AUGUSTUS MONTAGUE TOPLADY (1740-78) AND THE LIMITS OF THE EVANGELICAL ENLIGHTENMENT

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By

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Abstract

Augustus Montague Toplady and the Limits of the Evangelical Enlightenment
by Kevin Moss

Augustus Toplady is famous for his hymns, and infamous for his very public and acrimonious disagreement with John Wesley over the historic Reformation doctrine of predestination. Whilst the residue of his published polemic has been leveraged by both sides of the theological debate, and whilst Toplady himself has been treated as a kind of lodestone of Christian culture, there has never been a serious attempt to assess his significance as a theological writer in his own right, within the Enlightenment context which framed his life's work.

This thesis explores Toplady's published contributions within his immediate context. His vocational life was cut prematurely short, but the nature of his personal formation appears to have uniquely equipped him for a particular kind of 'elenctic' theological contribution within the polemical culture of the long eighteenth century. Toplady's personal credentials facilitated a distinctive perspective on the nexus between the Calvinistic and Arminian branches of Evangelicalism, and on the interaction between historical scholastic disciplines and modern Enlightenment thinking, underpinned throughout by his own Anglican convictions.

This thesis explores his key writings, published over a brief, nine-year period, and recalibrates the focus of Toplady's key publications, raising question-marks over a significant proportion of the historical commentary regarding his method and priorities. The conclusions are therefore relevant to the studies on the origin and definitions of Evangelicalism, the distinctives of confessional Anglicanism, as well as the historic narratives concerning the eclipse of scholasticism.

Acknowledgements

This thesis has been almost seven years in gestation, and it is an encouraging moment when I have the opportunity to give some thought to those individuals who have been so supportive and provided such invaluable input. Inevitably, there are risks of faulty memory here, for which I beg forbearance.

My first acknowledgement must go to my wife, Mags, who has uncomplainingly and consistently adjusted her life in order to accommodate the strange, solitary life of doctoral research, and who has responded to the continual arrival of inexplicably expensive texts with an almost unworldly toleration. I am not sure that I will ever be able to repay this particular debt, and certainly would not have persisted in my studies without her active encouragement.

The second key acknowledgement must go to my supervisor, David Ceri Jones, not least for his preparedness to take on a student with zero experience of serious historical studies. Always proactive, and a consistent source of constructive feedback and direction, David has never once wavered in his own exacting standards and expectations. I am indebted to him, and his consistent belief that here was a valuable story, waiting to be told.

Due to my geographical removal from Aberystwyth University, my other professional commitments, and then the intervention of COVID, this research project has proven to be an exercise in solitary endeavour. Nevertheless, I have been grateful for relevant interactions along the way. Richard A. Muller (Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary) has provided encouragement and useful corroborations in relation to Toplady's scholastic influences. Jake Griesel (George Whitefield College, SA), has shared common Cambridge interests and theological focus. Patrick O'Banion (Lindenwood University) has thoughtfully contributed insights from his work on Jerome Zanchius. David Bebbington (University of Stirling) has graciously listened to me grapple with early conclusions, and provided other input.

I am grateful too for the accommodations and understanding from my colleagues at 'The Foundations Trust', based at the Round Church in Cambridge, whilst my academic demands have distracted me from my duties to the charity.

Table of Contents

Abbreviations

Toplady	Standardised rendering in place of multiple versions of Toplady's full name (Augustus Montague Toplady) utilised across the literature.
A Caveat against Unsound Doctrines	*A Caveat against Unsound Doctrines: Being the Substance of a Sermon Preached in the Parish Church of St. Ann, Blackfryars On Sunday, April 29, 1770* (London: Joseph Gurney, 1770).
A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley	*A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley: Relative to his pretended Abridgement of Zanchius on Predestination* (London: Joseph Gurney, 1771).
Free Thoughts	*Free Thoughts on the Projected Application to Parliament for the Abolition of Ecclesiastical Subscriptions* (London: Joseph Gurney, 1771).
Free-Will and Merit	*Free-Will and Merit Fairly Examined: or, Men not their own Saviors* (London: J. Mathews, 1775)
Historic Proof	A. M. Toplady, *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England* (London: George Keith, 1774).
Jesus Seen of Angels	*Jesus Seen of Angels, and, God's Mindfulness of Man* (London: Joseph Gurney, 1771).
The Church of England Vindicated	*The Church of England Vindicated from The Charge of Arminianism and The Case of Arminian Subscription Particularly Considered* (London: Joseph Gurney, 1769).
More Work for Mr. John Wesley	*More Work for Mr. John Wesley, or, A Vindication of the decrees and Providence of God from the Defamations of a late printed Paper, Entitled 'The Consequence Proved'* (London: James Mathews, 1771).
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online: https://www.oxforddnb.com).
The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination	*The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination Stated and Asserted: With a Preliminary Discourse on the Divine Attributes. Translated, in Great Measure from the Latin of Jerom Zanchius* (Philadelphia: Stewart & Cochrane, 1769).

The Doctrines of the Church of England	*The Doctrines of the Church of England; Proved to be the Doctrines of Christ; OR, Clerical Subscription no Grievance* (London: W. Row, 1772).
TGM	*The Gospel Magazine* (editions from 1766 through to 1899).
The Liturgy of the Church of England	*The Liturgy of the Church of England Explained and Vindicated, So as to appear in perfect Harmony with the Scriptures, and very far distance from the Arminian System* (London: W. Rowe, 1880).
The Reverend Mr Toplady's Dying Avowal	*The Reverend Mr Toplady's Dying Avowal of his Religious Sentiments* (London: J. Mathews, 1778).
The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted	*The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted. In Opposition to Mr. John Wesley's Tract on that Subject. With a Dissertation Concerning the Sensible Qualities of Matter: and the Doctrine of Color in Particular* (London: Vallance and Simmons, 1775).
Works	*The Works of Augustus Toplady B.A., Late Vicar of Broad Hembury, Devon. A New Edition, Complete in One Volume* (London: J. Chidley, 1794).
Zanchius	Standardised alternative to 'Zanchi' or 'Girolamo Zanchi'.

Introduction

Toplady as Enlightenment Theologian

> When Langour and Disease invade
> This trembling House of Clay;
> 'Tis sweet to look beyond the Cage,
> And long to fly away.[1]

Augustus Montague Toplady, Anglican cleric and polemicist, died on 11 August 1778. He was thirty-seven. The brevity of his life was far from a unique distinction: like Keats, he had struggled over several years with the frailties associated with Tuberculosis, so his death was no surprise. Indeed he had been expecting it for some time, and had taken steps to put his affairs in order, writing to his longtime friend, William Hussey in Gloucester on 11 March 1778 to confirm that 'All my affairs respecting both worlds, are completely settled',[2] having appointed Hussey as his sole executor and legatee. During those few remaining months, and whilst maintaining a schedule of preaching commitments that would have been demanding even for a man in good health, Toplady took steps to visit his many friends. Many other notable evangelicals, such as John Newton, Andrew Gifford, William Bull and John Ryland, traveled considerable distances to meet with him.

In his own instructions, Toplady had asked for a private, inexpensive funeral, without a sermon.[3] However, there was a spontaneous turnout of thousands of mourners at the Tottenham Court Road chapel on 17 August 1778, and his friend Rowland Hill ended up preaching to the congregation that had gathered. The evidence is that Toplady had been a popular preacher, much-loved by evangelicals in London: having been called to lead the French Calvinist Reformed Church in

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[1] Toplady, 'Occasional Hymns No. XXIV', *Hymns and Sacred Poems on a Variety of Divine Subjects* (London: Daniel Sedgwick, 1860), p. 163. Wright tells us that this is 'probably the last hymn written by Toplady', and it is known as 'Toplady's Death Song'.

[2] Toplady, 'Letters', *The Works of Augustus Toplady, B.A. Late Vicar of Broad Hembury, Devon* (London: J. Chidley, 1794), p. 882.

[3] Toplady, 'Last Will and Testament', *The Works of Augustus Toplady*, p. 41.

Orange Street, Leicester Square at the age of thirty-five, he preached his first sermon there on 11 April 1776 and thereafter the premises were so full that worshippers queued for hours outside to get a chance to hear this young, but very sickly preacher. By this time, his doctor had already told him that he had only a few years left to live, and he was fully aware that the clock was ticking. Notwithstanding, and quite supplementary to his pastoral duties, Toplady was able to publish his *Psalms and Hymns for Public and Private Worship*[4] and a variety of other publications, as well as edit and write articles for *TGM* during these final years.

If this was the only backdrop to his life, Toplady would probably have remained a somewhat uncontroversial and marginal figure, but there is another, darker thread which has influenced the commonly understood narrative. During the months preceding his death, the Methodist leader, John Wesley, and his supporters were publishing rumours that Toplady had lost his faith, renouncing his Calvinist beliefs. Toplady responded on 14 June 1778, by leaving his sick-bed and entering the Orange Street pulpit in order to repudiate these rumours, closing his address with what became known as his *Dying Avowal*. Three days later, such was the continued prevalence of these rumours, that he took the step of publishing the *Dying Avowal*,[5] to which he attached a clear testimony to his doctrine, pointing his readers to his earlier publication, *A Caveat Against Unsound Doctrine* (1770) which supplied a convenient overview of his theological convictions.[6]

This was not an end of the controversy, however, as even after his funeral, Wesleyan propagandists continued to circulate the rumour that Toplady had died blaspheming God, in a state of horror and despair.[7] It fell to another friend, Sir Richard Hill, to take on these false claims,

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[4] Toplady, *Psalms and Hymns for Public and Private Worship* (London: E. & C. Dilly, 1776).

[5] Toplady, *The Reverend Mr Toplady's Dying Avowal of his Religious Sentiments* (London: J. Buckland, 1778).

[6] Toplady, *A Caveat against Unsound Doctrines: Being the Substance of a Sermon Preached in the Parish Church of St. Ann, Blackfryars On Sunday, April 29, 1770* (London: Joseph Gurney, 1770).

[7] George Ella cites a letter from J. Gawkrodger of Bridlington, dated 30 August 1779, to Sir Richard Hill, which quotes directly from Wesley's supporters. George M. Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady: A Debtor to Mercy Alone* (Darlington: Go Publications, 2000), pp. 332-33.

publishing a refutation in the national press, under the pen name of 'Veritas'[8]. Subsequently, various eye-witnesses attested to the manner of Toplady's death, but this whole unseemly episode is suggestive of a very profound antipathy that existed between Toplady and Wesley, one which has coloured subsequent, even recent, assessments of Toplady's character and significance. A characteristic example of this is supplied by Boyd Stanley Schlenther: '…the rigid Calvinist polemicists Richard Hill and Augustus Toplady, who happily dug their chisels into Methodism's most jagged fissure.'[9] This suggests a somewhat cynical, pragmatic mode of engagement, where Toplady's strategy was to look for weaknesses in an opponent, using his undoubted skills to attack at that point. Phrases such as these present a particular kind of view of a person's own motivations and mindset, and therefore require careful evaluation. Alongside this, Toplady has been portrayed as an argumentative, acerbic individual, prone to an unfortunate and excessive use of intemperate language, deployed in such a way as to damage the unity of the evangelical cause, and especially pernicious in his focus on John Wesley himself.[10] This perception of Toplady has persisted, assisted by early comments from J. C. Ryle: 'He that only reads Toplady's hymns will find it hard to believe that he could compose his controversial writings. He that only reads his controversial writings will hardly believe that he composed his hymns'.[11] It lingers even when we read the beautiful words of his most famous hymns, such as 'Rock of Ages', or 'A Debtor to Mercy Alone', as if, somehow, we should be suspicious even of the words on the page. More recently, George Lawton has perpetuated this negative tone in the very opening words to his own treatment: 'Augustus Montague Toplady - a name that sounds ominous, a name with an echo like a clanging bell in the dismal regions below stairs in some shabby Regency mansion, a synonym for quarrelsomeness and strife, ill-breeding and

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[8] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Toplady', *Works*, p. 37.

[9] Boyd Stanley Schlenther, *Queen of the Methodists, The Countess of Huntingdon and the Eighteenth century Crisis of Faith and Society* (Durham: Durham Academic Press, 1997), p. 105.

[10] J. C. Ryle, *Christian Leaders of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Chas. J. Thynne & Jarvis, 1868), pp. 360, 363, 367, 378-80.

[11] Ryle, *Christian Leaders of the Eighteenth Century*, p. 383.

insolence.'[12] The very distinct framing of the historiography of this staunch Anglican presents an equally significant challenge: might Toplady have been misread or misunderstood? And if that is the case, might we be missing out on some valuable insights? In fact, there are hints from Toplady's remains that there was much more to the man than this: in a letter dated July 7, 1775 to Messrs Valance and Simmons, he wrote that he '…now write to you, on occasion of a report which prevails here, that Mr. J. W__ died lately in Ireland.'[13] It is clear that the object of this enquiry is John Wesley, who had been taken seriously ill at Tanderagee during his fifteenth preaching tour of Ireland. Toplady, writing to Wesley's solicitors, revealingly proposes to suppress the publication of his *Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity* (1775) and even rewrite it, given it's critical commentary regarding Wesley's Cartesian philosophy. Such an initiative balances the picture painted by Ryle and Lawton, or by his more polarised critics, and the mere fact that he had been in contact with Wesley's legal representatives suggests a degree of interaction which leaves no traces in the surviving documentation.

However, there is, in fact, much more to Toplady than this, although this perplexing background provides a sufficient justification for a fresh examination of his writings. Whilst the circumstances he encountered within and without his own beloved Church of England drove him towards the polemical end of the spectrum, alongside his extensive poetry and hymn-writing, we discover a commitment to translating historic works from Latin, together with his own prolific writings on historical theology and philosophy. Clearly evident in Toplady's output, as well as in the residue of his personal diary, is a level of scholarship and a kind of sustained focus which augments our view of the man as a mere polemicist, or poet, or short-lived but tumultuous cleric - a matter which will be expanded further in this thesis. The aim of this study therefore, is to explore in detail Toplady's published contributions, seeking to understand them within the context of the late eighteenth

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[12] George Lawton, *Within the Rock of Ages: The Life and Works of Augustus Montague Toplady* (Cambridge, Lutterworth Press, 1988), p. 1.
[13] Toplady, 'Letter LIX' in *Works*, p. 872.

century, in relation to the diverse constituencies with which he engaged. Toplady's writings somehow navigate a path between Anglican, Calvinistic, Enlightenment and Evangelical streams simultaneously, and we will find that this at times uneasy balancing act is facilitated via a recapitulation of seventeenth century Protestant scholasticism.

In fact, the core argument of this thesis is that the 'uneasy balance' modelled by Toplady's ministry is *the* pivotal challenge to alternative, and more reductionist explanations of this period, especially those that seek to define the origins and nature of evangelicalism as a peculiarly eighteenth century phenomenon. The actual space that Toplady occupied is an interesting one because it is suggestive of a mind that was (and is) quite difficult to categorise. Toplady was a staunch Anglican churchman who clearly stood outside of any Latitudinarian or Laudian consensus that may have prevailed at that time. Notwithstanding his apparently fierce loyalty to the Church of England, this did not hinder him from forming strong attachments to Dissenters such as the Baptist, John Gill, or the Countess of Huntingdon, the promoter of Calvinistic Methodism.[14] He exhibited a firm affiliation to the evangelical cause, as was evidenced by his first major publication,[15] prompted as a defence of the six Methodist students expelled from Edmund Hall, Oxford in 1768. And yet, he found himself on the wrong side of the fence in his relations with John Wesley, whilst consistently affirming the Calvinism of George Whitefield.[16] And although, in his own account, he clearly valued the writings of the puritan, Thomas Manton as being critically formative to his own theological position, he actually went out of his way to distance himself from seventeenth century Puritanism, especially the kind associated with the Cromwellian regime or Presbyterianism.[17]

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[14] Thomas Wright, *The Lives of the British Hymn Writers, Being Personal Memoirs derived largely from unpublished materials, Volume II: Augustus M. Toplady and Contemporary Hymn-Writers* (London: Farncombe & Son, 1911), pp. 194, 196.

[15] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated from The Charge of Arminianism and The Case of Arminian Subscription Particularly Considered* (London: Joseph Gurney, 1769).

[16] Toplady, 'A Concise Character of the Late Rev. Mr. Whitefield', *Works*, p. 494.

[17] Toplady, *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England* (London: George Keith, 1774), p. 531.

Thus, a part of what makes Toplady interesting is the challenge of definition. Here we have a 'conviction' Anglican churchman, who would prefer to attend a Strict Baptist church than a non-subscribing Anglican one.[18] Here was a 'modern' Anglican who liked to signal his modernism, but who was committed to scholastic Protestantism, something which became largely out of favour in the era of the Enlightenment.[19] Here was a wide-ranging student and thinker who interacted competently with Enlightenment thinking, whilst simultaneously skirting the more sceptical, rationalistic tendencies of this period.[20]

Toplady was born in 1740, dated his Christian conversion to 1756, and in 1758 was persuaded of the Calvinism of the Church of England Articles, having read Thomas Manton's *Discourses on St. John Chapter XVII*.[21] At this point he felt able, with a clear conscience, to be ordained deacon and by June 1762 was serving as curate in Blagden, Somerset.[22] In May 1764, Toplady was ministering temporarily in London, until he was appointed curate of Farleigh Hungerford, near Bath. After two years, he relocated to Harpford with Fen Ottery in Devon before being given the benefice of Broad Hembury in 1767, which he retained until his death. In 1769 he ministered for six months in London, following which he relocated to Broad Hembury until he made the decision to move permanently to London in 1775, due to the precarious state of his health. From April 1776, he ministered at the French Huguenot Church in Orange Street, Leicester Square, where he remained until his death in 1778. The total years he devoted to Anglican ministry amounted to sixteen, but for the purpose of this study, we are primarily concerned with those that commenced with the publication of his translation of one of Jerome Zanchius's works in 1769, continuing until his death in 1778.

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[18] Toplady, 'Letter LXXII', in 'Letters', *Works*, pp. 878-9.

[19] Dan Edelstein, *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 22.

[20] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Toplady', *Works*, pp. 12, 20-21.

[21] Thomas Manton, *Sermons Upon the Seventeenth Chapter of St. John* (London: James Nisbet & Co, 1872). This was the second folio edition of Manton's works, published originally in 1684.

[22] Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady*, p. 72.

Research Questions

If it appears initially that the dynamics of Toplady's life and ministry are not easily harmonised, then this challenge must necessarily feed through to the assessment of sources, as well as the evaluation of third-party literature. Furthermore, each formative influence brings with it an accumulation of intellectual strata which necessarily impacts on the questions we should ask about Toplady himself. Samuel Clarke, predeceasing Toplady's birth by eleven years, was heavily indebted to Locke,[23] who was, in turn, influenced by Richard Hooker.[24] It is clear that Hooker was influenced by Desiderius Erasmus, the Dutch humanist and theologian, whom subsequent historians have struggled to define.[25] Such interconnectedness over time lends itself both to a sense of ambiguity over the stance of individuals, and perhaps also a preparedness to take shortcuts when critiquing them: for example, in what sense was Toplady disdainful of Thomas Aquinas and also simultaneously indebted to him? What historical and theological continuities mattered to Toplady? What motivated him sufficiently to cause him to operate in a more contentious, polemical space, to the neglect of his precarious health as well as his reputation, when his natural aptitude for study and contemplation might well have indicated a far less stressful path?

What drove this brief, utterly focused 'late fruit' in such a brief life - and what equipped him for the task? And what kind of legacy did he bequeath to contemporaries and posterity? If we accept him as a Calvinist, *what kind* of Calvinist was he? If he was influenced by, or was responding to Enlightenment phenomena such as rationalism, religious scepticism or anti-clericalism, how did these themes translate through to his writings and public utterances? Was the character of his

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[23] Ezio Vailati, 'Introduction', in Samuel Clarke, *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, And Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. xiii, xxvi, xxvii.

[24] Debora Shuger, 'Societie Supernaturall: The Imagined Community of Hooker's *Lawes*', in Arthur Stephen McGrade (ed.), *Richard Hooker and the Construction of Christian Community* (Tempe, AZ: Medieval & Renaissance Studies, 1997), p. 309.

[25] Philip B. Secor, 'In Search of Richard Hooker' and William J. Bouwsma, 'Hooker in European Cultural History', in McGrade (ed.), *Richard Hooker*, pp. 32-34 and p. 44.

output influenced by a particular quality or tradition of theological reflection or methodology? How did his changing perceptions of the dangers facing the Established Church influence the targets that he selected for attention? To what extent does his life's work correlate with modern perspectives on the Enlightenment and Evangelicalism? How did he model the complex interaction between orthodoxy and a rapidly-changing intellectual climate? And are the kinds of interpretations of his life, offered by his various biographers, accurate and dependable assessments of his significance in the late eighteenth century and beyond?

In relation to these considerations, Toplady's own ministry is very far from being an isolated example of what Protestant theologians were seeking to achieve in the mid eighteenth-century. In New England, Jonathan Edwards provided an extensive analysis of the new philosophy, and delivered a highly nuanced application of Lockean epistemology.[26] In Britain, Isaac Watts was engaged in a similar task and his work on reason became a key text in university education for at least a century.[27] Similarly, Philip Doddridge developed his own rational defence of the Christian faith, based upon Lockean presuppositions.[28] The Scottish theologian, John Erskine consciously utilised Lockean empiricism and rational proofs, eschewing the model of the Scottish Common Sense philosophers.[29] In Germany, Johann Georg Hamann was certainly nowhere as famous as Immanuel Kant, but his 'Metacritique' of the latter's philosophy represents an early and robust Christian riposte.[30] Others, such as Samuel Clark had been interacting robustly with Enlightenment

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[26] Jonathan Edwards, *A Careful and strict Enquiry into The modern prevailing Notions of that Freedom of the Will* (Boston, 1754).

[27] Isaac Watts, *Logic, or The right use of reason, in the inquiry after truth* (London, 1725).

[28] Robert Strivens, *Philip Doddridge and the Shaping of Evangelical Dissent* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), p. 71.

[29] Jonathan M. Yeager, *Enlightened Evangelicalism: The Life and Thought of John Erskine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 89.

[30] Hamann's 'Metacritique of the Purism of Reason' was unpublished during his lifetime, due to the value he placed on his friendship with Immanuel Kant. For a consideration of its relevance, see John R. Betz, *After Enlightenment: The Post-Secular Vision of J. G. Hamann* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

thinking, albeit outside of the evangelical perspective that is the focus within this paper.[31] It is clear that no boiler-plate template existed to define the presuppositions and scope of the evangelical engagement with the Enlightenment, and so identifying Toplady's defining characteristics will be indispensable to the task of assessing his significance. This thesis represents the first extensive critique of Toplady's published output, with the objective of supplying a reliable mapping of his location within a 'quadrilateral' composed of Anglican, Calvinistic, Enlightenment and Evangelical strands. Thus, the study of Toplady intersects directly with the debate over the 'secularity' of the Enlightenment, as highlighted by Sorkin,[32] as well as the decline and subsequent revival of scholasticism and Thomism.[33]

Sources and Methodology

The range[34] of Toplady's writings render the process of analysis complex, although the limited chronological parameters which constrain his main published works (1769-78) do at least minimise the impact of the kind of intellectual drift or development which might otherwise characterise a more prolonged period of writing. His output oscillated between modest pamphlets, and mature, extensively researched works; between his own initiatives, and responses triggered by external events and attacks. It is quite clear that, across the range of his publications, quite different audiences were intended, and that the focus for his attention did shift over the course of his ministry, notably as the increasingly acerbic engagement with John Wesley triggered publications which were both defensive and offensive in nature.

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[31] Clarke predated Toplady, and was famous for his Boyle Lectures, in particular his *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*, delivered in 1704. He was nowhere referred to in Toplady's writings.

[32] David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 1-5.

[33] P. J. Fitzpatrick, 'Neoscholasticism', in N. Kretzmann, A. Kenny and J. Pinborg (eds) *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 840.

[34] Poetry, hymns, articles, essays, polemic, satire, historical theology, philosophy, translation.

The method, therefore, has been firstly to contextualise each of these key works, to seek to understand why and when they were written, the intended audience, and to differentiate between them sufficiently to apply a reliable interpretative gloss. This means that attention has been focussed on Toplady's 'mature' published works from 1769 onwards, though not to the detriment of such earlier materials as his 'juvenile' diary and poems, his later journal (age twenty), essays on natural history, biographies, articles written for *TGM*[35] and some correspondence. Defining the range of primary sources in this way delivers a coherent and relatively homogeneous body of material for analysis. Minor additional sources are held by the 'Cowper & Newton Museum' (Olney, Buckinghamshire), the 'John Rylands Research Institute and Library' (now the University of Manchester) and dispersed across multiple sites under the auspices of the Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory, USA. The decision to restrict the consideration to the primary published works followed initial enquiries to these bodies and the discovery that the majority of the relevant sources had already been identified and were accessible elsewhere.

Secondly, my methodology has reflected the approach adopted within Toplady's most ambitious work, his *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England*. Whilst this is not the only publication which emphasised historical theology, it takes the form of an extended treatment of doctrinal continuities, investigating their historic origins, influences, contributions and abiding relevance to confessional Anglicanism. This thesis seeks to explore this aspect of trajectory or continuity in order to determine how it may frame Toplady's own distinctiveness as a theologian and polemicist.

Thirdly, this thesis will incorporate some reflection on other comparable evangelical figures, operating in a similar space to Toplady, around the same time. Isaac Watts battled ill-health for most of his life, just like Toplady, and sought to work out the pastoral and catechetical dimensions

[35] Toplady was editor of *The Gospel Magazine* from December 1775 through to June 1776, but he had also contributed articles to it from around 1771.

of this difficult experience through his own hymnology, which went through fourteen editions during his lifetime.[36] John Erskine attempted his own reconciliation of Calvinism and Enlightenment thinking, though based upon different presuppositions to Toplady.[37] Doddridge's evangelicalism followed a more Baxterian model, and seems to have more explicitly depended on Locke than Toplady allowed himself to.[38] There are similarities, but also key differences as we consider Toplady's position within a matrix of Enlightenment possibilities - and such factors feed through to the more strategic question of his significance.

