derivative ways of faith, worship, providence, and holiness are then illustrated by her spiritual autobiography. Chapter 8 discusses Dutton's use of the Trinity in her epistolary counseling of the afflicted souls. They were directed to depend on the sovereign grace of the Father, the love of the Son, and the comfort of the Spirit.

This dissertation concludes with a call for re-centering Christian devotion and practices, such as worship, education, and counseling, on the Trinity as the way to revive the Christian life in praxis as well as in doctrine.

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