The bulk of the analysis in this study is based upon a broad categorisation of genre, which requires a degree of nuancing as there is some blurring between categories. Some works fall into the category of 'sermon publications': *A Caveat Against Unsound Doctrines* (1770), *Jesus Seen of Angels & God's Mindfulness of Man* (1771), *The Doctrines of the Church of England; Proved to be the Doctrines of Christ; or, Clerical Subscription no Grievance* (1772), *Freewill and Merit fairly examined, or MEN not their own SAVIORS* (1775), and *Joy in Heaven and The Creed of Devils with a Word Concerning Apparitions* (1775). A second category are those publications which are 'primarily polemical', such as, *The Church of England Vindicated from The Charge of Arminianism and The Case of Arminian Subscription Particularly Considered* (1769), *A Letter to the Rev. John Wesley* (1770), *Free Thoughts on the Projected Application to Parliament for the Abolition of Ecclesiastical Subscriptions* (1771), *More Work for Mr. John Wesley: or, A Vindication of the DECREES and PROVIDENCE of GOD from the Defamations of a late printed Paper, ENTITLED 'The Consequence Proved'* (1772), *An Old Fox Tarr'd and Feathered* (1775) and, finally, *The Reverend Mr Toplady's Dying Avowal of his Religious Sentiments* (1778). One posthumously-published work in this category, entitled *The Liturgy of the Church of England Explained and*

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[36] Daniel Johnson, 'Sickness, Providence and the Historiography of Isaac Watts' (paper given at the Christianity & History Forum Conference, 10 September 2021).

[37] Yeager, *Enlightened Evangelicalism*, p. 199.

[38] Strivens, *Philip Doddridge*, p. 71.

Vindicated came out in 1880 and is an example of a manuscript which was rescued from conflagration by his friends.[39]

The Church of England Vindicated is an example of the challenges of categorisation: a longer work of 136 pages, it is clearly polemical in its stance, but ends up providing a rigorous overview of historical theology. This is a 'crossover' piece, which brings us to our third category of 'historical theology', which includes two significant works: *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination* (1769),[40] and *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England* (1774). A significant proportion of what follows will be heavily dependent upon these two latter publications, partly due to the scholarship that underpins them, but also because they are emblematic of the other works which will receive close attention.

The three-fold categorisation covers the bulk of Toplady's published works, but leaves us with three final pieces. The *Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted* (1775) is a distinctively philosophical work; his *Moral and Political Moderation Recommended* (1776) falls into the category of political and cultural commentary, and his *Psalms and Hymns for Public and Private Worship* (1776) is quite clearly intended for devotional purposes. Alongside these there are the more *ad-hoc* contributions to *TGM*, which will be considered in some depth in the chapter on Toplady and Evangelicalism.

The methodology adopted seeks to critically evaluate the text used within Toplady's primary corpus, in an attempt to assess the existing historiography which may be unduly influenced by considerations of style, or simply the byproduct of other, competing, polemics. Cultural nuances which seem significant, given the broader context of the Enlightenment, will be explored within their immediate and historical setting. It will be argued that such an approach reframes our

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[39] Toplady, *The Liturgy of the Church of England Explained and Vindicated, So as to appear in perfect Harmony with the Scriptures, and very far distant from the Arminian System* (London: W. Rowe, 1880).

[40] This is Toplady's translation of a work by the Protestant Scholastic, Jerome Zanchius, otherwise known as Girolamo Zanchi, and it seems to have been the work that triggered the spat with John Wesley.

appreciation of Toplady, and may help to explain the conundrum hinted at in Ryle's brief biographical treatment:

> The book[41] remains to this hour unanswered, and that for the simplest of all reasons, that it is unanswerable. It proves irrefragably, whether men like it or not, that Calvinism is the doctrine of the Church of England, and that all her leading divines, until Laud's time, were Calvinists. All this is done logically, clearly, and powerfully. No one, I venture to think, could read the book through, and not feel obliged to admit that the author was an able man.[42]

Ryle, albeit no historian, functions in this context almost as a 'hostile witness', so the warmth of his commendation might be seen to carry some authority within the Anglican constituency. However, the nature of Ryle's own polemic might simply tell us more about his own preoccupations, than it actually informs us about Toplady's value.[43]

Literature Review

There are essentially nine biographical treatments of Toplady's life and work, and they vary in both quality and in their extent of the analysis of their subject. This section provides an overview of these works in chronological order, and comments on their emphases and underlying qualities.

Firstly, the somewhat abbreviated *Memoirs* issued by Walter Row, Toplady's publisher, in the year following his death. This later became incorporated into *The Works of Augustus Toplady, B.A.*[44] Row's treatment of his subject is largely uncritical, verging on the adulatory, his introductory comments placing Toplady at the end of a succession commencing with Elijah, Luther and Calvin, culminating in Whitefield and James Hervey. Any stylistic shortcomings are dismissed with the phrase, 'His animated warmth was justly proportioned to the cause he had espoused' and his capacities in defence of Calvinistic doctrine are described as superseding 'any eulogium that can be

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[41] Ryle was referring to Toplady's *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England.*

[42] Ryle, *Christian Leaders of the Last Century*, p. 380.

[43] James Kirby, *Historians and the Church of England: Religion and Historical Scholarship, 1870-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 183.

[44] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A.B.' in *Works*, pp. 1-45.

passed upon his uncommon abilities.'[45] The *Memoirs* consist, largely, of extracts from Toplady's diary (December 1767 - December 1768), various quotations and letters, with Row's summary historical contextualisation forming a kind of unremitting commendation. We discover here that Toplady's initial access to the living in Blagdon, Somerset was because it was 'procured by friends'. There are repeated references to his pastoral duties which he clearly prioritised, with recurring visits to named individuals evidencing a genuine care for their spiritual wellbeing. He refers to John Gill as 'my learned friend' and 'my honoured friend', extensively lists friends lost through death, refers on several occasions to his friend and colleague Mr Luce, and itemises by name all the parishioners he sought to help by purchasing grain. On 2 April 1768, he was dining with Mr Holmes in Exeter, together with a Baptist minister and on 8 April, his friend Mr Luce was with him again. On 2 September, Toplady expresses concern over news he has received of the spiritual decline in 'Mr Morris, of the county of Wexford, in Ireland, whose ministry was, a little turned of twelve years ago, blest to my conversion', and resolves to write an encouraging letter.[46] There is much more in a similar vein, quite sufficient to dispel the misapprehension that Toplady was the kind of insular and abrasive character portrayed by both Ryle and Lawton. Indeed, the inconvenient over-attendance at his funeral is an adequate antidote to such a view. The biographical data also goes some way to explaining the nature of Toplady's intellectual engagement, which would later feed into the rather demanding publishing regime which dominated the last few years of his life.

Row introduces us to those authorities that Toplady was reading with profit: John Gill (Particular Baptist) features prominently, as does James Hervey (Anglican), Edmund Calamy (Presbyterian) and John Erskine (Scottish Presbyterian). He took the opportunity to contrast the inspirational John Bunyan with the 'stiff, sapless, tedious piece of work … written by bishop

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[45] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montagu Toplady, A.B.', pp. 1-2.
[46] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montagu Toplady, A.B.' pp. 3-27.

Patrick! How does the unlearned tinker of Bedford outshine the bishop of Ely!'[47] He wrote at some length on the radical scepticism of Jean Leclerc, prompted by his reading of Leclerc's *Ars Critica* of 1696, and expressed his reservations about the 'extremely flighty and conjectural' content within William Wall's *Critical Notes on the New Testament* (1730).[48] This suggests that he was quite intentionally engaging with the latest fruits of Enlightenment scepticism. He quoted at some length from puritan works such as Richard Sibbes' *Soul's Conflict* (1635), and John Downame's *Christian Warfare* (1604), whilst referring with approval to Bishop John Wilkins' *Preacher* (or Ecclesiastes) of 1646. Row's selection of diary entries may be patchy, but they do help to demonstrate the breadth and catholicity of Toplady's literary appetites, albeit with some clear favourites. This picture of the sheer extent of Toplady's intellectual engagement will be further explored, when we come to look at the work which is commonly regarded as his magnum opus, the 1774 *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England*.

Erasmus Middleton's treatment of Toplady's life takes the form of fourteen pages in the fourth volume of *Biographia Evangelica*, published a mere eight years after Toplady's death in 1786.[49] Middleton's treatment is both similar [50] and dissimilar to Row's: there is not even the most fleeting reference to the unfortunate manner which so exercises other biographers. Relatively little space is devoted to historical detail, and conspicuously there is no mention of the 1768 Oxford expulsions which directly involved Middleton himself, and which formed the catalyst for Toplady's very first exercise in polemic.[51] This seems a significant omission, given the traumatic and formative nature

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[47] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montagu Toplady, A.B.', p. 12.

[48] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montagu Toplady, A.B.', p. 21.

[49] Erasmus Middleton, 'Augustus Montague Toplady, A. B.', in *Biographia Evangelica: Or, an Historical Account of the Lives and Deaths of the Most Eminent and Evangelical Authors or Preachers, Both British and Foreign, in the Several Denominations of Protestants, From the Beginning of the Reformation to the Present Time*, vol. 4 (London: W. Justins, 1786), pp. 474-88.

[50] Indeed, Middleton acknowledges in his opening sentence that he is 'freely' borrowing from Row.

[51] Thomas Nowell, defending the expulsions, had described Middleton as 'an enemy to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England', had 'behaved indecently' towards his tutor, that he 'was deficient in learning'. See Thomas Nowell, *An Answer to a Pamphlet, Entitled Pietas Oxoniensis, in a Letter to the Author* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1769), pp. 19, 25.

of the expulsion, and the way Middleton's own experience intersected with Toplady's ministry. In fact, Middleton's primary focus is on the personal character and the qualities of his subject: 'His style was nervous and masculine; his language easy and flowing, without being florid or diffuse; and his arguments close, clear and pertinent. In a word, he was to the opposers of truth a *Boanerges*; but to its friends a *Barnabus.'*[52] Over fifty percent of Middleton's account is given to Toplady's exercise of faith in suffering, particularly in relation to his death, which is suggestive of the degree of influence that his subject exerted over him. Darren Schmidt comments that 'Middleton's work, however, exuded the rigour of a Toplady rather than the amicable moderateness of a Newton.'[53] Whilst this may accurately describe the broader quality of this work, the way in which Toplady's history is narrated seems primarily intended as a model of what Christian suffering looks like when wedded to Calvinistic convictions. It therefore takes the form of a particular kind of apologetic, perhaps as a refutation of the false Wesleyan claims of recantation.[54]

Almost a century later came a single chapter in Bishop J. C. Ryle's *Christian Leaders of the Last Century or England a Hundred Years Ago,* where it is evident that Ryle struggled to balance his admiration for Toplady's work with unease over his style.[55] Ryle wrote extensively on church history, contrasting the high points (the Reformation, Puritanism and the evangelical revival) with the low (Roman Catholicism, Laudianism and Tractarianism). Andrew Atherstone notes that he had 'little patience for historical nuance or ambiguity', taking a 'facts are facts' approach to the narrative.[56] This binary approach to the handling of historical data was almost bound to struggle when it came to a complex character like Toplady, Atherstone noting Ryle's profound distaste for

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[52] Middleton, 'Augustus Montague Toplady, A. B.', p. 478.

[53] Darren Schmidt, 'Erasmus Middleton's *Biographia Evangelica*', in Andrew Atherstone and David Ceri Jones (eds.), *Making Evangelical History: Faith, Scholarship and the Evangelical Past* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), p. 61.

[54] Middleton might also have been consciously modelling his short biography on the pattern of John's Gospel, where around half the chapters treat with the events of the Passion and Resurrection of Christ.

[55] Ryle, *Christian Leaders of the Last Century*, pp. 360, 363, 379, 380, 381.

[56] Andrew Atherstone, 'J. C. Ryle and evangelical churchmanship', in Atherstone and Jones (eds.), *Making Evangelical History*, pp. 90 & 94.

his ‘caustic attitudes’, to the extent that he avoided even reproducing examples of this in his own account. There was a strange overlap with Toplady in Ryle’s approach, where ‘history [was] put to polemic use in an attempt to fix evangelicalism’ , although presumably this was simultaneously undermined by his less than forensic treatment of the historical data (in contrast to Toplady).[57] Ryle, despite his palpable lack of enthusiasm for Toplady’s approach, nevertheless highlights his significance:

> Toplady’s controversial works display extraordinary ability. For example, his ‘Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England’ is a treatise that displays a prodigious amount of research and reading. It is a book that no one could have written who had not studied much, thought much, and thoroughly investigated an enormous mass of theological literature. You can see at once that the author has completely digested what he has read, and is able to concentrate all his reading on every point which he handles. The best proof of the book’s ability is the simple fact that down to the present day it has never been really answered. It has been reviled, sneered at, abused, and held up to scorn. But abuse is not argument.[58]

One might thereby conclude that such profundity would garner support and collegiality, but no - Ryle tells us that he was not ‘what the world would call a *genial* man - had very few intimate friends - and was, probably, more feared and admired than loved.’ This image is reprised a few pages later when he says, ‘It is more than probable, too, that it gave him the reputation of being a narrow-minded and sour divine, and made many keep aloof from him, and depreciate him.’ Notwithstanding, there are counterbalancing notes here, with Ryle referring to ‘the eminent spirituality of the tone of his religion. There can be no greater mistake than to regard him as a mere student and deep reader, or as a hard and dry controversialist’ and, ‘Yet really, if the truth be spoken, I hardly find any man of the last century who seems to have soared so high and aimed so loftily, in his personal dealings with his Saviour, as Toplady.’[59] According to this view, Toplady was a kind of isolated, friendless genius, grudgingly admired from a safe distance - a view that is not shared by other biographers.

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[57] Atherstone, ‘J. C. Ryle and evangelical churchmanship’, pp. 88 & 101.
[58] Ryle, *Christian Leaders of the Last Century*, pp. 379-80.
[59] Ryle, *Christian Leaders of the Last Century*, pp. 360, 363, 367.

William Winters' *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. A. M. Toplady, B.A.* of 1872[60] is a more substantive treatment, though it seems to draw heavily on Row, Middleton, and Ryle.[61] Winter was a bookseller, religious journalist and historian who became pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Waltham Abbey, between 1876 and 1893. He provides a more detailed explanation of the destruction of some of Toplady's writings, shortly before his death, based upon the published narrative from his executor, William Hussey.[62] There is some helpful commentary upon his qualities as a scholar, which to natural talent added an extraordinary degree of focus and diligence, bestowing great proficiency upon him from an early age.[63] Similar to Ryle, Winters regarded Toplady's erudition as quite singular: 'Toplady's reply [to Nowell, in 1769] displayed a mass of information and learning seldom possessed by so young a mind, and abounded with arguments which remained unanswered, only because they were unanswerable.'[64] Winter also supplies more detail than others regarding Toplady's friendships with Samuel Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith, William Mayo and other famous individuals, commenting that 'he mixed very freely in all the habits of social intercourse with persons of all persuasions and denominations'.[65] This provides a tantalising glimpse of his ecumenicity, which showed itself in other ways, as we shall explore later. It is worth noting, however, that this is another largely uncritical account of its subject.

Fifth in the chronological listing is Thomas Wright's *Augustus M. Toplady and Contemporary Hymn-Writers* of 1911, a thorough treatment which includes a wealth of additional contextual material, which may have been sourced from friends such as John Ryland and Edward Hitchin, that is helpful when critiquing other biographies.[66] Wright's account took the form of the second

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[60] William Winters, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. A. M. Toplady, B.A.* (London: F. Davis, 1872).
[61] Winters, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of ... Toplady,* pp. 7, 8, 19, 57, 80, 93-115.
[62] William Hussey, 'Letter', in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 68, part 1 (April 1798), 272-3.
[63] Winters, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of ... Toplady*, pp. 11, 12, 13, 21.
[64] Winters, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of ... Toplady*, p. 28.
[65] Winters, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of ... Toplady*, p. 41.
[66] Wright, *August M. Toplady and Contemporary Hymn-Writers*, pp. 75-6, 82, 83.

volume in a series entitled 'The Lives of the British Hymn Writers', subtitled 'Personal Memoirs derived largely from unpublished materials' and evidences Wright's effort as an assiduous researcher, where the material is laid out in chronological order, supported by extensive lists and appendices. We learn here a great deal about Toplady's many rich friendships, which provide an intriguing correction to Ryle's portrayal of him as an intimidating man with 'very few intimate friends'.[67] Wright's treatment of the Zanchius translation, which triggered the conflict with Wesley is interesting: he clearly applauded its contents, but he devoted no space towards a consideration of its significance. This in turn perhaps led him too quickly to critically judge Toplady's response to the plagiarism: 'Toplady's blood was up, and the bitterness of his attack has scarcely a parallel in religious history', and 'Toplady, whenever Wesley was under consideration, displayed a truculence which, exasperating as were the tactics of his opponents, is not for one moment to be defended.'[68] Alongside this commentary, without disclosing his sources, Wright included an account of a conversation between Toplady and Thomas Olivers, one of Wesley's lieutenants, which occurred in the book-room of the Foundery, on 8 April 1773. The conversation is humorous, sly even, and has a winsomeness to it, even though the two men were engaged in a form of verbal jousting. If accurate, this presents a contrasting picture of Toplady's gentleness and courtesy, even during encounters which were defined by the profoundest dissent.[69]

In fact, we are indebted to Thomas Wright for a level of background detail that neither Ryle nor Lawton build into their narratives. Alongside the references to Johnson, Goldsmith and Mayo, from this account we also learn about Toplady's amicable relations with James Boswell and his friend, the Rev. William Johnson Temple, and even David Garrick, the famous actor, playwright and theatre-manager.[70] Wright supplies an extensive account of Toplady's close friendship with Mrs

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[67] Ryle, *Christian Leaders of the Last Century*, p. 360.
[68] Wright, *August M. Toplady and Contemporary Hymn-Writers*, pp. 88 & 90.
[69] Wright, *August M. Toplady*, pp. 119-24.
[70] Wright, *August M. Toplady*, p. 127.

Catharine Macaulay, the widow, socialite and historian, concluding that his own intimations of early mortality led him to focus his energies away from that relationship, and towards his vocation. Wright records that Garrick, alongside Mrs Macaulay as well as Sir Joshua Reynolds worshipped at Orange Street during Toplady's appointment.[71] Alongside this list of Toplady's contacts, Wright also sketches out the more intimate friendships with other theologians, writers and church leaders, which included Ambrose Serle, William Romaine, Martin Madan, John Ryland, John Gill, Edward Hitchin and Andrew Gifford. One singled out for particular emphasis as an influence, was the Baptist, John Gill: Toplady did not just study and value his *Body of Practical Divinity* (1769), but he regularly listened to him preach, frequently meeting and corresponding with him. It was Gill who encouraged him to publish his translation of Zanchius (1516-90), and Toplady admitted that he had deferred so doing for nine years because of his fear of the reaction, stating, 'I was not then, however, sufficiently delivered from the fear of man.'[72] No doubt, it has been the strength of this association that has, in part, cemented Toplady's reputation as a controversialist, drawn somewhat towards the extreme fringes of Calvinistic orthodoxy. A. H. Freundt Jr. differentiates between how Gill saw himself (a defender of 'staunch Baptist principles and what he believed to be orthodox Calvinism against contemporary heterodoxical views of the Trinity') and how he has been perceived ('He actually espoused an extreme form of Calvinism').[73]

Wright also confirms for us something of the depth of friendship and mutual respect that Toplady enjoyed with certain of his colleagues, such as Ambrose Serle, with Toplady on one occasion stating in a letter to him, 'The person does not breathe whom I love and respect more than you'. In Serle's own correspondence, Toplady was described a giant.[74] One cannot review the

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[71] Wright, *August M. Toplady*, p. 184.

[72] Wright, *August M. Toplady*, p. 34.

[73] A. H. Freundt Jr, 'Gill, John', in Walter A. Elwell (ed.), *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, Second Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), p. 483.

[74] Wright, *August M. Toplady and Contemporary Hymn-Writers*, p. 142.

extant letters, and the corresponding testimonies regarding him, and conclude that Toplady was a remote, intimidating character that did not easily form strong relationships with others.[75] The breadth of Toplady's social connections is also reflected in the catholicity of his studies. Wright notes his indebtedness to the works of John Gill, Stephen Charnock, Edward Polhill and John Bunyan. His diary references him reading Hervey's *Dialogues* (1755), Watts's *Logic* and the Greek Testament (1725), and records his highly critical review of Baxter's *Aphorisms Concerning Justification* (1745).[76] There is also useful contextualisation here. Whilst this account of Toplady's life is certainly no study in neutrality, it does include an extensive listing of 'unpublished manuscripts in Toplady's handwriting',[77] as well as referring (as others do) to Walter Row's edition of *Works* as a valuable resource, notwithstanding its manifest weaknesses. He describes Row as 'a pious and unmethodical man', asserting that 'His memoir of Toplady in the first volume is studded with mistakes; in printing Toplady's works he does not follow chronological order, and he mentions neither whence the miscellaneous papers are taken nor their dates. When, however, he deals with the hymns he literally riots in confusion.' Nevertheless, he remains indebted to Row's flawed endeavours, 'but for his enthusiasm, much that we possess of Toplady's would have been hopelessly lost.'[78] Furthermore, it is Wright who confirms the explanation for the relative paucity of material that constitutes the estate of a man who was clearly a compulsive writer all of his life.[79] Whilst the dating of the related event is unclear, it seems that the following extract describes an event shortly prior to his death,

> Toplady next resolved to destroy all his manuscripts, and he and Hussey spent two whole days committing them to the flames. Only a bundle of sermons, a number of articles of a miscellaneous

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[75] Toplady, 'Collection of Letters', in *Works*, pp. 829-82.

[76] Toplady's diary entry for 10 August 1760 is reproduced in 'Journal of Mr Toplady's', *TGM for October 1800*, 395. This is cited in Wright, *August M. Toplady*, p. 28.

[77] Wright, *August M. Toplady*, pp. xvii-xxi.

[78] Wright, *August M. Toplady*, pp. 230-31.

[79] Indeed, it appears that Wright is dependent upon the same sources that Winter used in his earlier (1872) *Memoirs*: Winter, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of ... Toplady,* pp. 90-92. This was very likely the account of William Hussey.

> character, and a few letters, remained when Ryland and Dr. Gifford happened to call. They expressed their sorrow on account of the procedure, and begged that the rest might be preserved. With reluctance, Toplady gave a partial consent, and turning to Hussey he said, "My dear friend, you are at liberty to do whatever you please with them.[80]

Wright goes on to inform us that, amongst the destroyed works was a 'very voluminous History of England, nearly completed', as well as 'many works of taste and genius' which supplies a tantalising hint of the potential scale of the research that would have been possible if not for that final act of self-censorship. Later, he concluded by stating,

> Such are the salient events in the life of that diary and whole-hearted apostle and genius, Augustus M. Toplady, who, whether we consider him as hymnist, prose writer, or preacher, is one of the most distinguished ornaments of the Church of Christ… No man contended more energetically for, or wrote more luminously on, the doctrines of Free Grace. His influence on Christendom has been enormous, and his career is a striking confutation of the idea sometimes put forward that Calvinism and gloom are synonymous terms.[81]

The Rev. C. Sydney Carter published a sketch of Toplady's life in 1949.[82] Carter's sketch is almost too brief to add value, especially as he repeats accusations about Toplady's 'abusive and violent controversial language which is quite inexcusable', but he does helpfully correct Ryle's inaccurate portrayal of him as a friendless soul, confirming his close connections with Lord Chesterfield, David Garrick, Dr. Samuel Johnson and Mrs Macaulay.[83] Carter seems to have been dependent upon Wright's account, even at times replicating the form of words although without any explicit referencing. Due perhaps to its brevity, this article has value in presenting a succinct timeline of the key events in Toplady's ministry, as well as presenting a picture of the declined state of London's Anglican churches at that time. This helps to support the perspective conveyed in Toplady's 1769 *The Church of England Vindicated from the Charge of Arminianism*.[84] Carter concurs with Ryle that 'Toplady's tractate, like his later and fuller *Historic Proof of the Calvinism of*

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[80] Wright, *August M. Toplady*, p. 222.
[81] Wright, *August M. Toplady*, p. 241.
[82] Sydney Carter, 'Augustus Montague Toplady: A World-Famous Divine', *The Evangelical Quarterly*, vol. XXI no. 4 (October 1949), 286-96.
[83] Carter, 'Augustus Montague Toplady', 291.
[84] Carter, 'Augustus Montague Toplady', 288-89.

the Church of England, is a logical, powerful and very able defence of the Calvinism of the Church of England, based upon the Prayer Book and Articles, which has never been answered.'[85]

By contrast, George Lawton's *Within the Rock of Ages* supplies the first 'modern' assessment of Toplady's work and significance, and there is some attempt at an analysis of his writings, although overall there is still a palpable sense of perplexity over his choices, a rather guarded treatment of his contentious manner as well as a dismissive approach to his expressions of childhood piety. Lawton's treatment of the growing rift with Wesley feels like a synthetic construction, imposed upon the narrative of Toplady's life - exacerbated primarily by an ambiguous chronology. In the chapter dealing with his Trinity College, Dublin education (1755-60), and after referring to a letter from Wesley (1758), Lawton states 'Toplady's animus against Wesley grew with the years. A great theological cleavage widened between them, and Toplady may have been jealous of the older man's success.' In the very next paragraph, it seems as if Lawton is seeking to cement Toplady as a brick into a bigger construct: 'Calvinistic theology was already hardening against Methodist Arminianism.'[86] And yet, Toplady did not become persuaded of the truth of Calvinism until 1758, and the evidence is that Wesley's response to the publication of the Zanchius translation (1769) took him by surprise. Toplady's debt to a Wesleyan preacher,[87] coupled with his profound reverence for the peacemaker George Whitefield[88] would suggest that Lawson's 'cleavage' was more the product of Wesley's (later) calculated tactics in opposing Toplady's translation of Zanchius in late 1769.[89] The biographical data supplied is quite specific, and there is some useful analysis of Toplady's theology and polemic, but Lawton's lack of referencing justifies a degree of caution regarding a narrative about Toplady's motivations and actions which is evident so early in this treatment.

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[85] Carter, 'Augustus Montague Toplady', 295.
[86] Lawton, *Within the Rock of Ages*, pp. 29-30.
[87] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A.B.', in *Works*, p. 2.
[88] Toplady, 'A Concise Character of the Late Rev. Mr. Whitefield', in *Works*, p. 494.
[89] John Telford, *The Letters of John Wesley:* vol. 5 (London: Epworth Press, 1931), p. 167.

These matters were too much for George M. Ella, who took Lawton to task in his, admittedly more nakedly polemical, *Augustus Montague Toplady: A Debtor to Mercy Alone*, first published in 2000.[90] Ella's treatise runs to nearly 800 pages, and includes a very generous sampling of Toplady's writings, including essays, articles and letters: it is therefore a genuinely useful compilation, to be read alongside *The Works,* as well the individual publications themselves. This is the most voluminous treatment of all and was clearly driven by Ella's High Calvinism. The proportion devoted to the reproduction of many of Toplady's works is extremely helpful, but even so this treatment feels like an attempt to slot him into someone else's polemic. Indeed, Ella disdains any serious referencing to Evangelicalism as a phenomenon, and displays an affinity for older sources which hinder him from accessing more recent historical insights. This is a peculiar attribute for a relatively modern account.

Finally, we have the comparatively slim booklet from Lee Gatiss, *The True Profession of the Gospel*, published in 2010, but which sets out to make the case for Toplady's theological significance within Gatiss' own contemporary ecclesiastical and cultural context.[91] This supplies no new historical data pertaining directly to Toplady, and it is frustratingly brief, given the author's valuable work in seeking to contextualise Toplady within his own broader ecclesiastical culture, and narrower theological cohort - as he also does with Whitefield.[92] Gatiss defines Toplady's identity using his own quadrilateral, comprising Evangelical, Reformed, Anglican and controversialist elements, and asserts that he was a moderate Calvinist, a matter which will be explored in more depth in this thesis.[93] Gatiss's treatment provides a functional overview of the religious context for Toplady's focus, and frames the complex relationship between Whitefield and Wesley which

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[90] Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady,* pp. 36-39, 49, 53-54, 140-142.

[91] Lee Gatiss, *The True Profession of the Gospel: August Toplady and Reclaiming our Reformed Foundations* (London: The Latimer Trust, 2010).

[92] Gatiss, *The True Profession of the Gospel*, p. 43.

[93] Gatiss, *The True Profession of the Gospel*, pp. 62-3, 72.

predated Toplady's controversialist writings.[94] Of particular interest here is where Gatiss notes that Whitefield made use of the *pactum salutis* ('covenant of redemption')[95] which he sees as especially diagnostic of Whitefield's 'Reformed credentials' when combatting Wesley's Arminianism.[96] It is possible that the nature of this scholastic emphasis helped influence the young Toplady in his decision to translate Zanchius, especially given the admiration he expressed for Whitefield. Gatiss is also helpful in surveying the theological influences on Toplady, which included the puritan, Thomas Manton, Bishops William Beveridge and John Pearson, Archbishop Thomas Bradwardine, and the Dutch Reformed scholastic Herman Witsius. Toplady considered Francis Turretin, the Genevan theologian, 'one of the greatest divines that ever lived.'[97] Gatiss affirms Toplady as 'a mainstream Reformed theologian' but shows that he adopted some 'minority positions within the Reformed consensus',[98] citing William Twiss, John Gill and Bishop John Hooper as examples. He also identifies him as sitting firmly within the historic Anglican fold, defending Toplady against charges of heterodoxy, due to his association with Dissenters such as Gill.

Gatiss also confirms that the picture of Toplady as a prickly, sharp-tongued polemicist is in fact a misleading caricature. He shows how James Hervey's 'gentle' responses to Wesley did little to sweeten the dialogue prompted by his book *Theron and Aspasio*.[99] He notes that Toplady's robust treatment of Nowell in 1769 was largely because the latter was heavily dependent on the writings of the Laudian Peter Heylyn, which were, in turn, strongly polemic and revisionist in nature.[100] He draws a natural conclusion from the occasion when Wesley effectively 'forged' his own version of Toplady's translation of Zanchius, and given the nature of the legal penalties involved, comments:

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[94] Gatiss, *The True Profession of the Gospel,* pp. 35-49.
[95] Lee Gatiss (ed.), *The Sermons of George Whitefield,* vol. 1 (Wheaton, Il: Crossway, 2012), pp. 32-33.
[96] Gatiss, *The True Profession of the Gospel,* p. 45.
[97] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 68.
[98] Gatiss, *The True Profession of the Gospel,* p. 64.
[99] Gatiss, *The True Profession of the Gospel,* p. 74.
[100] Gatiss, *The True Profession of the Gospel,* p. 79.

‘There were harsh laws at the time against forgery, which did indeed lead to the execution at Tyburn of one of Mr. Wesley’s acquaintances in 1777. Toplady thought it better to refute Wesley’s falsehoods than take him to court for his plagiaristic libel.’[101] Furthermore, Gatiss argues that, stylistically, Toplady’s polemic was entirely consistent with that of the famous cartoonist William Hogarth, a theme which will be considered later.

Finally, after considering the more modern treatments of Toplady, there is value in mentioning an earlier summary of him, as an example of the kind of intellectual conundrum presented by Toplady. Leslie Stephen’s monumental *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* neatly encapsulates some of the key, lingering, apparently disparate, characteristics of the man, and so he is worth quoting in full:

> Toplady, his [Wesley’s] chief antagonist, seems to have been a man of considerable native powers of intellect, guided by a temperament of excessive fervour. His language towards Wesley is abusive and indecorous. He is in too great a passion to argue effectively. His chief work is an historical attempt to vindicate the Church of England from the charge of Arminianism, and he is still the intellectual contemporary of Calvin or Zanchius and [sic] the early Puritan writers whom he quotes in utter unconsciousness that they belong to an antediluvian epoch. His latest authority is Jonathan Edwards, whose writings represent the blending of the old Calvinism with more recent philosophical thought. Toplady, however, shows a greater logical insight than his other allies and antagonists, and remonstrates very justly with Priestley, who inherited the ordinary hatred of the rationalist school for Calvinism, whilst abandoning the rationalist dogma of free-will. Priestley previously denied that the Calvinist theory had any relation to the philosophical doctrine of causation. Toplady regards the philosophical doctrine as a perversion of Calvinism; but the mere perception that there is such a philosophical doctrine suffices to distinguish him from most of his fellows. *Their* arguments are almost entirely confined to a fanciful interpretation of Scripture texts, implying a serene indifference to the very existence of Hume, Gibbon, or Voltaire.[102]

Stephen repeats the same criticisms of Toplady’s temperament without seeking to locate him in the context of eighteenth century polemic, and exemplifies a cultural trend which was dismissive of the fruits of Reformation learning. Nevertheless, he admits that Toplady manifested a superior logic to his contemporaries, as well as implying a functional familiarity with key Enlightenment thinkers. The extract is useful in highlighting a sense of bafflement over Toplady's capacity to operate within

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[101] Gatiss, *The True Profession of the Gospel,* p. 95.

[102] Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 2 (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1876), pp. 427-8.

two intellectual worlds, perceived by Stephen (and others like him) as being essentially mutually exclusive.

Alongside these biographical sources, there are also some evaluations of Toplady's contribution within the broader literature. Paul Helm develops his analysis of Toplady's significance in a paper which seems specifically intended to undermine David Bebbington's thesis concerning the origins of evangelicalism.[103] Bruce Hindmarsh, in a chapter on 'Evangelical Spirituality and the Natural World' devotes a section to 'Augustus Toplady: Necessity, Mechanics, and the Emblematic Imagination' in which he considers the nature of his subject's interactions with the physico-theologians (Isaac Barrow, Robert Boyle, John Ray, John Wilkins), as well as with Newton, Locke and Halley.[104] Within a work which powerfully critiques the cultural context for evangelicalism, he notes the tension between this more abstruse edge of Toplady's reflections on the natural world, and his more childlike delight in observable phenomena, which lead him (in Hindmarsh's view) to an emblematic approach.[105] Elsewhere his treatment of Toplady is comparatively gentle, although rather as a foil to the moderation of John Newton, the former being defined primarily by his locus at the heart of any dispute.[106] One key text on Calvinistic Methodism contains scattered references which, cumulatively emphasise Toplady's instrumentality as a purveyor of Calvinistic contention.[107] This sort of treatment is significant given that it seems to pick up on one particular thread within the various biographical accounts and assigns it a dominant status. Mark Noll echoes such sentiments, peppering his writing with phrases such as 'fervently anti-Arminian works from Augustus M.

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[103] Paul Helm, 'Calvin, A. M. Toplady and the Bebbington Thesis', in Michael A. G. Haykin & Kenneth J. Stewart (eds), *The Emergence of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008), pp. 199-220.

[104] D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Spirit of Early Evangelicalism: True Religion in a Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2018), pp. 145-49.

[105] Hindmarsh, *The Spirit of Early Evangelicalism*, p. 147. This emphasis will be explored in more detail in Chapter 5.

[106] D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition* (Grand Rapid, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), pp. 122, 136.

[107] David Ceri Jones, Boyd Stanley Schlenther and Eryn Mant White, *The Elect Methodists: Calvinistic Methodism in England and Wales 1735-1811*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016), pp. 155, 158, 160.

Toplady' and 'stiff Calvinists like Toplady'.[108] Likewise, David Bebbington casts Toplady in the role of controversialist in relation to the 'Calvinistic Controversy of the 1770s that drove Methodism further apart from other Evangelicals' and tells us that this was 'based in part on a misunderstanding' where Toplady and Rowland Hill are, in effect, portrayed as the guilty parties.[109] Thus, the *only* reference to Toplady in this extensive work on the origins of evangelicalism presents him as a causal factor (along with Rowland Hill) of this period of disunity and wrangling over doctrine.[110] This thesis will challenge this somewhat polarising view of Toplady's contribution, and in so doing must necessarily question assumptions about the qualities of evangelicalism.

Contrastingly, within William Gibson's narrative of the Church of England over this period, Toplady does not merit a single entry in the index, although he is fleetingly listed alongside a collection of 'heterodox clergy' ordained within the Bath and Wells diocese in or around 1773.[111] Gibson's passing reference suggests that it may not just be the evangelicals who struggled to categorise Toplady.

Our review of the relevant literature helps us begin to determine Toplady's significance. After all, he was merely one Anglican clergyman amongst many, yet he is remembered for a particular kind of contribution, and his influence is perceived to be divisive, depending upon the theological or philosophical perspective of the commentator. Furthermore, although this period was characterised by prolific pamphleteering, and Toplady is therefore one isolated contributor within a genre favoured by many writers,[112] yet his writings have been collected together into compilations

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[108] Mark Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys,* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2004), pp. 258-9.

[109] D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 28.

[110] A digression on this specific incident is included in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

[111] William Gibson, *The Church of England 1688-1832: Unity and Accord* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 203.

[112] Pamphleteering was certainly not unique to religious contexts. Randall McGowen documents a legal *cause célèbre* in France which was connected with widespread pamphleteering: Randall McGowen, 'Law and Enlightenment', in Martin Fitzpatrick, Peter Jones, Christa Knellwolf and Ian McCalman (eds), *The Enlightenment World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), p. 507.

that have gone through many reprints.[113] In 1769, he confronted Thomas Nowell, Principal of St. Mary Hall, Oxford, in relation to the expulsion of the six Methodist students, but it is Toplady's polemic which has persisted in the record of the incident, not Nowell's. For a man whose life was so short, and so utterly defined by chronic illness, Toplady's legacy is difficult to understand at first sight, although it seems likely that, from the earliest stages he perceived himself in a combative role. S. L. Ollard provided the only standalone account of the Oxford expulsions, and in his listing of relevant publications, refers to Toplady's *The Church of England Vindicated from the Charge of Arminianism*, noting that this was a direct response to the doctrinal content within Nowell's rebuttal of Sir Richard Hill's *Pietas Oxoniensis.* Ollard's account is firmly focused on the events themselves, and on the treatment meted out by the authorities to James Matthews, Thomas Jones, Joseph Shipman, Erasmus Middleton, Benjamin Kay and Thomas Grove. Within his main text he does not mention Toplady at all, although Erasmus Middleton, Richard Hill and others within Toplady's circle are mentioned. Later, in an appendix, there is a brief paragraph on Toplady's book, which acknowledges that Toplady was primarily concerned with the doctrine of the Church of England and therefore 'merely touches on the Six Students.'[114] Of course, the circumstances which framed Toplady's response to Nowell did not directly include Wesley at all, indeed the latter had chosen not to involve himself in a defence of the Methodist students, perhaps because of their Calvinistic beliefs, or his own politics. Ryan Nicholas Danker observes that 'Interestingly, the prosecutors of the trial were of the same political ilk as John and Charles Wesley'.[115] This expulsion was a critical event, representing something of a boiling point in the relations between high churchmanship and the weakened evangelical presence in Oxford. Given that one of the

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[113] An example of this genre is *Contemplations on the Sufferings, Death and Resurrection of Christ* by Augustus Montague Toplady 1740-1778, published in 1971 by Gospel Standard Baptist Trust Ltd. This presents a selection of poetical verse, and largely unattributed devotional extracts from the *Works*.

[114] S. L. Ollard, *The Six Students of St. Edmund Hall, Expelled from the University of Oxford in 1768* (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co, 1911), p. 53.

[115] Ryan Nicholas Danker, *Wesley and the Anglicans* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2016), p. 199.

students (James Matthews) was closely associated with Wesley's colleague, John Fletcher of Madeley, it is conspicuous that this was a controversy that Wesley chose to sidestep. That disengagement demonstrates that Toplady's polemic did not initially have Wesleyan Arminianism in his sights, but the publication of *The Church of England Vindicated*, combined with the timing of the translation of Zanchius no doubt convinced Wesley that this was a challenge which he could not ignore.[116]

Flowing out of the varied opinions of Toplady's style are those that purport to define his focus. One approach arises out of his uncompromising Calvinism, notes the fact that a significant proportion of his oeuvre was dedicated to opposing John Wesley, and concludes thereby that this was his primary motivation. Even Ella, in his defence of Toplady the polemicist, seems to tacitly support this perspective. Though it is doubtful that he anticipated it, it was the subsequent publication of Toplady's translation of Zanchius (in 1769) which precipitated the contentious dialogue between himself and Wesley. As one might expect, Ella devotes some 41 tightly crafted pages to this particular episode, turning it into an uncompromising justification of Toplady's approach, although he appears to view the chief significance of *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination* from the perspective of how it was received by Wesley. There is some basis for this approach, given preserved letters from Wesley to his colleague Walter Sellon which apparently initiated the subsequent conflict.[117] But it may be unwise to reduce the 'Zanchi Affair' to a spat between Wesley and Toplady, as the publication of the translation stands, in effect, as a distinct piece of work, a product of an earlier period, before there is evidence of such antipathy or an occasion for it. The influence of Zanchius on Toplady's spiritual formation seems to be too

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[116] This is suggested in Wesley's own correspondence with colleagues. See Telford (ed.), *The Letters of John Wesley,* vol. 5, p. 167.

[117] Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady*, p. 223.

significant to seek to reduce it to a tactical component within the contention with Wesley, and more likely contributes toward a clearer understanding of his Anglicanism.

Lawton's treatment of Toplady's publication of the Zanchius translation seems to adopt a similar stance, covering it under the subheading of 'Toplady versus Wesley and others'.[118] After briefly overviewing the background to, and content of this 'free translation', and after admittedly applauding the author's tone and espousal of 'moderate Calvinism', Lawton then *immediately* embarked on a consideration of how Wesley responded to the book and the resulting furore. Indeed, the 'others' referred to in Lawton's subheading receive no mention, other than some passing comments about Wesley's own associates, to whom he delegated the task of attacking Toplady in print.[119] Taken alongside Ella's more uncritical endorsement, Lawton's perspective tends to reinforce the idea that the publication of the Zanchius translation was, in fact, all about Wesley - but we have no evidence that this was the case at all. In fact, this seems an unlikely gloss, since the translation is one of three works which predate the spat with Wesley, and we know that Toplady had held back publication for some nine years, so it had clearly not been written with anything of the kind in mind.

Toplady's biographers provide some useful context on his evangelical or 'experimental' emphasis which demonstrate how he viewed the practical use of doctrine. We have seen that Middleton dwelt at some length on how Toplady repeatedly articulated his personal experience of the 'Doctrines of Grace', especially as his health declined, and death was approaching. The increasing intensity with which Toplady comprehended the impact of his doctrine on both a physical and emotional level is narrated, using language which suggests that the dying man was already experiencing a new realm.[120] This is consistent with a developing emphasis within

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[118] Lawton, *Within the Rock of Ages*, p. 98.
[119] Lawton, *Within the Rock of Ages*, pp. 100-05.
[120] Middleton, *Biographia Evangelica,* vol. 4, p. 484.

evangelicalism at this period - indeed Row's own selection of diary extracts display Toplady's conviction that Christianity was an 'experimental religion', as quite a substantial proportion is devoted to a recounting of his experience, and his reflections on the ebbing and flowing of spiritual life within himself. In 1767, on 13 December, Toplady wrote in his diary 'Between morning and afternoon service, read through Dr. Gill's excellent and nervous tract on predestination. … How sweet is that blessed and glorious doctrine to the soul, when it is received through the channel of inward experience!'[121] There is much more in this vein, indicating that Toplady took his experiences very seriously, and actively sought to relate them to an objective source. This matter will be further explored in Chapter 5.

Interwoven with this emphasis is a consistent narrative which details his pastoral activities with his parishioners, as well as at least two carefully documented instances of poor relief. This content serves to counterbalance the bookishness that characterised Toplady's private life, and underscores the primacy of his sense of vocation, where the expectation is that experience will match doctrine. Bebbington places this emphasis firmly within the framework of Enlightenment empiricism, stating that 'it is not surprising that Evangelicals frequently spoke of true Christianity as 'experimental religion'. It must be tried by experience. … Edwards summed up the attitudes of his co-religionists. "As that is called experimental philosophy", he wrote, "which brings opinions and notions to the test of fact; so is that properly called experimental religion, which brings religious affections and intentions, to like test." Evangelicals held Newtonian method in high esteem.'[122]

It is in relation to Toplady the theologian that there are a number of sources which have some relevant points to make, although it becomes evident that their focus is more upon Toplady's Calvinism than, say, his churchmanship. Henry D. Rack's biography of John Wesley provides a number of abbreviated references to the controversy that played out between Toplady and the

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[121] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A.B.', in *Works*, p. 4.
[122] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain,* p. 58.

Methodist leader,[123] but notably also supplies some clues as to the former's comparative status within the polemic. He informs us that 'Only Toplady, one of the main protagonists in the 1770s, seems to have had a fair knowledge of the historical theology behind the tradition.'[124] Later, he expands on that insight, stating that 'Augustus Montague Toplady was the most learned on the other side, and he certainly shows a considerable knowledge of Augustine and the late mediaeval controversialists like Bradwardine as well as of Calvin and Calvinistic scholastics. … He was, however, well in line with contemporary views of religious toleration and, as we shall see, in favour of the cause of America and 'liberty', unlike Wesley.' Indeed, Rack is at some pains to delineate the contrast between Toplady and Wesley, commenting that 'Wesley, who seems to simply have inherited an instinctive revulsion against Calvinism, probably had no profound knowledge of its scholastic literature as well as little sympathy with it.'[125] That statement supplies a helpful means of interpreting the basis for the apparently insoluble disagreement that arose between the two men, as well as the animus that fueled it. This thesis argues that Toplady was driven by his appreciation of scholasticism, a matter which, according to Rack, Wesley would not have been equipped to handle.

Ryan Nicholas Danker, however, does not corroborate Rack's view of Toplady's toleration, when dealing with the divergence between the 'old divinity' and the new. He states, 'For example, in the controversy following the expulsion of Calvinistic Methodists from St. Edmund Hall. … Toplady, much like Hill, argued for a strict Calvinist reading of the Articles of Religion that left little room for most Anglicans … While most Evangelicals, and especially Newton, would not have argued for such an exclusivist reading, Toplady used the lens through which most Evangelicals viewed these foundational documents.' Danker then goes on to draw the distinction for us:

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[123] Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 1989), pp. 351, 376, 407.

[124] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 200.

[125] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 451.

'Evangelical Anglicans saw themselves as promoting a moderate form of Calvinism. Bebbington describes the Evangelicals as moderate Calvinists in that they "rejected stronger views of God's control of human destiny" … This moderate Calvinism is seen in Newton's comment that Calvinism, like sugar in tea, should only be served "mixed and diluted"'.[126] This kind of narrative sets out the distinction between the moderates (embodied by Newton and Whitefield) who somehow held together a form of consensus with Wesley, and their stricter brethren (such as Toplady) who apparently did not. Further consideration of this issue is provided later in this study. Similarly, Herbert Boyd McGonigle, in his treatment of Wesley's 'Evangelical Arminianism' peppers his account with references to Toplady, and (more significantly) devotes five pages to the polemical spat triggered by Wesley's plagiarisation of the Zanchius translation. McGonigle reprises the theme of Toplady as 'a zealous and rigid Calvinist' and a 'dogmatic supralapsarian'[127] who, 'in spite of his many gifts and abilities, seemed unable to present and explain his convictions without indulging in most abusive attacks on his opponents.'[128] He also echoes Lawton's perplexity over Toplady's choice of Zanchius as a worthy project, repeating the notion that Toplady's Calvinism was more dependent upon Zanchius than on Calvin. To this misconception, Richard A. Muller provides a persuasive response: Toplady's affinity for Zanchius reflected an appreciation for his moderate, infralapsarian Calvinism, one that clearly harmonised with Toplady's own broader churchmanship.[129]

McGonigle is not neutral over the nature of the controversy, justifying Wesley's abridgement in the following way:

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[126] Danker, *Wesley and the Anglicans*, p. 226.

[127] This would appear to be an unwarranted assertion. Toplady's endorsement of a more moderate infra/ sublapsarianism is clear. See Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated from the Charge of Arminianism*, p. 9, and *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England*, p. 506.

[128] Herbert Boyd McGonigle, *Sufficient Saving Grace: John Wesley's Evangelical Arminianism* (Carlisle, Paternoster Press: 2001), p. 282.

[129] Richard A. Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), pp. 112, 116, 117, 118.

> With his much-practiced skill in editing and extracting, Wesley had reproduced Toplady's essential arguments without the repetitious verbiage that characterised the original. But why did John Wesley publish a work that defended a doctrine he thought an anathema? The only possible explanation is that he wanted this doctrine to be seen for what it was.[130]

But this kind of explanation does not adequately explain the data. Firstly, the Zanchius volume was not Toplady's own creation, but a translation (from the Latin) of an original work, of a particular theological genre, which Toplady had attempted to preserve as a whole. Secondly, Toplady's anger was not triggered because Wesley produced a clever piece of précis, but rather because his reductionism had taken the subject matter beyond the point of caricature, running rough-shod over the careful nuancing of Zanchius' scholasticism, and attributing words to him which he had not uttered. The weighty outline of doctrine contained in the original 118 pages had been reduced to a mere twelve (actually one page, folded into twelve) and this (in Toplady's view at least) had consequences for the accurate representation of truth. And thirdly, there was what McGonigle recognises to be the 'reprehensible epilogue' added by Wesley to the heavily truncated text, which supports the reasonable view that the intention was to caricature a disputed set of beliefs, rather than supply a reasoned antidote. The attempt to justify Wesley's actions here has the effect of painting Toplady's original publication in a particular light, reinforcing the idea that making available a valuable scholastic work, one that may well have been foundational to the Articles of the Church of England, was merely a piece of misplaced polemic, one requiring Wesley's editing skills to put right.

The consideration of Toplady as a theologian is highly relevant. There is no doubt about his Calvinism, but it is important to understand where he sits on a spectrum - moderate, high or 'hyper'. This question receives cumulative attention in the following chapters, since it relates to Toplady's role as an Enlightenment thinker, and not least because of the developing antipathy between himself and Wesley, towards the end of his ministry. After all, Bebbington tells us that

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[130] McGonigle, *Sufficient Saving Grace,* p. 284.

'Increasingly, Wesley is being recognised as an Enlightenment thinker in his own right. … His beliefs in religious tolerance, freewill and anti-slavery have rightly been identified as Enlightenment affinities.'[131] Was Toplady therefore putting himself outside of the Venn diagram representing the overlap between Protestantism and Enlightenment thinking, through his opposition to Wesley? A little later, Bebbington tells us that 'Enlightenment evangelicals were eager to avoid disputation' and reports Wesley's disparaging comments about Puritan controversy, describing the character of Methodism as having 'a principled preference for harmony over exact theological definition.'[132] Toplady's defining characteristics hardly include a pathological aversion to conflict, so this perception necessarily feeds through to a consideration of how or where he sits on the evangelical spectrum.

Overview of Contemporary Literature

Having reviewed the available literature which relates directly to Toplady himself, it is important to provide a summary of the broader scholarship which may be relied upon to accurately frame his context.

In relation to the enduring influence of Calvinism into this period of 'late orthodoxy', much is owed to the work of Richard Muller,[133] Carl Trueman and James T. Dennison, Jr[134] and Dewey D. Wallace, Jr.[135] In addition to Muller, the understanding of the continuing relevance of scholasticism

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[131] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain,* p. 52.

[132] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain,* p. 58.

[133] Richard A. Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008).

[134] Carl R. Trueman & R. Scott Clark, (eds.), *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment* (Eugene, Or: Wipe & Stock, 2006).

[135] Dewey D.Wallace Jr, *Shapers of English Calvinism 1660-1714* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

is dependent upon the work of Manfred Svensson,[136] Willem J. Van Asselt,[137] Adriaan C. Neele[138] and Norman Kretzmann.[139] The understanding of the Elizabethan and Puritan dynamic between Anglicanism and a developing nonconformity is informed by the work of Patrick Collinson,[140] W. B. Patterson,[141] Jonathan D. Moore,[142] Crawford Gribben[143] and David D. Hall.[144]

The prevalence of a Calvinistic orthodoxy within the Church of England prior to Laud has been well documented by Anthony Milton,[145] Diarmaid MacCulloch,[146] Nicholas Tyacke,[147] Jake Griesel[148] and Peter Lake.[149] Indeed, Stephen Hampton has demonstrated a functional continuity of Calvinism into the early eighteenth century Anglican Church.[150] For a well-rounded view of the evangelical revival of the eighteenth century, as well as functional definitions of evangelicalism, I am reliant on the work of W. R. Ward,[151] Bruce Hindmarsh,[152] David Bebbington,[153] Mark A.

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[136] Manfred Svensson and David VanDrunen (eds.), *Aquinas Among the Protestants* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2018).
[137] Willem J. Van Asselt, *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011).
[138] Adriaan C. Neele, *Before Jonathan Edwards: Sources of New England Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).
[139] Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny and Jan Pinborg, (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
[140] Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).
[141] W. B.Patterson, *William Perkins & the Making of a Protestant England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
[142] Jonathan D. Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism: John Preston and the Softening of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2007).
[143] Crawford Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism, Experiences of Defeat* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
[144] David D. Hall, *The Puritans, a Transatlantic History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).
[145] Anthony Milton (ed.), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism Volume I, Reformation and Identity, c. 1520-1662* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
[146] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700* (London: Penguin Books, 2004).
[147] Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c. 1590-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).
[148] Jake Griesel, *Retaining the Old Episcopal Divinity: John Edwards of Cambridge and Reformed orthodoxy in the Later Stuart Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).
[149] Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
[150] Stephen Hampton, *Anti-Arminians: The Anglican Reformed Tradition from Charles II to George I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[151] W. R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
[152] Bruce D. Hindmarsh, *The Spirit of Early Evangelicalism, True Religion in a Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
[153] David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain, A History From the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

Noll,[154] Thomas Kidd,[155] Geordan Hammond & David Ceri Jones,[156] Henry D. Rack[157], Herbert Boyd McGonigle,[158] Boyd Stanley Schlenther[159] and others.

The treatment of the Enlightenment period as a whole draws in a widely-contrasting panoply of authorities, including those presenting a more polarised or even radical understanding (Peter Gay,[160] Ernest Cassirer,[161] Jonathan Israel[162]), those whose interpretation is more syncretistic (Carl L. Becker,[163] Dorinda Outram,[164] Ritchie Robertson[165] & Anthony Pagden[166]), and those who focus on the modern religious responses (David Sorkin,[167] William J. Bulman,[168] Robert Ingram[169] and Knud Haakonssen[170]). For a broader survey of responses to the Enlightenment, I have drawn on the work of John R. Betz,[171] George M. Marsden,[172] William R. Everdell[173] and Darrin M. McMahon.[174] For

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[154] Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism, The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Nottingham: IVP Apollos, 2004).
[155] Thomas S. Kidd, *George Whitefield America's Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).
[156] Geordan Hammond and David Ceri Jones, (eds.), *George Whitefield Life, Context, and Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
[157] Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism Third Edition* (London: Epworth Press, 2002).
[158] Herbert Boyd McGonigle, *Sufficient Saving Grace: John Wesley's Evangelical Arminianism*, (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2001).
[159] Boyd Stanley Schlenther, *Queen of the Methodists, The Countess of Huntingdon and the Eighteenth-Century Crisis of Faith and Society*, (Durham: Durham Academic Press, 1997).
[160] Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment, The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1995).
[161] Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).
[162] Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).
[163] Carl L. Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth century Philosophers (Second Edition)* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).
[164] Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[165] Ritchie Robertson, *The Enlightenment, The Pursuit of Happiness 1680-1790* (London: Allen Lane, 2020).
[166] Anthony Pagden, *The Enlightenment and why it still matters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
[167] David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).
[168] William J. Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment: Orientalism, Religion and Politics in England and its Empire, 1648-1715* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
[169] William J. Bulman and Robert G. Ingram (eds.), *God in the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
[170] Knud Haakonssen (ed.), *Enlightenment and Religion, Rational Dissent in Eighteenth century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
[171] John R. Betz, *After Enlightenment, The Post-Secular Vision of J. G. Hamann* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).
[172] George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards, A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).
[173] William R. Everdell, *The Evangelical Counter-Enlightenment: From Ecstasy to Fundamentalism in Christianity, Judaism, and Islam in the 18th Century*, (Boston, MA: Boston University Studies in Philosophy, Religion and Public Life, 2022).
[174] Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

particular contexts of the development of Enlightenment thought, I have utilised research from Richard B. Sher,[175] Andrew Hook,[176] John Gascoigne[177] and Thomas Ahnert.[178] A more general cultural framing of the eighteenth century is dependent upon the work of Frank O'Gorman,[179] Paul Langford[180] and J. C. D. Clark.[181] Insights into continental Enlightenment developments are derived from the work of Alan Kors[182] and Dan Edelstein,[183] and a framing of the impact of the new Newtonian science is indebted to the work of A. C. Crombie,[184] Peter Harrison,[185] Sara J. Schechner,[186] Ronald L. Numbers[187] and John Hedley Brooke.[188] The framing of the understanding of eighteenth century Anglicanism is underpinned by the work of John Walsh,[189] Jeremy Gregory,[190] Anthony Milton,[191] William Gibson[192] and Peter B. Nockles.[193]

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[175] Richard B. Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).
[176] Andrew Hook and Richard B. Sher (eds.), *The Glasgow Enlightenment* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1995).
[177] John Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the age of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
[178] Thomas Ahnert, *The Moral Culture of the Scottish Enlightenment 1690-1805* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014).
[179] Frank O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century, British Political & Social History 1688-1832* (London: Arnold, 1997).
[180] Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People, England 1727-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).
[181] J. C. D. Clark, *English Society 1688-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
[182] Alan Charles Kors, *Atheism in France, 1650-1729: Volume I, The Orthodox Sources of Disbelief* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).
[183] Dan Edelstein, *The Enlightenment, A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).
[184] A. C. Crombie, *The History of Science from Augustine to Galileo* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1995).
[185] Peter Harrison, Ronald L. Numbers and Michael H. Shank (eds.), *Wrestling with Nature, From Omens to Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).
[186] Sara J. Schechner, *Comets, Popular Culture, and the Birth of Modern Cosmology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).
[187] Ronald L. Numbers (ed.), *Galileo goes to jail, and Other Myths about Science and Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).
[188] John Hedley Brooke, *Science and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991 & 2014).
[189] JohnWalsh, Colin Haydon and Stephen Taylor (eds.), *The Church of England c. 1689-1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
[190] Jeremy Gregory (ed.), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism Volume II, Establishment and Empire, 1662-1829* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).
[191] Anthony Milton (ed.), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism Volume I, Reformation and Identity, c. 1520-1662* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
[192] William Gibson, *The Church of England 1688-1832, Unity and Accord* (London: Routledge, 2001).
[193] Peter B. Nockles, *The Oxford Movement, Anglican High Churchmanship 1760-1857*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

All of these treatments deal with their subjects over periods of continual, dynamic change and it is important to note that, relatively speaking, Toplady represented one moment along such a continuum. A fuller engagement with the detail of this historiography will unfold in the following chapters, and it will become evident that the 'model' of his engagement demonstrates both continuities as well as anomalies in contrast with the literature.

Outline

Recognising Toplady's function as a point of intersection for several distinct intellectual and religious currents, this study considers Toplady's significance in the mid-eighteenth century via an exploration of five contributory themes.

In Chapter One, I chart Toplady's spiritual formation, looking at his development, influences, defining characteristics and key life events. This section is more dependent upon his own journals, and biographical material, compares him with contemporaries and will argue for a rapid and distinctive theological developmental path, one which equipped him for a unique form of ministry.

In Chapter Two, I seek to demonstrate that Toplady's Protestantism embodied a reprise of Calvinistic Scholasticism, which had profound implications for his methodology as well as his preferred theological sources. I argue that this background helps to explain the nature of the rift with Wesley, frames his understanding of Anglican distinctiveness, informs his engagement with Enlightenment thinking, and lends a distinctive shape to his evangelicalism.

Chapter Three focuses on Toplady's sense of Anglican identity - locating him on the Establishment spectrum, and seeking to understand the basis for his conviction-based churchmanship. It will be seen how his (scholastic) Calvinism is entirely material to his defence of

confessional Anglicanism in the face of the subscription debate, and the twin forces of Latitudinarianism and Laudianism.

Chapter Four documents how Toplady, who might so easily be accused of anachronism through his recapitulation of an allegedly outmoded scholasticism, engaged with the broader cultural context of the Enlightenment. I explore several examples of his output which demonstrate a distinctive voice, one which contrasts markedly with many of his contemporaries, and I argue for his exposition of 'elenctic' theology as a tool for engagement with aspects of Enlightenment thinking.

Chapter Five extends this theme by investigating Toplady's Evangelicalism, discovering that he was simultaneously exemplar and outlier, when contrasted with the standard models proposed within the literature.

Chapter Six functions as a closing summary, with the aim of bringing these disparate themes together, for these are not discrete matters which can be considered in isolation. Toplady's embracing of Anglicanism was predicated upon his Calvinistic convictions which, in turn, were a product of the particular influences which helped form him. Conversely, his Calvinism, whilst it clearly led to a kind of ecumenism, was perceived in distinctly Anglican tones. In his engagement with Enlightenment themes, ideas and literature, Toplady drew heavily on Calvinistic scholasticism which also fed through to his particular expression of evangelicalism. This means that, as we seek to fit him into some kind of accepted set of definitions, he remains at times both exemplar as well as outlier.

Chapter 1

Toplady's Spiritual Formation

Use the Gifts bestow'd on me
To thy great Praise alone;
LORD, the Talents lent by thee
Are thine and not my own:
May I in thy Service spend
All the Graces thou hast given,
Taken up, when Time shall end,
To Live and Reign in Heav'n.[1]

Beginnings, Transitions, Colours

To attempt to address the nature of Toplady's spirituality is to open the can of worms which contains the more prominent themes of his public ministry. One Wesleyan biographer framed the problem when he asked 'Was Toplady a *Christian*? It is difficult to answer the question. A more monstrous combination of opposing qualities has seldom figured on the stage of human life.'[2] This viewpoint was no doubt coloured by the kind of bipartisan posturing that occurred during the Arminian-Calvinist conflict of the 1770s, and of course by that time Toplady had been on a quite distinct developmental journey. The fragmentary nature of his own diaries, as well as the patchy nature of the biographical treatments available means that any consideration of his spiritual and theological formation needs to proceed with caution.

Toplady's theological credentials are not exactly untainted by controversy. George M. Ella carefully notes his association with both John Ryland, Snr and James Hervey, both of whom espoused a 'High Calvinist' stance, a position which has been associated with Antinomianism.[3]

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[1] Toplady, 'Petitionary Hymn XV', *Hymns and Sacred Poems on a Variety of Divine Subjects*, p. 19.
[2] Luke Tyerman, *Wesley's Designated Successor: The Life, Letters and Literary Labours of the Rev. John William Fletcher, Vicar of Madeley, Shropshire* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1882), p. 341.
[3] Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady*, pp. 147-8.

George Lawton records an instance when one of John Wesley's lieutenants, Thomas Olivers, recalled a service where Toplady preached, commenting 'What a shame it is…that an Antinomian preacher should have so many people to hear him.'[4] These factors, and others like them, have led to a narrative that pins Toplady firmly to this 'high' Calvinist category: I shall argue that, due to his influences and associations, he presents a more complex and nuanced position. I shall also seek to demonstrate that Toplady's own spiritual formation led him to address a set of conditions which prevailed at that time, both within the Church of England, and within the broader evangelical movement.

Walter Row's minimalist *Memoirs* of Toplady included within the collected *Works* tells us little of Toplady's spiritual journey, but does confirm that his father died at the Siege of Carthagena in 1741, leaving his mother Catherine a widow.[5] A previous son, Francis, died in infancy and the young Toplady was closely cared for by his frail, often overwrought mother and was clearly conscious of their straitened circumstances, especially when they spent time with the wealthy, pugnacious and disputatious family on the maternal side. These factors may well have fed into the precocious and possibly oversensitive spirituality displayed in his boyhood diaries of 1752-4.[6] George Lawton comments that 'Some will be revolted by this unnatural, unhealthy piety. It is uncommonly introvert',[7] and later adjudges that 'The diary unwittingly traces the lines of the life to follow. At times the boy is insufferably priggish and pathologically pugnacious. He has keen intelligence, but he was swept by emotional tides.'[8] Whilst he accuses another biographer, Thomas Wright, of not being able to 'see the child for the man', it seems that Lawton was committing the reverse error: it is reasonable to expect the process of maturing into adulthood to have the effect of

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[4] Lawton, *Within the Rock of Ages*, p. 85.
[5] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A.B.', in *Works*, p. 2.
[6] 'Juvenile Diary of A. M. Toplady', *TGM*, no. 401 (May 1899), 349-54.
[7] Lawton, *Within the Rock of Ages*, p. 17.
[8] Lawton, *Within the Rock of Ages*, p. 21.

moderating childhood excesses. Bearing in mind that the pages of his 'juvenile diary'[9] cover a period when Toplady was aged twelve to fourteen, and that most adults would shudder to recollect their utterances at such an age, the content tells quite a bit about his developing spirituality. He was clearly of a serious disposition, so books (and bookcases) figure prominently. He was in the habit of committing his thoughts to paper, writing a manual of prayers, setting down his own rules for life and drafting sermons. The diary contains a significant degree of reflection regarding the dysfunctional family relationships, which, regardless of the kind of perceptive deficiencies associated with immaturity, evidences Toplady's awareness of the moral implications at quite a sophisticated level. Of particular note are those episodes recorded which demonstrate his forthright and robust responses (to adult family members) when his integrity and character were being impugned.[10] Whilst it is conceivable that Lawton's criticisms of Toplady's oversensitivity have some justification, the diary entries demonstrate that this characteristic is primarily in evidence when his own honesty was called into question, and when he was on the receiving end of a kind of arbitrary brutality, usually emanating from his aunt and uncle. This may set the scene for his reaction to Wesley in later years.

Whilst Toplady identified his conversion to evangelical Christianity as something that happened later, these diary entries show a child engaging in spiritual activities which go beyond the more formal habituation that may afflict the children of religious parents. In April 1752, he commented that 'I always join in the prayers which are said in the school: and though I do not understand the prayers, yet I join in the Lord's prayer'[11] to which he affixed his own closing petition. Many children might stoically comply by rote with something they did not understand, and look no further, maybe even dismissing the entire notion of prayer: even at that age, Toplady was striving

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[9] 'The Unpublished Juvenile Diary of Toplady', *The Christian Observer*, vol. 30 (London: J. Hatchers and Son, 1830), 548-57.

[10] 'The Unpublished Juvenile Diary of Toplady', 551, 553, 554.

[11] 'The Unpublished Juvenile Diary of Toplady', 552.

after something which seemed at that time beyond his comprehension. The diary shows him not merely writing prayers, but actually praying them with his mother. In March 1753, he preached a sermon on Isaiah 1:16-17 to his aunt, and in April he heard two sermons (in different churches) on the same day, one of which he rated, and the other concluded was 'a most miserable hum-drum sermon'. In January 1754 he 'heard a poor, mean sermon, and a very long one, by Dr. Piere, Bishop of Bangor. The only good thing in it was when he said, "to conclude."'[12] These and other diary extracts indicate the beginnings of a vital spirituality and the qualities of critical discernment that resurface later in his writings, as well as a preparedness to venture a forthright opinion.

It should perhaps be no surprise that these characteristics resurfaced later, especially in the years immediately following Toplady's conversion. According to his own account, Toplady arrived at a clear sense of his own conversion to Christianity at the age of sixteen, whilst in Ireland in August 1756, under the ministry of the Wesleyan Methodist preacher, James Morris.[13] He retained a lifelong appreciation for Morris, commenting in a diary entry on 1 August 1760, 'Visited, with my dear brother Morris, that precious follower of the Lamb, Mrs Hutchins.'[14] In February 1768, a diary entry refers to Morris as the means of his calling[15] and in September 1768 he referred to Morris's own spiritual struggles, and his intention of writing a letter of encouragement to him.[16] Whilst Toplady's own conversion under an Arminian ministry did not apparently lead him to take a negative view in later years of the human instrument, it is nevertheless clear that a profound change in theological perspective was occurring. In his own biographical treatment, Thomas Wright pointed to 1758 as the year when Toplady was persuaded of the truth of the Calvinistic theological system. That this change was not easy for him, Wright's account makes clear, stating 'but after his

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[12] 'The Unpublished Juvenile Diary of Toplady', 556.
[13] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A.B.', in *Works*, p. 2.
[14] 'Journal of Mr Toplady', *TGM*, vol. V (1880), 393-97.
[15] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A.B.', in *Works*, p. 13.
[16] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A.B.', in *Works*, p. 26.

awakening under Morris he made a special study of the 39 Articles, which he found, to his dismay, to be Calvinistic. His principles being Arminian, he felt that he could not in conscience subscribe to them, and he therefore resolved to sever his connection with the Church of England and to become a minister in one of the dissenting and Arminian churches.'[17] Indeed, as late as September 1758, he was still corresponding amicably with John Wesley, but Wright informs us that he was wrestling with doubts about the Arminian system, that is until his encounter with Thomas Manton's *Discourses on the Seventeenth of John*, brought about a transformation of his theological outlook. Thereafter, he considered himself to be a Calvinist, in agreement with the 39 Articles and Wright concludes, '…he at once abandoned his idea of quitting the Church.'[18]

That this change was foundational becomes immediately apparent from diary entries in Toplady's journal at the age of twenty: entries for 29 and 30 July and 4 August 1760 show that he was reading *Hervey's Dialogues*[19], and on July 31, he was studying *Poole's Synopsis*.[20] Of particular interest here is the latter, for this was a monumental work, published in five volumes,[21] providing a verse-by-verse summary of biblical interpretation, bringing together 150 critics and commentators from most eras (ancient and medieval Jewish Rabbis, Church Fathers, Catholics, Lutherans and Reformers) in a highly rigorous work of exegesis, the whole text being in Latin. Matthew Poole (1624-79) was a presbyterian but a *jure divino* one which may have helped endear him to the young and idealistic Anglican Toplady. His *Synopsis* took him ten years to complete, after the project had been prompted by William Lloyd who later became Bishop of Worcester.[22] All of this conveys a very evident point: that a young man of twenty was studying a work of such

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[17] Wright, *Augustus M. Toplady*, p. 19.

[18] Wright, *Augustus M. Toplady*, p. 21.

[19] James Hervey, *Theron and Aspasio* (Dublin, Robert Main: 1755).

[20] 'Journal of Mr Toplady', *TGM*, vol. V (1800), 393-97; and Matthew Poole, *Synopsis Criticorum* (1679).

[21] Volume 3 alone amounts to 2,178 pages. The work remains largely unknown at the present time, as it has yet to be translated into English.

[22] Nicholas Keene, 'Poole, Matthew (1624-79)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: ODNB, 2004).

technical detail, only four years after his conversion, is a significant fact which tells us a great deal about his rapid development. Poole's *Synopsis* incorporated both Calvinistic and scholastic[23] content, but it also reflected the increasing theological diversity of the seventeenth century, so it is apparent that Toplady was exposing himself to a broader range of theological influences, even whilst he nurtured the relationship with Morris, the Wesleyan. Indeed, on 11 August, prior to leaving Ireland, he commented that 'Dear Mr. Morris preached a most excellent sermon, from *Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will hear thee, and thou shall glorify me*. Afterwards took leave of that precious man of God.'[24] This sense of a caring relationship across the doctrinal divide contrasts markedly with an increasingly acrimonious interaction with Wesley.

Toplady attested that he owed his theological development to the writings of Thomas Manton This influence brought about not only a radical theological change, but governed the rest of his life to a significant extent.[25] Manton had been an Anglican holding Presbyterian views, who was deprived of his living at St. Paul's, Covent Garden at the time of the Act of Uniformity in 1662. There may actually be several reasons for the impact that he undoubtedly had on the young Toplady. Firstly, there is a circumstantial component, that both of their early livings were located in North Devon and Somerset. Secondly, Manton disapproved of the execution of Charles I and had been in favour of the restoration of Charles II. Toplady would have warmed to this since he was not a supporter of Oliver Cromwell, and was instead a monarchist, deploring the treatment meted out to William Prynne for his loyalty to Charles I.[26] Thirdly, although he was imprisoned in 1670 for the crime of holding private meetings, it seems he was held in generally high respect within the Established Church. Fourthly, there is testimony to his particular strengths within the very limited

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[23] This is based upon Poole's listing of sources.
[24] 'Journal of Mr Toplady', *TGM*, vol. V (1880), 393-97.
[25] Lawton, *Within the Rock of Ages*, pp. 31-35.
[26] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 666.

Memoir by William Harris, published in the first volume of *The Works of Thomas Manton*, in the form of the comments of Dr. Bates, who delivered Manton's funeral sermon:

> He was endowed with an extraordinary knowledge of the scripture; and in his preaching gave such perspicuous accounts of the order and dependence of divine truths, and with that felicity applied the scripture to confirm them, that every subject, by his management, was cultivated and improved. His discourses were so clear and convincing, that none, without offering violence to conscience, could resist their evidence; and from hence they were effectual, not only to inspire a sudden flame, and raise a short commotion in the affections, but to make a lasting change in the life.[27]

It seems as if there were qualities intrinsic to the man himself, which might incline Toplady to have given his writings a sympathetic reception - indeed there are aspects to his manner and method listed here which Toplady aspired to emulate. Not least was Manton's humility, reflecting a frame of piety at odds with what Toplady was shortly to experience when relationships with Wesley broke down. Within a short publication, entitled *Anecdotes, Incidents, and Historic Passages,* Toplady recorded the brief story of an encounter that Manton had with a disgruntled congregant who expressed considerable dissatisfaction of his sermon. This was at the height of his popularity in London, yet Manton's response was gentle and humble to a fault. Toplady named his source ('Told me by Dr. Gifford, Oct. 21, 1769'), and it seems significant that the sole mention of Manton in this collection of works serves only to underscore this particular aspect of his character.[28] That Toplady was especially susceptible to gentleness in others comes out elsewhere in his works: within the introduction for his *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England*, Toplady dwelt at some length on the 'Delicacy and Tenderness' and on the 'engaging Meekness of (t)his amiable and elegant Refuter' when portraying the somewhat brutal treatment meted out to James Hervey by Wesley, in relation to the former's *Theron and Aspasio* (1755). Indeed, on the very next page, Toplady referred again to the 'Humility and Self-Diffidence'[29] of Hervey, suggesting that

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[27] William Harris, 'Some Memoirs of the Life and Character of the Reverend and Learned Thomas Manton, D.D.', in *The Works of Thomas Manton,* vol. 1 (London, James Nisbet & Co: 1870), p. xxii.

[28] Toplady, 'Anecdotes, Incidents, and Historic Passages', in *Works*, p. 511.

[29] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. xvi-xvii.

these qualities were of paramount importance to him - a matter which contrasted strongly with the pungency of his own prose when debating later on with Wesley.

Manton did not publish these writings during his lifetime, but over the years following his death, several volumes of his sermons were issued, with the series on John 17 arriving in 1684. There were forty-five sermons in all, and they are models of expositional clarity, breathing the kind of practical divinity that the churchman, William Perkins, also exemplified. It is not difficult to see a forthright mind, such as Toplady's, warming more to this than to the more impenetrable Congregationalist, John Owen (1616-83). Given that Owen's first significant theological work was *A Display of Arminianisme* (1643), one might have expected Toplady to display a greater affinity for his work, but there is mainly only inferential evidence of this puritan, plus some topical citations in his own (surviving) writings.[30]

For a serious student such as Toplady, the forty-five sermons would have had a cumulative theological impact, but sermons II, XII, XX, XLI & XLII are likely to have provided a robust challenge to the Arminianism he had been accustomed to.[31] There are several aspects to this material which would have contributed to this impact: firstly, the text of these transcribed sermons was both highly-structured, as well as being very detailed. The combination of these two qualities would render the content highly appealing to the kind of ordered and methodical mind we see displayed in Toplady's written work. Secondly, under each subheading, Manton included a section on 'Uses', which explicitly connected his theology to real life. This integrated neatly with the Practical Divinity upon which the Church of England was based, appealing to the Churchman in the young Toplady. Thirdly, there are the key theological themes which Manton drew out of John 17: in Sermon (II), he dealt with the perseverance of the saints, Christ's relation to 'the elect' and the

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[30] The briefest of references are to be found in 'Excellent Passages from Eminent Persons' in *Works*, pp. 563, 564, 568, 573, 577, 581, 583, 585, 601, 604.

[31] Thomas Manton, 'Sermons Upon The Seventeenth Chapter of St. *John*', in *The Works of Thomas Manton,* vols 10 & 11 (London, James Nisbet & Co: 1870).

decrees of God. In sermon (XII), Manton emphasised Christ's prayer for the elect, handled objections to the doctrine with great fairness and attention to detail, whilst also emphasising its practical uses. In Sermon (XX) Manton demonstrated that he had the capacity and inclination to deal with a problematic text such as John 17:12 (the 'son of perdition').[32] Toplady would have been used to contemporary preachers skipping around such passages, but Manton addressed the issues robustly, and then went on to show why his exegesis had practical implications. Again, the compelling aspect to this treatment, was not only the statement of the doctrine, or its 'elenctic' defence (similar to Turretin), but the confirmatory persuasiveness of the practical application. It would have taken a plurality of persuasions to have brought about this radical reinvention of Toplady's theology, given the very single-minded and forthright nature of the youth we see revealed in his juvenile diary, and it is apparent that Manton supplied just the right mix.

Some Type of Calvinism

'Calvinism' is a descriptor of one particular theological thread within the Christian tradition that emerged from the Reformation and permits an initially bewildering range of applications. Richard A. Muller reviews the options, ranging from 'Calvin's own position on a particular point, perhaps most typically of Calvin's doctrine of predestination' through the application to his followers, or 'as a term for the theology of the Reformed tradition in general'. He comments that the term 'similarly, has been used to indicate Calvin's own distinctive theological positions, sometimes the theology of Calvin's *Institutes*. It is also used to indicate the theology of Calvin's followers. More frequently, it has been used as a synonym for 'Reformed' or for the 'Reformed tradition.'[33] Roy Porter epitomises the nature of the problem from a quite different perspective: in his key work

[32] Manton, 'Sermons Upon the Seventeenth Chapter of St. *John*', in *The Works of Thomas Manton,* vol. 10, pp. 125ff, 241ff & 334ff.

[33] Richard A. Muller*, Calvin and the Reformed Tradition: On the Work of Christ and the Order of Salvation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), p. 51.

Enlightenment, he nowhere provides us with a definition of what Calvinism is, but he does tell us that 'The Calvinist dogma of predestination had bred 'enthusiasm', that awesome, irresistible and unfalsifiable conviction of personal infallibility.'[34] Observing in passing that the crime of 'enthusiasm' was as attributable to Wesleyan Methodists as any other brand of evangelicalism, it is worth noting that the essential link between Calvinism and predestination is the lasting impression left by this comment. Diarmaid MacCulloch conveys his sense of unease over the use of the term, stating that Calvin himself would not have approved of the easy equation between his name and 'the whole of Reformed Protestant theology and practice.'[35] Later, he alludes to the difficulties inherent in appropriating Calvin's name to describe a Christian movement, because 'alternative Reformed voices' to Calvin included Bucer, Cranmer, Peter Martyr, Melanchthon, Laski and Bullinger, and they 'for the most part…had done their work before Calvin…and…did not look to him as an authority, and frequently disagreed with him.'[36]

Nevertheless, we are left with the term, and that Toplady developed into a species of Calvinist is beyond dispute, not least because his own writings make extensive use of this designation, and because he 'owned' the label as a place-setter for his own convictions. His reputation is founded on this fact, and several of his key writings were spirited and substantive defences of the Calvinistic basis for the Anglican settlement. However, there was, at the same time, significant nuance. John Walsh tells us that 'In 1772 the Calvinist Augustus Toplady, who was planning a polemical life of Archbishop Laud, dropped the idea, lest it might encourage mud-slinging not only at Arminianism, but at Christian orthodoxy itself: "we bid fair at present not for having an high Church", he wrote, "but for having no church at all."'[37] This expression of restraint is intriguing, since it postdates the

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[34] Roy Porter, *Enlightenment* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), p. 50.

[35] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation, Europe's House Divided 1490-1700* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 253.

[36] MacCullough, *Reformation*, p. 319.

[37] John Walsh, 'Introduction: The Church and Anglicanism in the "long" eighteenth century', in John Walsh, Colin Haydon and Stephen Taylor (eds.), *The Church of England c. 1689-1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 47.

publication of his translation of Zanchius (1769), his engagement with Thomas Nowell over the Oxford Expulsions of 1768,[38] and the beginning of his dispute with John Wesley in 1770, all of which are nothing if not robust defences of Reformed orthodoxy. It seems probable that the apparent restraint had as much do with a decision to pace himself, and marshal his resources for an altogether bigger project, the monumental *Historic Proof of Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England* which was published as two volumes in 1774. Indeed, this work has a great deal to say about Laud, as an embodiment of a particular kind of Arminian influence within Anglicanism.[39] Nicholas Tyacke identifies in Laud the particular propensity to identify Calvinism *as* 'Doctrinal Puritanism', which may help explain Toplady's twin aversions towards Laudianism and the Puritans.[40]

It is clear, therefore, that Toplady made the transition between two very different theological systems, but there was a wide spectrum of Calvinistic expression in England by the latter half of the eighteenth century. This fact was recognised by Andrew Fuller (1754-1815), the leading Baptist theologian of the time, in his description of three sub-categories: high, moderate and strict. Bruce Hindmarsh discusses the implications raised by these terms: by 'high', Fuller meant a variant of Calvinism which was 'more Calvinistic than Calvin himself; in other words, bordering on Antinomianism'. By moderate, it appears that Fuller imagined quite a broad church, comprising 'half Arminian, or, as they are called with us, Baxterians.'[41] And by 'strict', Fuller intended people like himself, who adhered to 'the system of Calvin', which he also described as 'evangelical Calvinists.'[42] Hindmarsh's focus is on John Newton's status, commenting that 'it is the amorphous

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[38] S. L. Ollard, *The Six Students of St. Edmund Hall, Expelled From The University of Oxford in 1768* (London, A. R. Mowbray & Co: 1911).

[39] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 640, 649, 650, 651, 655, 668.

[40] Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c. 1590-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 166-7.

[41] This variant more normally known as Hypothetical Universalism had been embraced by John Preston and Richard Baxter. See Jonathan D. Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism: John Preston and the Softening of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007).

[42] Hindmarsh, *John Newton*, pp. 122-3.

nature of the Anglo-Calvinist tradition that raises the question of the precise character of Newton's theology' since he had focused firmly on maintaining unity with Wesley, despite the fact that 'preachers sent by Wesley emphasised controversial points of doctrine.'[43] Newton's own story is in a way complementary to that of Toplady, as it highlights the extent to which the former downplayed key Calvinistic doctrines in order to preserve unity among evangelicals, and Hindmarsh states 'That in 1765 Newton felt he needed to defend predestination to Wesley illustrates the way that perfectionism exacerbated Calvinist-Arminian tensions which had until 1762 remained, however uneasily, suppressed.'[44] The perfectionism debacle was no mere side-show. In 1762-3, the excesses on the part of Thomas Maxfield and George Bell at Wesley's Foundery Society had brought unwelcome notoriety to the Methodist movement, culminating in the prophecy that the world would end on 28 February 1763.[45] Wesley himself made no bones about perfectionism being a core theme of his own message, and published his own *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* in 1767.[46] There is an intriguing crossover here with the new science: Wesley had become a believer in the efficacious powers of electricity as a cure-all, writing extensively about its properties as a 'panacea' in his 1760 *Desideratum: Or, Electricity Made Plain and Useful. By a Lover of Mankind, and of Common Sense*.[47] This was a time of great speculation, and that speculation fed through to Wesley's followers, who had noted some parallels with the kind of ecstatic religious experience recounted by devotees of perfectionism.[48] It is likely that the enthusiasm for Newtonian physics fed through to this emphasis on Perfectionism, and John Newton's concern about this emphasis was clear: there had been a consensus, an agreement between the Arminian and Calvinistic parties, that they would focus on matters of primary importance, and avoid schism by relegating secondary

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[43] Hindmarsh, *John Newton*, pp. 125, 127.
[44] Hindmarsh, *John Newton*, p. 136.
[45] Hindmarsh, *John Newton*, p. 132.
[46] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast,* p. 396.
[47] John Hedley Brooke, *Science and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 259.
[48] Hindmarsh, *The Spirit of Early Evangelicalism*, pp. 122-24.

matters to the status of 'opinion'. In Wesley's mind, this principle seemed to apply to the free-will/predestination debate, but by pushing perfectionism as a primary truth, Newton felt that he had effectively subverted their agreement. The correspondence between the two men on this topic dates back to April 1765.[49]

This indicates that by the time Toplady entered the fray with his translation of Zanchius, the uneasy truce between Arminian and Calvinistic evangelicals that had existed since the 'Free Grace' controversy between Whitefield and Wesley in 1741, was functionally over, and therefore, rather than this polemic being a contributory factor in the breakdown, it was more symptomatic of the state of affairs already pertaining. Following the Methodist Conference of 1770, Wesley took the unusual step of publishing the minutes, which explicitly rescinded any concessions that had been made to Calvinism, and emphasised the role of good works as an essential component of the basis for salvation in a manner that other evangelicals could not have ignored.[50] Herbert Boyd McGonigle alludes to the significance of this when he states, 'Henry Rack goes as far as to say that in these Minutes Wesley was as close to Pelagianism as he ever was. The judgement is not without some foundation.'[51] Accordingly, one notes that the timing of Toplady's foray into a published defence of Calvinistic doctrine matches so precisely with the resumption of hostilities, that this helps explain the nature of Wesley's response to his translation of a short work from an obscure theologian. It also may have informed Toplady's continued emphasis that the new Arminianism was, in fact, the old Pelagianism in new clothes.[52]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Toplady features only fleetingly in Hindmarsh's discussion of Newton, but there is one cryptic mention in connection with the theological development of John Ryland Jr (1753-1825) of Northampton, away from the High Calvinism of his father (John Collett Ryland,

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[49] Hindmarsh, *John Newton*, p. 133.
[50] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 454.
[51] McGonigle, *Sufficient Saving Grace*, p. 268.
[52] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated,* pp. 6-9, 35, 47.

1723-92), to the more moderate 'evangelical Calvinism' of Andrew Fuller. We read that, prior to this moderation, Ryland, Jun, had been influenced by 'authors such as Hussey, Gill, Brine, and Toplady.'[53] The reference to Toplady, as well as that significant source of influence upon him (Gill) would seem to place him firmly within the 'high' category, although there is no evidence in his own writings that he exhibited that diagnostic trait of constraining the 'free offer' of the Gospel, or that he displayed any 'antinomian' tendencies. This may alert us to the dangers inherent in fitting individuals into categories, but it may also reflect a species of cultural dissonance that existed between Particular Baptists and Anglicans at that time. And of course, whilst the Strict Baptist, Gill, was a profound influence on the young Toplady, he was very far from being the only one, as the references in his works demonstrate. This is born out in the very clear admiration that Toplady expressed for George Whitefield, in *A Concise Character of The Late Rev. Mr. Whitefield* (a brief biographical sketch, published within Toplady's *Works*), wherein it is apparent that this admiration was not limited to the man's character or the nature of his life's work, but also to the colour of his theology. Toplady states that Whitefield 'was a true and faithful son of the Church of England, and invincibly asserted her doctrines to the last; and that not in a merely doctrinal way (though he was a most excellent systematic divine), but with an unction of power from God, unequalled in the present day.'[54] Wright, in his biography of Toplady, informs us of the power he experienced in Whitefield's preaching on 16 August 1760, after which he refers to his decision to enter Holy Orders. A little later, Wright mentions Whitefield's invitation to join him in itinerant ministry, an option which Toplady felt that his precarious health prevented.[55] What is clearly evident here is the profound influence which that 'Moderate Calvinist' had upon Toplady's formation, and this is far from being an incidental, minor component in the bigger scheme of things. David Ceri Jones, referring to Whitefield's interaction with Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine in Scotland, states that 'While Whitefield

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[53] Hindmarsh, *John Newton*, p. 147.
[54] Toplady, 'Biography', in *Works*, p. 494.
[55] Wright, *Augustus M. Toplady and Contemporary Hymn-Writers*, pp. 29 & 164.

certainly sympathised with their Calvinism, he did not agree with their separatist ecclesiology.' Later, he comments that 'Whitefield was committed to an "evangelical ecumenicity" which sought to "bring evangelicals together under the banner of conversion"'.[56] This is a remarkably apt description of the way in which Toplady's brief clerical life played out, and may be testimony to the profound influence that Whitefield exerted upon him.

It is also helpful to note that the two men shared particular influences in common. In a study of Whitefield's conversion and early theological formation, Mark K. Olsen refers to Whitefield's encounter with the writings of John Edwards (1660-1714) of Cambridge, most notably his work *The Preacher* (1705-7) which Whitefield read in September 1739, and which persuaded him that the Church of England's Articles and Homilies were based upon the Reformed faith. Later, Olsen states that 'All this suggests that Whitefield saw himself as a Reformed Anglican in the vein of John Edwards and the other Calvinistic churchmen he was reading.'[57] Whitefield sympathised with Edwards' opposition to Archbishop John Tillotson's Latitudinarianism, which promoted an Enlightenment rationalism rather than what he regarded as an Establishment Calvinism.[58]

A similar appreciation of Edwards' writings can be seen in Toplady's work, although, intriguingly, whilst his diary entries are peppered with references to Gill, there is no corresponding mention of Edwards. However, within his 1769 polemic responding to Thomas Nowell, Toplady quoted extensively from Edwards' *Veritas Redux*[59] in his defence of the Thirty-Nine Articles, especially relevant to the equivocations of Bishop Burnet, who proposed the Articles 'to the clergy,

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[56] David Ceri Jones, Boyd Stanley Schlenther & Eryn Mant White, *The Elect Methodists: Calvinistic Methodism in England and Wales, 1735-1811* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), pp. 46-47.

[57] Mark K. Olsen, 'Whitefield's Conversion and Early Theological Formation', in *George Whitefield: Life, Context and Legacy*, Geordan Hammond and David Ceri Jones (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 43.

[58] Frank Lambert, 'Whitefield and the Enlightenment', in Hammond and Jones (eds.) *George Whitefield*, pp. 65-66.

[59] Published in 1707 and running to 558 pages, this was Edwards' powerful defence of mainstream Calvinism. See John Edwards, *Veritas Redux: Evangelical Truths Restored* (London: Jonathan Robinson, John Laurence, and John Wyatt, 1707), pp. 521-22.

to be taken in an ambiguous sense. They are taught, in the whole, to trim; to turn about as they please; to dissemble with God and man; to subscribe to that, which, they know, most assuredly, is, in the plain meaning of it, against their persuasion.'[60] For Toplady, as for Edwards, subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles was as much a function of integrity as of theological orthodoxy. Later in the same work, as Toplady set out the historical grounding for the validity of the Lambeth Articles of 1595, he returned again to the authority of 'The great and famous Dr. John Edwards, who flourished in the reigns of King William and Queen Anne, and was both a member of the university of Cambridge, and one of its brightest ornaments',[61] which authority was then used to help document the existence of manuscripts which supported Toplady's argument against Nowell.

Indeed, it is the lasting legacy of Edwards' theological and polemical work which helps frame our understanding of Toplady's own ministry. Dewey D. Wallace, Jr. attests to the 'seriousness, erudition, and even judiciousness of what he wrote', and confirms that Edwards 'stands as a representative and transitional figure of English Calvinism between the older Church of England and Puritan Calvinism on the one hand and the newer evangelicalism of the British revivals on the other.' Pertinent to this study, he emphasises the continuity between Edwards and 'the work of the Anglican evangelicals of the later eighteenth century such as George Whitefield, Augustus Toplady, and John Newton, and … Charles Simeon'.[62] Wallace's summary of Edwards' significance is important in stressing the theological continuities which united Toplady with his peers, none of whom would be considered anything other than 'moderate' in their Calvinistic convictions. Whilst it is true that Edwards was not explicitly referenced within Toplady's magnum opus, his two-volume *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England* (1774), neither was John Gill, who was clearly also an important influence on him. There are, however, repeated

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[60] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, p. 22.

[61] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, p. 50.

[62] Dewey D. Wallace, Jr. *Shapers of English Calvinism, 1660-1714: Variety, Persistence, and Transformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 242.

references to reading Gill's writings within Toplady's diary in 1767 and 1768,[63] always in tones of appreciation, alongside other positive references to the writings of William Cave (1637-1713), James Hervey, James Ussher (1581-1656), Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, Bishop Ezekiel Hopkins (1634-90), Richard Sibbes (1577-1635), Bishop John Wilkins (1614-72) and Joseph Hart (1712-68). Within his initial venture into polemical writing, *The Church of England Vindicated from the Charge of Arminianism*, whilst Edwards is cited in several places, there is one location where Gill's *The Cause of God and Truth* (1735-8)[64] is proposed to Nowell as a kind of theological nut to crack. Toplady made the claim of this volume that 'it has stood unanswered for, I believe, near thirty years; and you, Sir, or any other expert Arminian, would do well to try your skill on it, if you are able, while the learned and judicious author is detained from Abraham's bosom.'[65] He was writing in 1769 and Gill was to die shortly after, in October 1771.

Books and the Consolations of Life

One of Toplady's notable personal habits was the compilation of 'common-place books', 'collections of citations from Calvin, Witsius, Zanchi and other Reformation divines'[66] which he referred to as his *Collectanea*.[67] It seems probable that his catholic reading appetites reflected the broad nature of his associations, and it is therefore worth perusing Toplady's reading list in somewhat greater depth. On Friday 22 January 1768, his diary entry confirms that he had 'Bought

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[63] See (1767: December 8, 13, 26; 1768: March 2), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A. B.', in *Works*, pp. 3-14.

[64] This work was published by John Gill, in four instalments between 1735 and 1738, as an answer to an Arminian polemic against Calvinism, entitled *Dr. Whitby's Discourse on the Five Points* (1710) It is quite possible that Toplady regarded Gill's meticulous and granular analysis of both the biblical data and the Church Fathers as a kind of benchmark for his own later works.

[65] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, p. 76.

[66] Wright, *August M. Toplady and Contemporary Hymn-Writers*, p. 27.

[67] This appears to be a practice that commenced in his undergraduate years, but persisted over the longer-term. Toplady began a third volume of *Collectanea* in 1762.

Cave's *Historia Literaria*, Brook's *Dispensatory*, and Erskine's *Sermons*.'[68] His designations for the book titles are sometimes opaque: it is likely that he was referring to *The Whole Works of the Late Rev. Ebenezer Erskine, Minister of the Gospel at Stirling, Consisting of Sermons & Discourses*,[69] but then some of the individual sermons alluded to in the same diary entry originated from Ralph Erskine (1685-1752), as well as Ebenezer Erskine (1680-1754). Toplady did not always differentiate between them, and in his 1768 diary refers appreciatively to readings from 'Erskine's Sermons' on 22, 23, 24 January, 10 February, 17 and 31 July. The unqualified nature of that appreciation is reflective of what may be found in Whitefield's own journals, where references to both Ralph and Ebenezer are invariably positive and it is clear that Whitefield corresponded with both men on several occasions in 1739, preceding his first visit to Scotland in 1741.[70] On the ground, the reality was to become more complex and difficult for all parties. Beebe and Jones confirm that the initial warmth of the friendship between the Anglican Whitefield and the two Secessionist ministers was moderated by the former's determination to strengthen the Kirk, rather than throw in his lot with those pursuing the 'nascent Secessionist movement'.[71] Despite this schismatic dynamic, Whitefield's successive visits to Scotland were arguably successful, and so he could afford to be generous in his Journal entries which precede the difficulties, not least because he must have been aware of the extent of his theological debt to Ralph Erskine.[72] William Cave (1637-98) was a talented theologian[73] who published *Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Historia*

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[68] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A.B.' in *Works*, p. 11.

[69] *The Whole Works of the Late Rev. Ebenezer Erskine, Minister of the Gospel at Stirling, Consisting of Sermons & Discourses* (Edinburgh, Ogle & Murray: 1761).

[70] George Whitefield, *A Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Journal, From His Arrival at London, To His Departure from thence on his Way to Georgia, Fourth Edition* (London: James Hutton, 1739), p. 97.

[71] Keith Edward Beebe and David Ceri Jones, 'Whitefield and the "Celtic Revivals"', in Hammond and Jones (eds), *George Whitefield*, pp. 140-47.

[72] Beebe and Jones, 'Whitefield and the "Celtic Revivals"', p. 141.

[73] Gretchen E. Minton, 'Cave, William (1637-1713)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: ODNB, 2008).

Literaria a Christo nato usque ad saeculum XIV,[74] a literary history of ecclesiastical writers, as part of a polemical engagement with the radical, sceptical writer Jean le Clerc (1657-1736). The thoroughness of Cave's research was a by-word for academic rigour, and this treatise extended to 653 pages of tight Latin prose, excluding the massive indices. The third book on Toplady's shopping list that day was altogether of a more practical nature: 'Brooks Dispensatory' refers to *The Expert Doctor's Dispensatory* by Pierre Morel.[75] This is an extensive formulary for the prescription of medicinal concoctions, running to some 471 pages, and suggests that Toplady was familiar enough with his family's own tubercular pathology to feel the need to self-medicate. The extracts from his diary for 1767 to 1768 are peppered with references to his fragile health, some of which hint at the nature of his condition, and it is appropriate to seek to draw out some implications. Firstly, Toplady's descriptions of his parishioners betrays evidence of the kind of fragilities which formed the backdrop of everyday rural existence in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Frank O'Gorman paints the picture of a highly decentralised society, where the old systems of hierarchy and patriarchy remained resilient, but where there was a growing awareness of the need for reforming the corporations which governed the towns and other centres of population. The Poor Laws received a great deal of attention during the eighteenth century, but O'Gorman comments that the delivery of social action remained in local hands, notably with the churches and 'bodies like the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge which founded schools, including hundreds of charity schools.'[76] It is therefore unsurprising to discover evidences in Toplady's journal of the kind of intentional, locally-focused social action that must have been prevalent at the time. Hence, on 30 December 1767 he itemised the recipients of poor relief that he had distributed, and then did so

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[74] William Cave, *Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Historia Literaria a Christo nato usque ad saeculum XIV* (Oxford: E. Theatro Sheldoniano, 1688 & 1698). Toplady was probably referring to the two folio edition, edited by Daniel Waterland, published Oxford in 1740 & 1743.

[75] Pierre Morel, *The Expert Doctor's Dispensatory: The Whole Art of Physick Restored to Practice* (London: N. Brook, 1657).

[76] Frank O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political & Social History 1688-1832* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 286.

again on 3 January 1768: it seems significant that his focus was not on 'the poor' as a class, rather on specific individuals, but this may simply be indicative of the prevailing culture. Nigel Yates in his discussion on poverty and social care, comments that 'By far the greatest contribution to the relief of poverty, over and above that provided by statute, came not from societies but individuals.'[77]

Clearly, these matters were playing on Toplady's mind, as on 31 December, he recorded 'All day within, reading. The thought of how many acquaintances I have lost by death, within the course of this year, dwelt with great weight upon my mind.'[78] This was then followed by a listing of fourteen names, and Toplady concluded by marvelling 'yet I am spared!' Against that background, the entry for 25 December 1767 is perhaps significant: 'I would observe, that I have, through the blessing of God, been perfectly well through this whole day, both as to health, strength, and spirits.'[79] Toplady was counting his blessings, as this seems to have been an exception to his normal experience, and he went on to note a correlation between his physical and spiritual states: 'I myself am a witness, that spiritual comforts are sometimes highest when bodily health, strength and spirits, are at the lowest.' The diary overall testifies to the abundance of those 'spiritual comforts', which may tell its own story.

Secondly, at the beginning of 1768, there began a sequence of incidental comments which betray Toplady's awareness of his lack of strength (17 January, 12 February), and then a steady increase in diary entries which refer to headaches and indisposition, so that it is unsurprising when on 27 March the record is of 'violent cold…with a tendency to a sore throat…', followed by repeated references to 'violent hoarseness' (2, 3, 5 April). Indeed, in the 5 April entry, following his relief that 'My hoarseness, blessed be God, begins to go off', Toplady moved immediately to a

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[77] Nigel Yates, *Eighteenth century Britain 1714-1815* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2008), p. 111.
[78] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A.B.', in *Works*, p. 8.
[79] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A.B.', in *Works*, p. 6.

conversation with a Mr Leigh, where 'We talked much of death, the assurance of faith, and the invincibility of converting grace.'[80] On 26 June 1768, he recorded that 'I have been, for some days past, troubled with a cough, which grows upon me, more and more.' On 17 July, he commented that 'My cough was rather troublesome today'. These notes take on a greater significance when contrasted with his biographer's comment in the *Memoirs*, relating to a failed attempt to preach on 19 April, 1778: 'as he attempted to speak from Isaiah xxvi 19 … his hoarseness was so violent, that he was obliged, after naming the text, to descend from the pulpit.'[81] This was a mere four months before his death. It is worth noting that Toplady's perceptions of his own frailty were not limited to the growing evidences of a physical pathology: following the sudden destruction of his home in a fire, on 8 March 1768 he reflected on his relatively steady outlook throughout this catastrophe, commenting 'This could not proceed from nature, for, my nerves are naturally so weak, that, in general, the least discomposing accident oversets me quite, for a time.'[82] Knowing his own propensities towards anxiety, he saw this composure as God-given.

The extracts from the diary included by Row finish in December of that year, but it may be helpful to add a corrective to any premature diagnosis of hypochondria. In his entry for 31 August, Toplady stated that 'God has also given me, in general, a much greater portion of health and strength than usual.'[83] Indeed, throughout this period, Toplady's overarching theme was one of thankfulness that he had been able to serve effectively, despite these infirmities.

The eighteenth century was a period of unprecedented growth in medical care, mostly centred on the capital. Guy's Hospital was chartered by an Act of Parliament in 1725, the Westminster in 1720, St. George's in 1733, the London in 1740 and the Middlesex in 1745. These were large

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[80] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A.B.', in *Works*, p. 18.
[81] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A.B.' in *Works*, p. 33.
[82] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A.B.', in *Works*, p. 15.
[83] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A.B.', in *Works*, p. 26.

institutions, with the London Hospital admitting some seven thousand patients annually by 1785.[84] It is quite possible, even likely, that the availability of such sophisticated medical care in London formed part of the motivation for Toplady's relocation there in 1776, although Wright's focus is on his sense of vocation.[85] Ella, documenting his decision to accept the call to the French Calvinist Reformed Church in Orange Street, Leicester Square, comments that 'Although only thirty-five years of age, the doctors had told Toplady that he was at his life's evening.'[86] Certainly, his own understanding of his waning physical strength must have informed this decision about his vocation.

But Toplady was pre-eminently a reader. On 22 December 1767 he recorded that he 'found a particular blessing in reading Mr Mayo's Sermon (*Morning Exercises*, Vol. iv, Sermon iv) on our "Deliverance by Christ from the fear of death" Heb. ii.15'. This refers to the *Casuistical Morning Exercises, the Fourth Volume, by Several Ministers In and About London, Preached in October 1689*. Otherwise known as the 'Cripplegate Lectures', or the 'Morning Exercises at Cripplegate, St. Giles in the Fields, and in Southwark', this particular example was one of a number of sermons preached by 'various Presbyterian divines', as part of an initiative inaugurated by the Puritan Thomas Case (1598-1682). 'Mr Mayo' was in fact Richard Mayo, a man renowned as a peacemaker at a time of religious tension, having suffered ejection as a nonconformist, and having preached two notable sermons urging peace which were later published as *The Cause and Cure of Strife and Division* in 1695.[87] Another Cripplegate sermon is referred to on 14 January 1768 when Toplady recorded that he 'Was greatly edified and comforted in reading Mr. Lee's choice sermon on 'Secret Prayer' from Matth vi 6 in the Supplement to the Morning Exercise at Cripplegate, sermon 14.'[88] Indeed so beneficial did he find this particular sermon, that Toplady laboriously duplicated over a

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[84] Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 134.

[85] Wright, *August M. Toplady*, pp. 164-66.

[86] Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady*, p. 297.

[87] Jim Benedict, 'Mayo, Richard (1631?-95)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: ODNB, 2008).

[88] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A.B.' in *Works*, p. 10.

page-worth of extracts for future reference. What is striking about these citations are their warm, analogous character, focusing on Christian experience, without the slightest hint of doctrinaire or polemical content. This is suggestive of a quite different Toplady to the one who ventured forth to combat Laudian and Wesleyan Arminianism. It does seem, from the diary references that this period particularly interested Toplady - he was reading through the 'Cripplegate Lectures' again on 17 January 1768, and prior to even opening this book, on 12 January recorded that 'In the afternoon, read Dr. Calamy's Account of the Ejected Ministers. What a blow to vital religion, to the Protestant interest in general, and to the Church of England herself, was the fatal extinguishment of so many burning and shining lights!'[89] The author referred to was Edmund Calamy[90], a Presbyterian minister and historian, who had been a champion for nonconformity and had studied theology in the Dutch scholastic school under the likes of Herman Witsius. The account of the ejected ministers, to which Toplady referred, was the ninth chapter in Calamy's *Abridgement of Mr Baxter's Narrative* (1702), and its original publication provoked a storm of protest. Alongside a subsequent edition, the ninth chapter, now revised and with considerable additional content, was published separately as the *Account of many others of those worthy ministers who were ejected after the restauration of King Charles the Second,* where it ran to over 850 pages. It seems likely that this is the text that Toplady was referring to, and given his later focus with his own *Historic Proof*, it is notable that this serious attempt to record a difficult period of Anglican history absorbed his attention.

On 18 April 1768, his diary informs us that he was 'much blessed' in reading from Benjamin Jenks' *Meditations Upon Various and Important Subjects; and Short Prayers Annexed*,[91] which he may have been led to because the book contained a 'Preface by the Reverend Mr. Hervey', for

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[89] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A.B.', in *Works*, p. 10.
[90] David L. Sykes, 'Calamy, Edmund', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: ODNB, 2004).
[91] Benjamin Jenks, *Meditations Upon Various and Important Subjects; and Short Prayers Annexed* (London: J. Matthews, 1701).

whom he held a great respect. Jenks died in 1724, and in the 1704 edition of his *Meditations* recorded the aspiration that 'even after my Decease, I may still be Preaching by these Papers'[92], a sentiment with which Toplady, with his own intimations of mortality, might well have concurred, especially as he was embarking upon his own literary work.

On 24 April 1768, he recorded that he 'Read Bishop Wilkins' Preacher, with great approbation and pleasure, and not without improvement.' This refers to the Bishop of Chester, John Wilkins' *Ecclesiastes, or A Discourse Concerning the Gift of Preaching*,[93] and it is notable that his very next comments refer to the effectiveness of his ensuing sermon. Wilkins was one of the founders of the Royal Society, with a lasting interest in natural philosophy and his last book, an exploration of Latitudinarian principles, *Of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion*, was prepared for publication in 1675 by his son-in-law, John Tillotson.[94] Wilkins would represent an intriguing mix of emphases for the young Toplady who retained a consistent antipathy towards Latitudinarianism whilst at the same time harbouring a profound interest in Natural History, as evidenced by his essays on *Birds, Meteors, the Sagacity of Brutes, and the Solar System*.[95]

On 1 May 1768, Toplady described in somewhat mixed terms, his reading of 'Wall's Critical Notes on the New Testament'. This is a reference to William Wall's *Brief Critical Notes, Especially on the Various Readings of the New Testament Books*[96] and it is intriguing to see Toplady's reservations regarding the approach adopted by the 'learned author', describing his suggested amendments to the biblical text as 'extremely flighty and conjectural; often quite injudicious; and sometimes, astonishingly daring. Besides, the dead fly of Arminianism mars and taints the whole

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[92] Warren Johnston, 'Jenks, Benjamin', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: ODNB, 2004).

[93] John Wilkins, *Ecclesiastes, or A Discourse Concerning the Gift of Preaching* (London: W. Churchill, 1646).

[94] John Henry, 'Wilkins, John', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: ODNB, 2009).

[95] Toplady, 'Sketch of Natural History', in *Works*, pp. 518-39. This comprises a digest of separate articles published in *TGM*.

[96] William Wall, *Brief Critical Notes, Especially on the Various Readings of the New Testament Books* (London: William Innys, 1730).

pot of ointment.'[97] This supports the view that the young Toplady was an ambitious, wide-ranging, yet discerning reader - ready and able to critique what he encountered on the page. On 8 May 1768, he found a section within 'Dr. Sibbes's "Soul's Conflict"'[98] so memorable that he copied it out in his diary. Richard Sibbes was a prominent Puritan divine along with William Perkins and John Preston, but he was also an Anglican theologian, remaining within the Church of England. John Downame was another Anglican theologian who worked closely with the Westminster Assembly, and on 29 May 1768, Toplady was reading his *The Christian Warfare Against the Devil, World and Flesh*,[99] and was strongly affected by his emphasis on Christian experience. On 18 June 1768, Toplady was still in Anglican territory, noting that he 'Read Bishop Hopkins Works, which were sent me from Exeter yesterday, with much spiritual improvement.'[100] Indeed, he then devoted a long paragraph to a description of his elevated spiritual experience, as a direct result of reflecting upon the Bishop's writings. The author was Ezekiel Hopkins, a previous Bishop of Londonderry, whose collected *Works*[101] included discourses, sermons, and expositions of the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. Toplady did not identify which section of this massive 796-page volume gave him so much profit.

It is clear from his diary that the writings of John Gill, the High Calvinist, formed a regular part of his reading plan. On 8 December 1767, Toplady recorded that he 'Was much refreshed, and sensibly comforted, in the evening, while reading Dr. Gill's sermon on the death of Mr. Fall.' The next day he 'Spent the evening much more advantageously in reading Dr. Gill's sermon on 'The Watchman's Answer' and that great man's tract on final perseverance.'[102] Similar positive

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[97] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A.B.', in *Works*, p. 21.

[98] Richard Sibbes, *The Soules Conflict with it self, and Victorie over it self by Faith* (London: M. Flesher, 1635).

[99] John Downame, *The Christian Warfare Against the Devil, World and Flesh* (London, 1634).

[100] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A.B.', in *Works*, p. 22.

[101] Ezekiel Hopkins, *The Works of the Right Reverend and Learned Ezekiel Hopkins, Late Lord Bishop of London-Derry in Ireland* (London: Jonathan Robinson, 1710).

[102] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A.B.', in *Works*, p. 3.

comments on the value of Gill's writings appear in entries on 13 and 26 December, and then into 1768 on 2 March, although there is no mention here of the more substantial works such as the *Body of Divinity*, or his acclaimed commentary on the Bible. It seems that Toplady must have been familiar with these other works, given his explicit endorsement of Gill's *Cause of God and Truth* in his response to Nowell in 1769.[103]

Throughout the diary, there is considerable emphasis on the reading of sermons but, on 31 July 1768, Toplady recorded in his diary that he 'Read likewise, not without sensible improvement, some parts of the acts of the synod of Dort; particularly the judgement of the British divines, "De Perseverantia Sanctorum"'.[104] This is another piece of shorthand, as he appears to have been referring to *Consideratio doctrinae de perseverantia sanctorum in Synodo Dordrechtana proposita*,[105] published in 1621 by Johann Heinrich Timaeus, another work which is wholly in Latin. The timing of this diary entry suggests that this text may have been pertinent to Toplady's own research, relevant to the writing of his 1769 response to Thomas Nowell's justification of the expulsion of the six Oxford students. Here, he devoted six pages to the subject, sufficient to deal with Nowell's repudiation of the value of the Synod, and something of a dress rehearsal for a more substantive treatment in his 1774 magnum opus, the *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England*. This evidences a far more technical focus, as does the entry for 14 December 1767, where he recorded that he 'Began Le Clerc's "*Ars Critica*". A most learned, and in many respects, useful performance yet sadly interlarded with scepticism and profaneness.' Within the diary, Toplady itemised some choice extracts (in the original Latin), and interacted critically and pithily with Le Clerc's particular brand of biblical criticism. Hazard tells us that 'The ideas to which Jean Le Clerc, the Arminian, the Socinian, thus gives expression are those which were

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[103] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, p. 76.

[104] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A.B.', in *Works*, p. 25.

[105] Johann Heinrich Timaeus, *Consideratio doctrinae de perseverantia sanctorum in Synodo Dordrechtana proposita* (Giessen: Hampelius, 1621).

destined to prevail throughout the whole of the first half of the eighteenth century,'[106] and later informs us that *Ars Critique* was published in 1697. David L. Wykes confirms that Le Clerc's works on philosophy, theology and even physics were popular within the Dissenting academies.[107] This provides a backdrop for the rise of heterodoxy, and Jonathan Israel confirms that Le Clerc had in his sights the idea of a highly rationalised, stripped-down version of Christianity, about which there would be little dispute, something he called 'les principes du Christianisme'.[108] Indeed, according to Israel, Le Clerc's argument was that it was reason, prior to revelation, that proved the truth of Christianity, which led him to the conclusion that the infidel lacked the capacity to reason. It is therefore entirely appropriate to see Toplady, in this brief diary extract, employing sophisticated rational argument in order to demonstrate the lack of rigour to Le Clerc's conclusions, all the more remarkable for a young man aged twenty-six.

A Young Polemicist Learns His Trade

Toplady's own influences, as well as the company that he kept within the evangelical movement, are highly suggestive that we ought to place him within a variant of 'moderate Calvinism'. It is quite possible that a rush to assign him a more extreme category is therefore more a byproduct of his polemical style, and his decision to publish his translation of Zanchius' unfortunately entitled work, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination Stated and Asserted* in 1769. This is one of a number of key works which were solely intended as a defence of certain core Reformed soteriological doctrines. It is helpful, therefore, to set those to one side for the moment and focus instead upon elements of his output which may be less specific in their framing. In chronological

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[106] Paul Hazard, *The Crisis of the European Mind 1680-1715* (New York, NYRB: 2013), p. 97.

[107] David L. Wykes, 'The Dissenting academy and Rational Dissent', in Knud Haakonssen (ed.) *Enlightenment and religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth century Britain*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 117, 118, 120.

[108] Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 76.

order, the first instance is a sermon preached on 29 April 1770 and subsequently published in pamphlet form as *A Caveat against Unsound Doctrines* later that year. Toplady took as his text 1 Timothy 1:10, and it is apparent that his defence of orthodoxy equated to his defence of the Thirty-Nine Articles, and his own subscription to them.[109] Indeed, he drew this connection explicitly, when he stated, 'I shall arm myself, this Afternoon, with a two-fold Weapon: with the Bible in one Hand; and our Church-*Articles* in the other.'[110] However, whilst the broad objective of this exercise is stated in the opening comments on the text, Toplady leaves one in no doubt as to his real focus: 'So that, between the Bible and the Thirty-nine Articles, I hope I shall be able to carry my Point, and, as far as my Subject leads me, enter a successful Caveat against whatever Things are *contrary to sound Doctrine*. In attempting this, I shall fix my Foot upon ARMINIANISM; which, in its several Branches, is the Gangrene of the Protestant Churches, and the predominant Evil of the Day.'[111] In this, he was as good as his word, as the remainder of the sermon is a refutation of nine false doctrines which he claimed had entered the church: conditional election; denial of original sin; conditional redemption; justification by works; ineffectual grace; Antinomianism; sinless perfection; denial of assurance, and the possible loss of salvation. All but one of these (Antinomianism is the exception, an error which was commonly thrown as an accusation against Calvinists by Arminian advocates)[112] are, in effect, inversions of the Calvinist system, and on each point Scripture, logic and the relevant Articles were brought to bear.

What makes this sermon fascinating is that it is - almost - as much about an engagement with key Enlightenment ideas, as it is about theology: it is, genuinely, a 'crossover' piece. More on this will be said later, but the eighth item is largely a consideration of experience and epistemology,

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[109] Toplady, *A Caveat against Unsound Doctrines,* p. 18.

[110] Toplady, *A Caveat against Unsound Doctrines*, p. 19.

[111] Toplady, *A Caveat against Unsound Doctrines*, p. 20.

[112] William J. Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment: Orientalism, Religion and Politics in England and its Empire, 1648-1715* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 202.

rather than the more externalised exploration of doctrine. However, even if Toplady wished his audience to know that he was up to date with key Enlightenment themes, there are also unsubtle hints as to his real focus: 'This, then is the Order: 1. Election; 2. Effectual Calling; 3. Apprehensive Justification; 4. Manifestative Adoption; 5. Sanctification; 6. Religious Walking in good Works; 7. Continuance in these to the End.' And then, in case he might have been too abstruse, he includes the gloss, 'Such, therefore, being the Chain and Process of Salvation.'[113] The same kind of order was reiterated again later, and the capitalisation of 'Chain' should leave the reader in no doubt that this was a reference back to William Perkins' practical divinity.[114] Toplady's antidote to 'unsound doctrines' was an unashamed harking back to the founding fathers of the Church of England's Calvinistic settlement, and his argument was that, to a great extent, those fathers had at the very least been formed by scholastic Calvinism.

A second relevant example is the sermon preached to fellow clergy on 12 May 1772 which was published under the title of *The Doctrines of the Church of England; Proved to be the Doctrines of Christ; OR, Clerical Subscription no Grievance*. The printed text made it clear that the prompt for this message was the 'Feathers Tavern Petition', wherein the petitioners,[115] influenced by Latitudinarianism, sought to be freed of the legal requirement to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, whilst still remaining within it. Martin Fitzpatrick neatly sets out the defining characteristics of this movement, focusing on 'an emphasis on simplicity and rationality,…the belief that reason and revelation spoke the same language and produced the same enlightenment', the sense that 'the essential truths were contained in the Bible' and 'the optimism that these essential truths were accessible to all men' and finally that, 'apart from these truths, all other truths were matters of opinion . . . that men may know God in various ways, and that God

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[113] Toplady, *A Caveat against Unsound Doctrines*, p. 25.
[114] *A Golden Chaine: Or, The Description of Theologie*, was published by Perkins around 1591.
[115] These included Francis Blackburne, Theophilus Lindsey & John Jebb.

would not be offended by a belief sincerely held'.[116] Toplady's opposition to the Petition placed him alongside Sir Roger Newdigate (1719-1806), MP for Oxford University and Edmund Burke (1729/30-97), both of whom saw the Petition as being closely linked to a movement focused on political reform.[117] However, it appears that Toplady's theological antennae had accurately registered the real trajectory lying behind a petition which purported to tackle the issue of subscription alone: shortly after the failure of the initiative, Theophilus Lindsey left the Church of England to found the first Unitarian chapel, in Essex Street, London.

In his introductory comments, Toplady alluded to the rallying cry of William Chillingworth (1602-44), 'The Bible, the Bible is the religion of Protestants', which had been adopted by the petitioners as their slogan. The allusion to Chillingworth is not incidental, for he had 'confessed in private that he was "very inclined to believe, that the Doctrine of Arius is eyther a Truth, or at least no damnable heresy."'[118] Toplady seems to have been keen to establish the principle that verbal commitments 'to the Bible' do not automatically equate to a guarantee of orthodoxy. He then set out his purpose in the sermon, 'To weigh the principles of the Church of England in the balance of the sanctuary, by examining, What were those doctrines, which the Lord of life and glory made it his business to inculcate, during his continuance on earth.'[119] The answer he provided consists of an exposition of fifteen key doctrines, and what is surprising is that the selection and order do not directly reflect the Thirty-Nine Articles: (I) divine inspiration of the Old Testament; (II) unity of the Godhead; (III) the deity of Christ; (IV) God's sovereign election; (V) the New Covenant; (VI) original sin; (VII) The atonement; (VIII) Justification; (IX) effectual calling; (X) sanctification; (XI)

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[116] Martin Fitzpatrick, 'Latitudinarianism at the parting of the ways', in Walsh, Haydon and Taylor (eds), *The Church of England c.1689-c.1833*, p. 211.

[117] John Gascoigne, 'Latitudinarianism, Rational Dissent and radicalism', in Haakonssen (ed), *Enlightenment and Religion*, p. 228.

[118] Jean-Louis Quantin, 'Perceptions of Christian Antiquity', in Anthony Milton (ed), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, vol. I: Reformation and Identity, c.1520-1662*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 293.

[119] Toplady, *The Doctrines of the Church of England; Proved to be the Doctrines of Christ; OR, Clerical Subscription no Grievance* (London: W. Row, 1772), p. 7.

good works; (XII) perseverance of the saints; (XIII) God's providence; (XIV) immortality of the soul and (XV) the resurrection.

Whilst it is clear that Toplady did not derive the order or content from the Articles, one seeks the structure in vain in Edwards' *Veritas Redux*, or Calvin's *Institutes*, or the *Canons of Dort*, or the Belgic or Heidelberg Confessions - all of which he was familiar with. In fact, the closest match is to be found in John Gill's *Body of Divinity*, and even that is not a perfect fit.[120] It is, however, a sufficiently close match, and knowing Toplady's respect for Gill, it seems reasonable to conclude that he was following the order of Gill's doctrinal outline, but adapting it to his own purpose. Initially, it may be a surprise, that Toplady, a committed churchman, was prepared to base his defence of subscription to the Anglican Articles upon the theological writings of a Dissenter. The strength of this approach is to underline a broader acceptance of core Church doctrine, even by those who sat outside the Establishment - as a rebuke to those who benefited from patronage, but now questioned the church's teaching.[121]

But the next step is to draw the obvious conclusion: Toplady's basis for defending the overall doctrinal establishment of the Church of England was located in the systematisation of the most explicitly Calvinistic theologian of his day. This is what made the sermon of 12 May 1772 so interesting - because the result was the weaving together of a summary of doctrines which were not simply about the canons of Dort, in a way that showed that all fifteen points are essential to the Calvinistic system. And, as if to really underscore this point, Toplady arranged the sequence of doctrines in the form of a parallelism: thus (I) matches to (XV), (VI) to (X), and (VII) the atonement, sits right at the centre of it all. He may have been preaching a sermon, but cleverly he

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[120] Toplady's points (I) through to (10) follow Gill's schema in the exact same order. His inclusion of points (XI) and (XIII) are supplementary, and he then returned to Gill's outline with points (XIV) and (XV). See John Gill, *Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity Vols 1 & 2* (London: Tegg & Company, 1839).

[121] A. M. Toplady, *Free Thoughts on the Projected Application to Parliament for the Abolition of Ecclesiastical Subscriptions* (London: Joseph Gurney, 1771), pp. 9-11.

had created a simple primer of Reformed doctrine, with an overarching structure that made it all hang together. Having this address printed up and distributed later underscored his point, whilst at the same time providing an effective antidote to Blackburne and his fellow petitioners, who would slice and dice orthodoxy in line with their personal preferences. Toplady's message was that Calvinism was a *system* where everything cohered, and that the Church of England shared that same doctrinal coherence - effectively negating the Petitioners' argument.

Of course, the position he was seeking to normalise was far from being uncontested within the Church of England. Thomas Nowell, the Principal of St. Mary Hall, Oxford, whose defence[122] of the expulsion of six Methodist students in 1768 triggered Toplady's first venture into polemical print, argued that the expellees were 'tainted with calvinistical and methodistical principles' whilst at the same time describing them as being 'not qualified to improve in academical studies, nor capable of performing the exercises of the University and the Hall.'[123] Later, he reinforced this view, stating 'The circumstance makes me less wonder at his subsequent conduct, as the folly of methodism naturally leads either to madness or infidelity.'[124] Nowell's own defence of the decision to expel the six students makes it clear that a foundational component of their crime, was their adherence to 'methodistical principles' which are defined within the text as those classic Calvinistic doctrines that Toplady went on to defend so assiduously.[125] The fact that, in Oxford at least, Methodism was being associated with Calvinism may help explain why Wesley chose not to get involved in the defence of the six students.

Nowell went on to affirm 'universal redemption', the authority of a 1543 book, *Pia et Catholica Institutio*, published under Henry VIII's authority, inveighed against the doctrine of the

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[122] This publication by Nowell was a direct response to Sir Richard Hill's *Pietas Oxoniensis*, published in 1768.

[123] Thomas Nowell, *An Answer to a Pamphlet Entitled Pietas Oxoniensis, In a Letter to the Author* (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1769), pp. 26, 57.

[124] Nowell, *An Answer to a Pamphlet Entitled Pietas Oxoniensis*, pp. 26, 57.

[125] Nowell, *An Answer to a Pamphlet Entitled Pietas Oxoniensis*, p. 32.

perseverance of the saints,[126] protested against the Lambeth Articles of 1595, and presented an interpretation of the Synod of Dort intended to undermine its authority within the church. It is significant that, whilst Nowell's publication was written as a vindication of the expulsion of the six students from St. Edmund Hall, Oxford, it ended up defending an entire theological system which was antithetical to everything Toplady believed about the Thirty-Nine Articles.

There was, within Nowell's treatment, a strange dissonance about the contested doctrines of Calvinism which sat uncomfortably with the treatment meted out to the Oxford students. In his response to Richard Hill's (1733-1808) *Pietas Oxoniensis*, he argued that 'The points which you pronounce so confidently upon, are generally acknowledged to be abstruse and difficult points: and wise and good men have always differed about them. . . . These points have been disputed in almost all ages of the christian church.'[127] Later, he went on to affirm in respect of the formulation of the Articles, 'I would observe in general that they were drawn up with great moderation', suggestive of the kind of theological breadth and toleration which, in practice, would not have reflected the experience of the expellees. It is this kind of *faux* moderation which fed into Toplady's drive to establish the principle that the orthodoxy of the Church of England was, at root, Calvinistic orthodoxy, rather than accept the mirage of a kind of hypothetical syncretism. After all, Nowell had been entirely sanguine about expelling students for the crime of adhering to very doctrines that he professed an ambivalence about.

This backdrop helps to frame the timing of Toplady's publications. Both *The Church of England Vindicated From The Charge of Arminianism* and *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination* came out in 1769. The difference between them is that the former was an immediate and direct response to Nowell's publication (1769) whereas the latter had been completed several years prior

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[126] This is precisely *the* doctrine advanced in Thomas Manton's *Sermons on the Seventeenth Chapter of St. John*.

[127] Nowell, *An Answer to a Pamphlet Entitled Pietas Oxoniensis*, pp. 74-5.

to the Oxford Expulsions, and, having held it back, Toplady chose to release it at this time. It seems reasonable, therefore, to conclude that the combination of the two texts comprised a deliberate tactic, aimed at what Toplady saw as a kind of pragmatic Laudian and Latitudinarian synthesis which had consolidated its position within the Church of England. Whilst Laudians and Latitudinarians were not compatible, Nowell seems to articulate both emphases in his response to Richard Hill.[128] Of Toplady's first two publications, the one which initially tells us the most about his theological position at this point in time is the translation of a part of the *Summa Theologiae* by Zanchius, otherwise known as Girolamo Zanchi (1516-90), who was one of a number of Reformed Scholastics referenced elsewhere in Toplady's work (including Jean Calvin, Martin Bucer, Theodore Beza, Heinrich Bullinger, Peter Martyr Vermigli, and John Hales). Those scholastic theologians that he did not explicitly reference in his publications include Caspar Olevian, Antoine de lay Faye, William Perkins, Gisbertus Voetius, and Francis Turretin[129], although it is worth noting that Ella confirms that Toplady's 'favourites' were 'apparently Gill, Charnock,[130] Polhill,[131] Bunyan, Foxe, Ralph Erskine, Turretin and Sibbes.'[132]

Before we seek to understand Toplady's own approach, it is worth considering the background issue of Protestant scholasticism, because the degree of intersection between it and the broader Calvinistic tradition is not without some controversy. Richard A. Muller confirms that 'The problem of the relationship of scholasticism to Calvin (and to later Calvinism as well) is

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[128] Nowell, *An Answer to a Pamphlet Entitled Pietas Oxoniensis*, p. 75: his 'brightest ornaments of our church' comprise 'Laud, Hammond, Bull, Tillotson, Sharp, Stillingfleet'. He sees Anglican doctrine through the lens of *Pia et Catholic Institutio* (p.76). He affirms 'universal redemption and free-agency' (p. 115).

[129] It is, however, apparent that Toplady held Turretin in high regard. In a letter to Mrs Macaulay, dated 13 July 1773, he stated: 'How should I dwindle to a span, to an inch, to a point, to nothing, if compared with a Witsius, a Turretin, a Spanhemius, a Gurnall, a Hervey!' 'Collection of Letters', *Works*, p. 846.

[130] Stephen Charnock (1628-80) was a Puritan (Presbyterian) clergyman, remembered especially for his *Discourses on the Existence and Attributes of God* (London: D. Newman, T. Cockerel, Benj. Griffin, T. Simmons & Benj. Alsop, 1682).

[131] Edward Polhill (1622-94) was an Anglican churchman who published, amongst other works, *The Divine Will Considered in its Eternal Decrees and Holy Execution of Them* (1695): J. William Black, 'Polhill, Edward' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[132] Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady,* p. 109.

complicated, moreover, by the tendency of much twentieth-century Protestant theology and historiography to view scholasticism as a highly speculative and rationalistic system of thought' constrained by an Aristotelianism worldview, and theological novelties aiming at 'a synthesis of Christian theology and Greek philosophy'.[133]

This helpfully sets the scene for why 'scholasticism' might have come to be regarded as something 'other', especially as something quite apart from mainstream Calvinism. This emphasis on divergence is typified in the writings of Otto Gründler, who asserted that 'In the theology of Zanchi . . . one observes a clear shift from the Christocentric orientation of Calvin and Luther towards a metaphysics of causality that henceforth would characterise Reformed orthodoxy.'[134] This posits a new variant of Calvinism which was metaphysically distinct from Calvin himself, but as Muller goes on to show, this is far from being an accurate picture. Scholasticism was a 'dialectical method of the schools, historically rooted in the late patristic period, particularly in the thought of Augustine, and developed throughout the Middle Ages in the light of classical logic and rhetoric, constructed with a view to the authority of text and tradition.'[135] This view sees it as a 'best of breed' aggregation of disciplines, aiming for the accurate exegesis of the biblical text.

Muller goes on to emphasise that scholasticism represented a discipline, or methodology that was largely independent of its theological conclusions, a view that is echoed by R. Scott Clark who argues that the primary differences 'between Reformed scholastics and non-scholastics are mainly methodological, not theological', before going on to emphasise that scholasticism 'was a method

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[133] Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 42.

[134] Otto Gründler, 'Zanchi, Girolamo', in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, edited by Hans J. Hillebrand (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 305.

[135] Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, p. 42.

designed to facilitate clarity in debate and to make use of Scripture and the broader Christian tradition'.[136]

Thus, scholasticism should be viewed as a mainstream methodological discipline underpinning systematic theology, rather than a new movement with metaphysical aspirations. Given that background, what then is the significance of Zanchius for Toplady's own development? Patrick J. O'Banion makes the direct connection, when he concludes that Zanchius' theology was actually a key driver of the English Practical Divinity tradition, and demonstrates the extent to which his praxis-oriented approach to theology became pivotal to both the preaching and writing of seventeenth century ministers and theologians. And then, to stress the centrality of this approach, O'Banion adds that 'it was only in the middle decades of the seventeenth century that Zanchi was numbered among the great modern Protestant divines in English portrait books and popular histories. By then, however, his reputation was well established among English pastors and theologians.'[137] Toplady was certainly not the first to translate Zanchius into English. O'Banion tells us that William Perkins, in his devotional work *A case of conscience the greatest that ever was; how a man may know whether he be the child of God or no* (1592), included a translation of Zanchius' treatment on Christian perseverance.[138] Thus, Toplady's decision to translate this work of Zanchius was as much about his churchmanship, as it was about his Calvinism: Zanchius was closely associated with Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562), whom Archbishop Cranmer appointed to the Regius chair of Divinity in Cambridge, in 1549.[139] Vermigli was to be a profound influence upon Archbishop Edmund Grindall (1519-83) and it is difficult to imagine a theological thinker as

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[136] R. Scott Clark, 'The Authority of Reason in the Later Reformation', in Carl R. Trueman and R. Scott Clark (eds), *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*, (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2005), pp. 115-6.

[137] Patrick J. O'Banion, 'Jerome Zanchi, the Application of Theology, and the Rise of the English Practical Divinity Tradition', *Renaissance and Reformation*, XXIX, 2-3 (2005), 105-6.

[138] And this was not the only example. In 1592, John Legate published an English translation of Zanchius' *De spirituali inter Christum et ecclesial connubio*, and in 1599 translated *De religion Christiana fides*.

[139] Patrick Collinson, *Archbishop Grindal 1519-1583: The Struggle for the Reformed Church* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1979), p. 49.

productive and practical as Perkins, without the inherited theological DNA of both Zanchius and Vermigli.

It seems that Toplady himself sensed this particular 'golden chaine' running through these generations of divines and equipping him for his own role. Indeed, when in 1774 Toplady published his two-volume *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England*, this essentially historical narrative dealt quite extensively with both Peter Martyr and also Zanchius. The former he described as 'another Reformer and Luminary of the Church of England', justifying his invitation to England by Cranmer in 1547, 'to the end that his assistance might be used to carry on a Reformation in the Church', making him 'a Canon of Christ-Church, and a prebendary of Canterbury' and concluding 'Thus, it incontestably appears, that these two Learned Calvinists, Bucer and Martyr, were Church of England Men.'[140] Indeed, the section devoted to Peter Martyr within this work extends to twenty-four pages, whilst Zanchius is mentioned seven times, including a deliberate reference to the high regard for him, held by Grindall.[141] Toplady made the space to provide a more fulsome account of Zanchius' theological development in his *Some Account of the Life of Jerome Zanchius*, which appears within the version of *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination* which was later included within his collected *Works*.[142] Interestingly, this background is not supplied in the original version of the stand-alone translation, so it appears that Toplady felt constrained to add content at a later date, commensurate with re-establishing Zanchius' credentials as a key Establishment theologian. In this he alluded at some length to a recantation speech given in May 1595 by William Barrett, a fellow of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, after he had unwisely referred to a number of the Church of England's founding divines 'in terms of highest rancour and disrespect'.[143] Included within his extended recantation, Barrett stated that 'I

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[140] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 344, 345, 363.

[141] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 524-5.

[142] Toplady, 'Some Account of the Life of Jerom Zanchius,' in *Works*, pp. 669-75.

[143] See also Debora Shuger, 'The Mysteries of the Lambeth Articles', *Jnl of Ecclesiastical History,* Vol. 68, No. 2 (April 2017), 319-20.

also threw out, in a most rancorous manner, some reflections against P. Martyr, Theodore Beza, Jerom Zanchy, Francis Junius, and others of the same religion, who were the lights and ornaments of our Church, calling them by the malicious name of Calvinists, and branding them with reproachful terms…seeing our Church holds these divines in deserved reverence.'[144] Scholasticism was a formative influence on the Church of England, and for a churchman like Toplady, that was good enough for him.

In this, Toplady, the historian, was relying upon John Strype's *The Life and Acts of John Whitgift, D.D.* (1718). Whitgift had been Archbishop of Canterbury from 1583 to his death in 1604, and had been intimately involved in the fallout from Barrett's actions in Cambridge, leading to the publication of the nine *Lambeth Articles* in November 1595, which never received Queen Elizabeth's approval.[145] Whilst it may be argued that Whitgift's actions in 1595 were the kind of tactical, pragmatic thing that might have been expected from someone in his position, the broader tone of his ministry establishes precisely the kind of theological pedigree that was so critical to Toplady's arguments. David D. Hall describes the 'productive connections with sixteenth- and early seventeenth century Continental Reformed theologians such as Martin Bucer, Peter Martyr Vermigli, Heinrich Bullinger, Theodore Beza, and their academic allies and successors, a group that included Johann Piscator and Girolamo Zanchi.' He then significantly comments that 'In 1586 Archbishop Whitgift ordered Church of England clergy awaiting an official licence to use the sermons in Bullinger's *Fifty Godly and Learned Sermons* (in English, 1584) in their Sunday services.'[146] Fast forward nearly two hundred years, and that representative grouping of theologians

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[144] Toplady, 'Some Account of the Life of Jerom Zanchius', p. 674.
[145] Elizabeth Gilliam and W. J. Tighe, 'To "Run with the Time" Archbishop Whitgift, the Lambeth Articles, and the Politics of Theological Ambiguity in Late Elizabethan England', *Sixteenth Century Journal* XXIII, No. 2 (1992), 326.
[146] David D. Hall, *The Puritans: A Transatlantic History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), p.114.

was identical to those that Toplady cited when he constructed his case for the Calvinistic foundation of the Church of England.

This is another example of the kind of 'golden chaine' which inextricably linked a community of theologians over an extended period of time, via a robust thread of Reformed orthodoxy. We may see, therefore, that Toplady's action of translating and publishing Zanchius was far from being a mere exercise in polemical pragmatism, but rather the fruit of a very careful tracing of his own theological influences, which fed into a very considered reflection on his own spiritual formation.

In his response to Richard Hill's *Pietas Oxoniensis*, Nowell affected a pronounced disdain for continental Reformed Christianity, preferring instead to repose his confidence in home-grown authorities, such as George Bull (Bishop of St. Davids), Dr. Daniel Waterland and John Hooper (Bishop of Gloucester). Indeed, the contempt for the overseas dimension tangibly increased when Nowell described what he conceived to be the reluctant compliance of the English delegation to the Synod of Dort in 1618. 'How do the decrees of this synod concern us?' he queried, stating that 'It was only a national synod' and deriding the small group of English delegates who attended. 'So much for the famous synod of Dort!' was his conclusion.[147] In response, Toplady marshalled a representative body of European theologians (Vermigli, Zanchius, Martin Bucer) in order to make the point that *these* men were amongst the key influences on the founding of the Church of England, and they came from Italy and Germany.

All of this helps to frame our understanding of why, in terms of his serious publishing, Toplady chose to lead with the Zanchius translation. It is a robust defence of the doctrine of predestination, but it also feeds into the English practical divinity which actually led to the formation of the Church of England.[148] Toplady was marshalling his theological heavyweights in defence of a historic

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[147] Nowell, *An Answer to a Pamphlet Entitled Pietas Oxoniensis,* pp. 114-6.
[148] This is covered in more depth in Chapter 2.

Calvinism which had declined to such a degree within Anglicanism, but which was integral to its very emergence as a national church. And, alongside this emphasis, it is also likely that he was intentionally signalling his own credentials in the light of early intimations of the kind of conflict that he was edging into.

The Fully-Formed Contender

Toplady dated his evangelical Christian conversion to 1756, was fully persuaded of the truth of Calvinism in 1758, and was ordained Vicar of Harpford and Rector of Fen-Ottery in May, 1766. By August 1778, he would have run his course. The brevity of such a life, compounded with the fragmented records, is suggestive of a very rapid developmental curve. Interestingly, this was a thought that had crossed Toplady's mind also. A year and a half after commencing his ministry within the Church of England, in his diary entry dated 27 December 1767, he wrote these significant words:

> I can never be sufficiently thankful, that my religious principles were all fixed long before I ever entered into orders. Through the good hand of my God upon me, I sat out in the ministry with clear gospel-light from the first; a blessing not vouchsafed to every one. Many an evangelical minister has found himself obliged to retract or unsay what he taught before in the days of his ignorance. Lord, how is it that I have been so signally favoured of thee! … my early insight into which I look upon as one of the distinguishing blessings of my life.[149]

There is a recognition here that he had been equipped with a peculiarly clear view of spiritual things, a self-awareness which was tinged with sufficient humility to render it an acceptable observation about himself. Clearly, this understanding of himself permeated the balance of his ministry. In a sermon delivered on April 29, 1770, he stated:

> And I desire, in the most public Manner, to thank the Great Author of all Consolation, for a very particular Instance of his Favour, and which I look upon as one of the most felicitating Circumstances of my whole Life: I mean, my *early* Acquaintance with the Doctrines of Grace. Many great and good Men, who were converted late in Life, have had the whole Web of their preceding Ministry to unravel, and been under a Necessity of reversing all they had been delivering

[149] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A.B.', in *Works*, p. 7.

> for Years before. But it is not the smallest of my distinguishing Mercies, that, from the very Commencement of my unworthy Ministrations, I have not had a single Doctrine to retract, nor a single Word to *un say*.[150]

This is suggestive of the sheer intensity of Toplady's spiritual and intellectual development, as well as the comprehensive nature of the Calvinistic theological system that he embraced, antecedent of the impressive reading-plan outlined in the remainder of his diary (Hervey, Calamy, Luce, Cave, Erskine, Bunyan, Gill, Jenks, Wilkins, Wall, Sibbes, Downame, Hopkins, Whitty, Ussher). It should be remembered that he had translated Zanchius' scholastic work from the Latin at age nineteen (in 1759)[151], a feat which attests to both his linguistic skills and theological sophistication at that age. An uncommon degree of formation had occurred prior to Toplady's decision to venture into print-based polemic in 1769. The rigour of that preparatory work is considered in the next chapter in an exploration of the character of Toplady's Calvinism.

A digression on the 'contentiousness' of Toplady's approach (as a polemicist) is worth including as a final comment in this section in order to address Bebbington's suggestion that his 'outcry' (along with Rowland Hill) following the publication of the 1770 Methodist Conference minutes, was based upon a 'misunderstanding'. Bebbington comments that 'Wesley seemed to be rejecting no less a doctrine than justification by faith. In reality he did not.'[152] It would be fair to say that the wording of those minutes is problematic: under Question 28 ('What can be done to revive the work of God where it is decayed?'), point (6) states 'Take heed of your doctrine', with the comment 'We said, in 1744, "We have leaned too much toward Calvinism".[153] Then follow the contentious statements which Toplady (and others) picked up on. Sub-point (2) states that '…every believer, till he comes to glory, works *for* as well as *from* life'; Sub-point (3) says, 'We have received it as a maxim, that "a man is to do nothing in order to justification." Nothing can be more false. Whoever

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[150] Toplady, *A Caveat against Unsound Doctrine*, p. 18.

[151] Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady,* p. 222.

[152] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain,* p. 28.

[153] *Minutes of The Methodist Conferences From The First, Held in London, by The Late Rev. John Wesley, A.M., In The Year 1744* Volume 1 (London: John Mason, 1862), p. 95.

desires to find favour with God should "cease from evil, and learn to do well." Whoever repents should do "works meet for repentance." And if this not in order to find favour, what does he do them for?' Under a further section, the minutes ask, 'Is this not "salvation by works?"' and then answers 'Not by the *merit* of works, but by works as a *condition*.'[154] There is more of the same, and all of it is saturated with the kind of ambiguity which lends itself precisely to the kind of conclusion that Toplady drew. Bebbington's accusation of 'misunderstanding' might hold, based upon what Wesley had taught elsewhere, but the point is that this set of notes was intended to reframe or recalibrate Wesley's stance, since he had stated that previously they had 'leaned too much toward Calvinism'. That key phrase leads to the reasonable expectation that Wesley was 'leaning' in a different direction now, suggesting that the wording in the Minutes is pivotal. The terminology thus deployed blurs the theological distinctions between justification and sanctification, and seems to reposition the role of good works within Soteriology. If Toplady had misunderstood Wesley on these matters, it would seem he had reasonable cause, and it is doubtful that he would have applied contrary standards to reading the text, than his scholasticism led him to do elsewhere.

In fact, to attribute the elevated tensions within evangelicalism to the misunderstanding of men like Toplady seems to underestimate Wesley's own intentions: Boyd Stanley Schlenther asserts that the public dissemination of the Minutes was intended by Wesley to confront the Countess of Huntingdon's theology.[155] This suggests that he had anticipated the inflammatory impact of his chosen wording: if Wesley had set out to exacerbate suspicions of heterodoxy, then he certainly achieved his objective. The May 1771 edition of *TGM* published extracts from the Minutes, largely without comment, and the August 1771 edition included a satirical response to Wesley's attacks on Toplady, as well as a skeptical reference to Wesley's ensuing clarification of his doctrinal position.

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[154] *Minutes of The Methodist Conferences From The First, Held in London, by The Late Rev. John Wesley, A.M., In The Year 1744* Volume 1, pp. 95-96.

[155] Boyd Stanley Schlenther, *Queen of the Methodists, The Countess of Huntingdon and the Eighteenth Century Crisis of Faith and Society* (Durham: Durham Academic Press, 1997), p. 106.

Herbert Boyd McGonigle quotes Luke Tyerman describing (in 1873) the Minutes as 'these loosely worded propositions' and underlines Henry Rack's comments about the closeness to Pelagianism when he says, 'This judgement is not without some foundation'.[156] It would be charitable to interpret the minutes as simply imprecise in their formulation, but given the atmosphere of suspicion about key areas of doctrine, it was hardly surprising that Calvinist thinkers were disinclined to give them the benefit of the doubt. Toplady's primary response was to publish a sermon given earlier, on April 29, 1770 (thus prior to the Conference), under the title *A Caveat Against Unsound Doctrines*. This is, for the most part, a juxtaposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles alongside various examples of current heterodoxies. Wesley is not directly mentioned by name, but it is not too difficult to read in elements of this controversy. Pertinent to this consideration of Toplady as a polemicist, it is worth noting the wider pamphlet war triggered by this event, one which ought to put Schlenther's descriptions of Toplady ('rigid Calvinist polemicist', 'virulent Calvinist') into a more balanced context.[157] We may conclude that, by the age of thirty, he had matured into a historically-informed and competent defender of the theological underpinnings of the Church of England, and that those underpinnings required a defence.

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[156] McGonigle, *Sufficient Saving Grace*, p. 268.

[157] Schlenther, *Queen of the Methodists*, pp. 105 &108.

Chapter 2

Toplady the Protestant Scholastic

> The Work, which his Goodness began,
> The Arm of his Strength will complete;
> His promise is Yea and Amen,
> And never was forfeited yet:
> Things future, nor things that are now,
> Not all things below nor above,
> Can make him his Purpose forego,
> Or sever my Soul from his Love.[1]

The Anglican Calvinist

Chapter 1 established that Toplady's formation drew on scholastic influences to lead him to a definitively 'Calvinistic' theological position within the Church of England, during a period when this represented a dissenting position against the prevailing views. This chapter explores his scholastic focus, and seeks to assess the unique impact this had on his ministry and output.

There are a number of aspects to this analysis which require careful consideration and it is worth noting the thrust of his successive publications. His first polemical work, *The Church of England Vindicated From The Charge of Arminianism* (1769) avoids mentioning 'Calvinism' in the title, but Toplady seemed quite unabashed over his espousal of that designation throughout the text.[2] Indeed, we might conclude that the frequency of repetition of the term 'Calvinism', despite the inclusion of extensive citations from the Articles and Homilies (which do not include the term), is a significant matter. Firstly, Toplady used the word in a generic sense, as the antithesis to Arminianism. Secondly, he took care not to associate it with the 'five points' which emerged from

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[1] Toplady, 'Occasional Hymn IV', verse 2, in *Hymns and Sacred Poems on a Variety of Divine Subjects*, p. 140.

[2] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, pp. 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 16, 18, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30, 34, 36, 40, 41, 42, 45, 46, 47, 48, 51, 55, 58, 60, 61, 63, 67, 70, 71, 76, 77, 81, 84, 85, 86, 88, 94, 99, 105, 106, 132, 134, 135, 136.

the Synod of Dort, as his intent was to date the doctrinal system back to Augustine and the Church Fathers. Thirdly, he utilised the word as a placeholder for 'predestinarian' doctrines, which then allowed him to pull in connected doctrines such as regeneration, reprobation, perseverance and assurance. This, in turn, allowed him to reference a wider range of the Church of England's Articles.[3] Fourthly, the simple strategy of the repeated use of the term then helped to contextualise any consideration of Anglican tradition and teaching: at the very least, Toplady was demonstrating how the framework of Anglicanism was normalised within a broadly 'Calvinistic' framework, when Nowell had dismissed the very possibility. Toplady's decision to use the term in this way feels like a key distinctive, given what Philip Benedict tells us about the problematic use of a word which was originally intended as a tool of stigmatisation, and then increasingly became associated with the acronym, TULIP.[4] Richard Muller affirms the multiple uses of the term, but helpfully clarifies the key point that, far from representing 'a unique theology of Calvin', the term more accurately denotes the shared formulations of Bucer, Viret, Musculus, Vermigli and even Bullinger.[5] This seems to reflect the way that Toplady was keen to deploy the designation.

In the following year, *A Caveat Against Unsound Doctrines* was published, this being a reprint of a sermon based upon 1 Timothy 1:10, that Toplady preached at St. Ann, Blackfriars in 1770, with the intention of addressing a range of heterodox themes which he had identified as prevalent at that time. This sermon repeatedly warns against 'the Dissemination of corrupt Doctrines', 'Schismatics' and 'pernicious Error' and targets 'Antinomianism' and 'Arminianism', but never once affirms 'Calvinism'.[6] Indeed, other than Scripture the only authority appealed to are the Thirty-Nine Articles, which are used systematically to underpin a broadly 'Reformed' framework of doctrine.[7]

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[3] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, pp. 92-104.

[4] Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed, A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. xxii-xxiii.

[5] Richard Muller, *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition, On the Work of Christ and the Order of Salvation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), pp. 52-53.

[6] Toplady, *A Caveat against Unsound Doctrine*, pp. 8, 9.

[7] Identified as the product of the 'Reformers': Toplady, *A Caveat against Unsound Doctrine*, pp. 23, 24, 28.

It seems that Toplady's strategy here was to endorse a broadly 'Calvinistic' theology by exploring the implications of common inversions of its characteristic doctrines, such as 'Conditional Election', the denial of Original Sin, or 'Uneffectual Grace'.[8] In this he exhibits some ability in critiquing and lampooning forms of heterodoxy which are anti-calvinistic, a skillset which would be honed in his later publications.

A year later, and Toplady was addressing the challenges presented by the 'Feathers Tavern Petition' in his pamphlet *Free Thoughts on the Projected Application to Parliament for the Abolition of Ecclesiastical Subscriptions* and, whilst there was only one passing reference to Calvinism, there were plentiful allusions to 'Deistical, Arian, Socinian, Pelagian Dissenters' and 'Arians, Arminians' along with 'Unitarianism' as the forces behind the petition.[9] Toplady's argument against the abolition of subscription, or against pleas in favour of conscience, or indeed against the proposed elevation of scriptural authority over the Articles is dependent upon his holistic Calvinistic framework, which connects such matters.[10]

In 1772, he preached a sermon at 'An Annual Visitation of the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of Exeter', which was subsequently published as *The Doctrines of the Church of England; Proved to be the Doctrines of Christ*. Here, Toplady pulled off a similar feat: the self-professed Calvinist managed to avoid mentioning the label, whilst being utterly clear about the 'inestimable truths, which the disciples of Arius, Arminius, and Socinus are labouring to wrest from our hands.'[11]

Indeed, as one compares these various publications, many of which overlap in their common themes, the impression emerges that Toplady was at times quite circumspect when it came to using Reformed or Calvinistic labels. Given that he has been lambasted by multiple commentators for the

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[8] Toplady, *A Caveat against Unsound Doctrine*, pp. 20, 29, 43.

[9] Toplady, *Free Thoughts on the Projected Application to Parliament for the Abolition of Ecclesiastical Subscriptions* (London: Joseph Gurney, 1771), pp. 14-15.

[10] Toplady, *Free Thoughts*, pp. 19, 20, 21-22.

[11] Toplady, *The Doctrines of the Church of England*, p. 23.

alleged lack of subtlety of his polemical writing, this evidence of delicacy deserves some consideration. What might have been the basis for such nuancing of his message? Thomas Nowell, over the first seventy-four pages of his response to Richard Hill's *Pietas Oxoniensis*, took care never to mention Calvinism in connection with the procedures that were followed to expel from Oxford the six (Calvinistic) students for 'methodistical practices'. This may be connected to his affectation of a studied ambivalence over these doctrines: 'The points which you pronounce so confidently upon, are generally acknowledged to be abstruse and difficult points: and wise and good men have always differed about them…These points have been disputed in almost all ages of the christian church.'[12] Even his choice of terminology here ('points') seems to imply an understanding which was framed by the (recent) Remonstrant/Dordt terms of reference, rather than perceiving these matters through the lens of any kind of historical theological continuity. It may be reasonable to conclude that Toplady's discerning eye spotted this characteristic, and this led to his far more weighty defence of Calvinism, heavily dependent upon long-term historic continuity.

Nevertheless, having set this framework for consideration, when he turned to more doctrinal matters, Nowell did not lose much time in declaring his actual colours: after affirming Laud, Hammond, Bull, Tillotson, Sharp and Stillingfleet as 'the brightest ornaments of our church', he went on to assert that 'our articles have been vindicated from the charge of Calvinism by Bp Bull, Dr. Waterland, and several other religious and learned men.'[13] Thereafter, Nowell embarked upon the somewhat contrived argument that Cranmer and Ridley subscribed to a theological perspective which was largely sympathetic to Arminian doctrine. In this case, it is evident where the battle-lines were cast, and this helps explain why Toplady's response was unabashed in its pro-Calvinistic polemic - as, for that matter, in the even less subtly-entitled *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England.* It seems that he had a keen eye for context, and was careful to

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[12] Nowell, *An Answer to a Pamphlet Entitled Pietas Oxoniensis*, pp. 74-75.
[13] Nowell, *An Answer to a Pamphlet Entitled Pietas Oxoniensis*, p. 75.

avoid prejudicing his audience against his arguments, when he sensed that the terminology might needlessly distract from his main point. Subscription was about the Articles, and therefore so was Anglican orthodoxy.

In Toplady's somewhat mixed introduction to his *magnum opus*, he tellingly referenced 'The Ecclesiastic Reign of Archbishop Laud', commenting 'But that Prelate attached himself to the new System (and it was then very new indeed) of Arminius'.[14] This uncomplimentary allusion to the novelty of Arminianism is no incidental matter, given that he, firstly, shows how the Church Fathers clearly refuted Pelagianism, and that the modern phenomenon of Arminianism was merely reconstituted Pelagianism.[15] In addressing this heresy, Toplady allocated substantial space to an analysis of Thomas Bradwardine's (1300-49) *On the Cause of God Against the Pelagians*.[16] Gordon Leff decries the neglect suffered by Bradwardine, a leading fourteenth-century scholastic thinker who refuted the sceptical ideas of both Duns Scotus (1266-1308), who rejected the union of faith and reason, and William of Ockham (1290-1349) who effectively 'made the truths of revelation inaccessible to reason.'[17] Calvin Normore confirms that Bradwardine was instrumental in reviving and defending a high view of the centrality of God's sovereign will in determining both past and future contingents.[18] Toplady's twenty-two page treatment of his theology is therefore significant on several counts: firstly, Bradwardine's establishment of a clear link between Pelagianism and the scepticism of Scotus and Ockham is apposite, given Toplady's own unity of revelation and reason;[19] secondly, Toplady was embedding his views firmly within a continuity of theological reflection that predated the Establishment of the Anglican Church, and thirdly, he was

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[14] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. xiii.

[15] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, p. 8.

[16] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 204-226.

[17] Gordon Leff, 'Thomas Bradwardine's De Causa Dei', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History,* Vol. 7, Issue 1, April 1956, 21-29.

[18] Calvin Normore, 'Future Contingents' in N. Kretzmann, A. Kenny & J. Pinborg (Eds.), *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 375.

[19] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination Stated and Asserted With a Preliminary Discourse on the Divine Attributes* (Philadelphia: Stewart & Cochran, 1769), p. x.

reprising the tools of scholastic theology within his current Enlightenment context. It is also worth noting that, whilst Bradwardine made significant contributions to the field of natural philosophy, such as *De proportionibus velocitatum* (1328), Leff confirms that 'he rejected metaphysics and philosophy, as independent means of arriving at the truth, in favour of the rigorous application of logic to theology.'[20] It is impossible to read Toplady's works without identifying that same strand of intellectual DNA consistently evident throughout, even when, at times, it is overlain with the accoutrements of polemic. Indeed, Leff confirms that Bradwardine's *De Causa Dei* was a polemical work, and therefore may provide a model for Toplady's own approach.[21] Furthermore, the standalone publication emerged from a course of lectures delivered to Bradwardine's fellow Mertonians - the kind of model which Toplady would follow when publishing his more modest *The Doctrines of the Church of England; Proved to be the Doctrines of Christ* in 1772.

Anthony Milton makes it clear that William Laud had strong sympathies for the anti-Calvinist publications of Richard Mountague, and that 'he saw Calvinist ideas and puritanism as subversive of the institutions of state as well as of church.'[22] It is almost as if Toplady's defence of a Calvinistic Church of England was driven by his perception of Laud's role in resetting the benchmarks for orthodoxy, despite his disgrace and execution in 1645. Thus, the latter's antipathy towards Calvinism, puritan nonconformists and presbyterianism is the natural backdrop to Toplady's Section I, subtitled 'Free-willers the first Separatists from the Church of England'.[23] Milton makes clear that Laud was unsympathetic to court Catholicism, but simultaneously his 'particular concern here and elsewhere seems to have been to avoid giving opponents of his policies the opportunity to tar them with an Arminian brush.'[24] It may, therefore, be unsurprising to see that

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[20] Leff, 'Thomas Bradwardine's De Causa Dei', 27.
[21] Leff, 'Thomas Bradwardine's De Causa Dei', 22.
[22] Anthony Milton, 'Laud, William' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: ODNB, 2009), pp. 7 & 17.
[23] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 51ff.
[24] Milton, 'Laud, William', pp. 12 & 15.

in Section II Toplady moved his focus on to 'ARMINIANISM charged and proved on the Church of ROME'.[25] Laud may well have, as Milton tells us, 'expounded a carefully moderate position', playing the fraught game of seventeenth century ecclesiastical politics with great care, but it seems that Toplady felt that he had seen through the smokescreen, given Laud's intimate connection with a network of Arminian agitators which included Mountague as well as Richard Neile, the Archbishop of York, a powerful promoter of heterodoxy.[26] The contrast between the two men does not merely appear with the benefit of hindsight, for it seems that the contrast had occurred to Toplady himself: in the index, there are fifteen major references to Laud, many more than those dedicated to Cranmer, and even his own beloved Zanchius. Both men were dedicated to strengthening the Church of England and clearly had a high view of its importance, but Laud 'had displayed little respect for or interest in the fortunes of other protestant churches'[27] whilst Toplady actively pursued a broad ecumenism with nonconformists. The biggest difference between them was that 'Laud's chosen means were legal and administrative rather than doctrinal'[28] whereas Toplady's focus was relentlessly historical and theological. Thus, Laud saw Calvinism as inimical to his vision of the health and unity of the Church of England, whilst Toplady understood it to be theologically integral.[29]

This is, of course, a fundamental distinction to be drawn between two devoted churchmen, separated by more than a century: the disparity of their methodology is directly reflected in their theology. Indeed, as we saw in Chapter 1, when crafting his defence of the Articles (*The Doctrines of the Church of England; Proved to be the Doctrines of Christ*), Toplady not only set a high bar when establishing their authority, but did so in such a way as to demonstrate that methodology and

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[25] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 67-103.
[26] Andrew Foster, 'Neile, Richard', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: *ODNB*, 2008), pp. 3 & 7.
[27] Milton, 'Laud, William', p. 17.
[28] Milton, 'Laud, William', p. 24.
[29] Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, p. 70.

theology were inextricably entwined. His language was carefully chosen to underscore this: 'That the whole chain of doctrines, comprised in our public standards as a Church, are perfectly coincident with that system of religious truths which God the Son made the grand subjects of his own personal ministry on earth, will, I hope, be sufficiently proved, in the course of our present enquiry.'[30] Laud may have had in mind the idea of an unbroken episcopal succession, but Toplady clearly perceived authority as flowing from Christ to the (Anglican) church via 'the whole chain of doctrines'. And whilst Nowell, following in Laud's footsteps, may have deprecated what he regarded as profitless theological speculation, Toplady underscored his point in order to settle that line of reasoning: 'The articles of the faith once delivered to the saints are not points of idle curiosity, or barren speculation.'[31] The nature of the post-Restoration Church's debate and division over these truths was evidence that they were far from inconsequential: Stephen Hampton argues that there were signs that (Socinian and Remonstrant) influences had given rise to a doctrine of God which was 'openly contemptuous of the scholastic methods and terminology traditionally used by Reformed authors…'[32]

Toplady's Broader Orthodoxy

Whilst the 1774 publication of the *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England* necessarily restricted its focus to doctrines such as predestination, that does not mean that Toplady was unconcerned about other areas of doctrinal laxity. In his defence of subscription, he repeatedly grouped together '*Deistical, Arian, Socinian, Pelagian* Dissenters' and correlated attempts to overthrow Trinitarian doctrine with the attacks on predestination.[33] It would, however,

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[30] Toplady, *The Doctrines of the Church of England*, p. 4.

[31] Toplady, *The Doctrines of the Church of England*, p. 4.

[32] Stephen Hampton, *Anti-Arminians, The Anglican Reformed Tradition from Charles II to George I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 220.

[33] Toplady, *Free Thoughts*, pp. 14-15, 17, 26.

be quite incorrect to deduce that he was attempting to advocate a narrower approach to subscription, one which was altogether less tolerant than the current law permitted. Indeed, Toplady argued that 'The Toleration of *Protestants* should, by every Law of God, of Nature, and of Civil Policy be *absolutely unlimited*.'[34] By this, he did not mean that there should be any weakening of the standards of subscription within the Church of England, but that, 'not within the Establishment' there should be the free exercise of religion: 'A Toleration, truly Protestant, requires a more generous and expanded Basis.' This was a logical outworking of Toplady's clarity over the fundamental character of the Church of England, a matter which floated to the top of his argument with Nowell: '*You*, Sir, have subscribed, to our articles and homilies, over and over again. These articles and homilies are Calvinistic: and you are a professed Arminian.'[35] Here, he pursued a line of argument which seems broader, more about integrity and consistency than the more binary matter of orthodoxy. 'Open the Liturgy where you will, Calvinism stares you in the face', and 'The doctrines of the church are to be learned from the articles and homilies of *the church herself*; not from the private opinions of some individuals who lay hold on the skirt of her garment, call themselves by her name, and live by her revenues.'[36] There was much more of a similar vein, and the kind of principle that he sought to establish was applicable across the broader swathe of contested doctrinal points: 'That, if ARIAN subscription to TRINITARIAN articles is palpably dishonest; then, by all the rules of argument in the world, ARMINIAN subscription to articles, that are CALVINISTIC, must and can be no less criminal.' And, 'Let not, then, the subscribing Arminian (though he may happen to be a Trinitarian) exclaim against the subscribing Arian, the subscribing Socinian, or even the subscribing Deist.'[37] It is, of course, far from incidental that Toplady should be directly linking his Christology to the doctrine of the divine decrees: Richard A.

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[34] Toplady, *Free Thoughts*, pp. 28-29.
[35] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, p. 24.
[36] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, pp. 13 & 15.
[37] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, pp. 18-19.

Muller notes precisely this characteristic in the schema of Jerome Zanchius, notably in his *De Tribus Elohim* (1572).[38]

It might be considered that Toplady may have been indulging in the somewhat unsophisticated tactic of tarring all dissenting voices with the same generic brush, but it will be noted (above) that he allowed for the possibility that a professing Arminian might still subscribe to a Trinitarian position. Stephen Hampton, however, has shown a discernible correlation between a developing Remonstrant emphasis within the Church of England, and a downgrade in Trinitarian doctrine. This trend surfaced within Anglicanism with the 1669 publication of George Bull's *Harmonia Apostolica*, an event which was backed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Gilbert Sheldon, whose consistent hostility to Reformed thought is noted by Hampton, commenting that 'Gilbert Sheldon was not only prepared to endorse Bull's controversial ideas on two separate occasions, but was also content for Bull to present himself as the standard-bearer for all those who were opposed to Reformed theology, himself among them.'[39] Whilst Toplady managed to avoid mentioning Bull in his writings, he would hardly have failed to note that his revered John Edwards had complained that Bull had influenced other theologians towards a heterodox view of Christ's divinity, and accused him of presenting a confused view of the teachings of the Church Fathers.[40]

The significance of Bull's work was not merely that he had set out to oppose the Reformed consensus, but that he effectively reworked the doctrine of justification and was part of a developing trajectory within Anglican theological reflection (including John Tillotson, Edward Fowler, William Sherlock, Daniel Whitby and Samuel Clarke) which led eventually to the establishment of English Socinianism, or Unitarianism.[41] Hampton is very clear that this process of

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[38] Muller, *Christ and the Decree*, pp. 118, 122, 123.

[39] Hampton, *Anti-Arminians*, pp. 39-40.

[40] David C. Norman, *Saving the Church of England, John Edwards (1637-1716) as Dissenting Conformer* (Eugene, Or: Wipe & Stock, 2022), pp. 82 & 92.

[41] Hampton, *Anti-Arminians,* p. 163.

doctrinal reinvention, culminating in Clarke's Arianism, was grounded in a longer 'tradition of thoroughly Anglican subordinationism' which was (in turn) derived from the theology of the Remonstrants, notably Simon Episcopius and Etienne de Courcelles.[42] This analysis provides a context for the linkages between Arianism, Socinianism, Pelagianism and Deism explicit within Toplady's writings, but there is even more here which sheds light on Toplady's method. As Hampton states in his conclusions, the above theologians 'approached the theology of God in a way that was both consciously different from Reformed teaching in this area, and openly contemptuous of…scholastic methods and terminology.'[43] Indeed, Hampton supplies multiple examples of the ways in which these thinkers refused to incorporate accepted metaphysical language, or scholastic methods into their novel thinking about the doctrine of God. It is clear, therefore, that, far from being driven by an unhealthy preoccupation with predestinarian theology, Toplady had made the jump to the broader understanding of orthodoxy, and how it was composed in the first place. This abrupt discontinuity in theological parlance as well as methodology is very likely what Toplady was referring to when he described the unproductive nature of the Remonstrants' discourse at the Synod of Dort, citing Pierre Bayle's account of the resulting 'Uproar and Confusion'.[44] It seems clear that, in Toplady's mind, the burgeoning heterodoxies during the Restoration period were as closely linked to shifting theological disciplines as anything else. Commenting upon the Remonstrants' strategy at Dort, he said, '…how absurd would it be, to discuss the naked Conclusion, without antecedently canvassing the Premisses! So that, in proposing such a wild and illogical Method of Procedure, the Arminians at the Synod of Dort acted neither as Men of Peace, nor as Men of Honesty, nor as Men of Sense.'[45] This same understanding finds support in the original documents arising from the British delegation to the Synod: George Carleton expressed his reservations

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[42] Hampton, *Anti-Arminians,* p. 165.
[43] Hampton, *Anti-Arminians,* p. 220.
[44] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 616-622.
[45] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 622.

concerning the Remonstrants tactic of developing a new terminology to sidestep objections to their teachings; Sir Robert Naunton emphasised the importance of adhering to the Church Fathers' formulations when rejecting Pelagianism; all the British divines were unanimous in deploring the Remonstrants inaccurate reframing of orthodox belief.[46] The Enlightenment rejection of an accepted theological discipline, common to both Catholic and Protestant scholars was a prerequisite for this departure from historic orthodoxy, as it deprived the protagonists of a common theological lexicon as well as the disciplines necessary for theological accuracy and balance. This background significantly reframes the perception of Toplady's approach, which might otherwise, erroneously, appear to be somewhat anachronistic.

Scholasticism in the Calvinist DNA

The comparison with Laud and his successors helps us to understand how Toplady's Calvinism was framing his approach, but there was also a contemporary example that may help to shed light on his strategy. Across the Atlantic, the theological reflections of the New-England Congregationalist, Jonathan Edwards, fed through to a significant publishing output, beginning with *A Divine and Supernatural Light* (1734) and ending with *Original Sin* (1758). Both he and Toplady were ministering during the period of the first 'Great Awakening', both struggled with persistent physical frailties,[47] and both were close acquaintances of George Whitefield, although it may be observed that Edwards had some reservations about Whitefield's tendency to rely on immediate impulses of the Spirit. George Marsden reports that, in the aftermath of Whitefield's visit to Northampton in 1740, 'Edwards was delighted that Whitefield had been used of God to spark a new awakening among his congregation, but he was determined to cultivate it carefully by his own methods.'[48] A

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[46] Anthony Milton (ed), *The British Delegation and the Synod of Dort (1618-1619)*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), pp. 202, 212, 217.
[47] George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards, A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 107-8.
[48] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards, A Life*, p. 212.

similar clarity of definition, and care over the substance of theology was shared by Toplady, and it is to be noted that both men wrote on metaphysical and philosophical topics. Edwards published his *Freedom of the Will* in 1754, and Toplady his *Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted* in 1775. Whilst it would be unhelpful to push the parallels too far, these similarities may provide hints of Toplady's growing understanding of his own identity and significance, as he sought to develop his ministry whilst severely hampered by bodily frailty. Edwards also shared Toplady's concerns about the prevalence of heterodoxy: writing in his schema, *A History of the Work of Redemption*, he referred to the declined spiritual state of Britain, stating that 'Arianism, Socinianism, Arminianism and Deism prevail, and carry almost all before them.'[49] This stance closely mirrors that of Toplady himself.[50]

Of course, Toplady had Zanchius, Bucer and Vermigli as his scholastic precursors - are there parallels here with Edwards? Interestingly, whilst there is barely a mention of these authorities in Edwards' writings, there is a well-documented, and very explicit dependence upon the Dutch scholastic, Peter van Mastricht (1630-1706).[51] Indeed, Adriaan C. Neelee describes this as a 'lifelong engagement with Mastricht's work of theology', and says that it sets Edwards apart. That Edwards benefitted from other influences is hardly a surprise, given Toplady's intent to defend the theological pedigree of his own Church of England - Edwards addressed a different context. Mastricht was a contemporary of Herman Witsius, whom Toplady admired, and was an adherent to the fourfold scholastic model of theological disputation: exegesis, doctrine, elenctic and practice.[52] Neelee has explored the nature of Edwards' fascination with, and dependence on, the writings of

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[49] Jonathan Edwards, *History of the Work of Redemption, Containing the Outlines of a Body of Divinity, Including a View of Church History, In a Method Entirely New* in Edward Hickman (ed.) 'The Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol. 1' (Worcester, MA: Belcher and Armstrong, 1834), p. 601.

[50] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, p. 130. See also, *The Doctrines of the Church of England*, p. 29.

[51] Adriaan C. Neelee, 'Mastricht, Peter' in *The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia* by Harry Stout (ed.), (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2017), pp. 362-65.

[52] Adriaan C. Neelee, *Before Jonathan Edwards: Sources of New England Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 40.

both Mastricht and Johann Friedrich Stapfer. (C. Layne Hancock confirms that Edwards was dependent upon Stapfer in his treatise *Original Sin*, and that he makes significant use of Stapfer's *Institutiones* (published in four volumes, 1756-57), due to its 'encyclopedic nature'.)[53] Neelee notes some similarities between Edwards and these thinkers (liberal arts education, culminating in a theological degree), but identifies rather more differences (Edwards' geographical isolation, pastoral setting and language). He observes that 'a more tempered portrait of Edwards should emerge: a remarkable preacher, revivalist, and struggling pastor who reflected theologically and philosophically in the immediate context of ministry.'[54] He was no ivory-tower thinker, and we might draw a very similar observation of Toplady, to which point Neelee's prefatory comment is pertinent: 'This study, then, is concerned with the consequences of past ideas. More precisely, the consequences of theological ideas of the past that found a way into Edwards's own theological reflections.'[55] At the close of his first chapter, reflecting upon Edwards' interaction with the Protestant scholastics, significantly Neelee concludes, 'In summary, I suggest a more "theological" Edwards, over against the portraits of a modern thinker, wrestling with a fuller emergence of the Enlightenment through the writings of Locke and Newton.'[56] Neelee's judgement regarding Edwards, might seem contrarian to those who identify his Enlightenment credentials, but it seems be reflective of what we discover in the work and emphasis of Toplady. Furthermore, whilst Josh Moody avoids mentioning Vermigli, Maastricht, Bucer, Turretin, Vermigli, Voetius or Witsius in relation to Edwards' own spiritual formation, he does state that 'Edwards' genius was to train the Puritan guns upon the Enlightenment. Theirs was the real immediacy, the real experimentation, the true reason, the true light.'[57] Thus, as with Toplady, his engagement with Locke, Hume, Newton

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[53] C. Layne Hancock, 'Stapfer, Johann Friedrich' in *The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia* by Stout (ed.), pp. 547-48.

[54] Neelee, *Before Jonathan Edwards: Sources of New England Theology*, p. 67.

[55] Neelee, *Before Jonathan Edwards: Sources of New England Theology*, p. x.

[56] Neelee, *Before Jonathan Edwards: Sources of New England Theology*, p. 68.

[57] Josh Moody, *Jonathan Edwards and the Enlightenment: Knowing the Presence of God* (Maryland: University Press of America, 2005), p. 139.

and others, was directly facilitated by the theological disciplines of a now discredited era. It is worth noting, however, as Muller does, that Edwards' treatise on the *Freedom of Will*, was heavily dependent upon Locke's notion of the free will which, in turn 'rested on Hobbes'.[58] By way of contrast, although Toplady did acknowledge some dependence upon Locke, his emphasis is quite distinct:

> I acquiesce in the old Distinction of Necessity (a Distinction adopted by Luther, and by most of, not to say all, the sound Reformed Divines), into a *Necessity* of COMPULSION , and a *Necessity* of INFALLIBLE CERTAINTY. - The Necessity of *Compulsion* is prædicated of *Inanimate Bodys*; as we say of the Earth (for instance) that it circuits the Sun, by compulsory Necessity: and in some Cases, of *reasonable Beings* themselves; viz when they are forced to suffer any Thing, contrary to their Will and Choice. - The Necessity of infallible *Certainty,* is of a very different Kind: and only renders the Event inevitably future, without any compulsory Force on the Will of the Agent.[59]

He then goes on to ask, 'Are Man's Actions *free*, or *Necessary*?' and answers, 'They may be, at one and the same Time, free and necessary too.' Whilst Toplady's definitions are here crafted for a general audience, rather than an academic one, it seems that he is basing his views firmly on those of Turretin, Mastricht and other scholastics, rather than on the more recent Enlightenment thinking which, according to Muller, seems to have fed through to Edwards' own distinctive views on the interaction between necessity and a version of libertarian free will.[60]

There will be more to be said about this, as we review other aspects of Toplady's output, but this historico-theological framing device is important in returning us to a key element of his Calvinism, via Edwards. McClymond and McDermott concur over the key theological emphases which fed into the latter's thinking: Francis Turretin, Francis Burgersdjilk, Gisbertius Voetius, and Petrus van Mastricht - all Protestant scholastics.[61] The importance of this background lies in the fact of the 'great work' that Edwards never got to finish, his extensively-planned *A History of the Work of*

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[58] Richard A. Muller, 'Jonathan Edwards and Francis Turretin on Necessity, Contingency, and Freedom of Will', *Jonathan Edwards Studies,* vol. 4, no. 3 (2014), 267.
[59] A. M. Toplady, *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted. In Opposition to Mr. John Wesley's Tract on that Subject*, (London: Vallance and Simmons, 1775), p. 14.
[60] Muller, 'Jonathan Edwards and Francis Turretin on Necessity, Contingency, and Freedom of Will', 270, 273-4.
[61] Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 340.

Redemption, which he cited as the basis for his reluctance to accept the presidency of the College of New Jersey (later Princeton) in 1757.[62] There are a few key insights to glean from this episode. Firstly, whilst (as is apparent from Edwards' prefatory sermons), this was to be a theological work, the author's intention was to show God's actions in history, bracketed by creation and summation. Secondly, in his letter to the trustees of the College of New Jersey, Edwards described what he was working on as 'an entire new method, being thrown into the form of an history, considering the affair of Christian theology.'[63] This fusion of history and theology was, apparently, going to be of an unprecedented nature.

This was a period for seriously ambitious literary projects. Pierre Bayle published his *Historical and Critical Dictionary* in 1696, one of the earliest skeptical texts, a multi-volume endeavour. Ephraim Chambers produced his *Cyclopaedia* in 1728. Of particular interest is Denis Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, which was a massive collaborative effort, comprising 72,000 articles in seventeen volumes, published in 1759. This was the classic work of the *philosophes*, many of whom (Voltaire, d'Holbach, d'Alembert, Rousseau, François Quesnay, Turgot and Jaucourt) wrote the contents. Ritchie Robinson sums up its distinctly secular Enlightenment credentials, confirming that 'Ecclesiastical history, prominent in Bacon, is represented only by the word' and a little later, 'The "Study of God" is disrespectfully short, with three (by implication) equally important parts: natural theology, revealed theology, and the study of evil beings.'[64] The *Encyclopédie* sought to draw all secular knowledge together, into one holistic model, but its treatment of historical theology was so reductionistic as to demand a corrective: this is what Toplady moved towards via successive publications until in 1774 he published the massive, two-volume *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England*.

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[62] McClymond and McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, p. 181.
[63] McClymond and McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, p. 183.
[64] Ritchie Robertson, *The Enlightenment: The Pursuit of Happiness 1680-1790* (London: Allen Lane, 2020), p. 415.

Toplady, the Calvinist Historian

Before moving on to consider Toplady's key work of history, it is necessary first to explore his credentials as a historian. There are both positives and negatives to factor into our view, but it is worth noting that, in the broader context, the writing of Anglican history is not without its problems. James Kirby laments the lack of decent historiography from the evangelicals who tended to revere the Reformers for their theology, or from liberals who de-emphasised the Reformation. High Churchmen and Erastians also had their reasons for focusing on particular periods and traditions.[65] In this imperfect context, Kirby mentions the writings of Ryle, but does not discuss Toplady's contribution. This thesis shows that Toplady's approach to handling historical data reflected his own theological discipline.

The sheer proportion of writings that Toplady devoted to the subject of history is indicative of his analytical focus, as well as his sense that he possessed a capability to handle such information in a meaningful way. By way of contrast, J. C. Ryle was no historian, but David Bebbington, amongst others, has attested to his authority as a commentator on both evangelicalism and Anglicanism, since he straddled both constituencies.[66] In fact, Ryle's later views have some relevance, in that, according to Ian J. Shaw, as Toplady set out to do, Ryle sought to re-assert the 'legitimacy of the Evangelical heritage within Anglicanism in the face of the continued strength of the Broad Church, and the advances of Anglo-Catholicism'. Shaw goes on to emphasise a prominent piece of Toplady's own intellectual DNA, albeit not by name: 'Despite seeing it as a new work of God, Ryle stresses the continuity between the Evangelical Revival and the sixteenth century'.[67] This connects the dots between Calvin, Luther and then Hooper and Latimer, with Whitefield and Wesley, via the

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[65] Kirby, *Historians and the Church of England*, pp. 183-85.

[66] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain,* pp. 2-3

[67] Ian J. Shaw, 'The evangelical revival through the eyes of the 'Evangelical Century': Nineteenth-century perceptions of the origins of evangelicalism', in Haykin and Stewart (eds), *The Emergence of Evangelicalism*, p. 306.

Puritans. Such an approach seems to follow Toplady's method, and therefore helps to explain Ryle's warm commendations of the *Historic Proof*. Nevertheless, because this substantial work has to do such heavy *theological* lifting, it seems essential to look past Ryle's glowing review - as other writers were coming to quite different conclusions.

Notably, Nowell, in his polemical response to Richard Hill's *Pietas Oxoniensis* refers to a range of historical sources, such as the historian and biographer John Strype's *History of the Life and Acts of Edmund Grindal* (1710),[68] and he cites many historical examples, such as Cardinal Wolsey, Bishop Maddox, Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, Hooper, Cromwell, Hooker, as well as historical documents such as *Pia et Catholica Institutio* (1543) and *Reformatio Legum* (1551). The text is peppered with other citations from Strype's *Life of Whitgift* (1717-18), and Peter Heylyn's *Ecclesia restaurata* (1661) and *Historia quinquarticularis* (1660), so it would be inaccurate to suggest that this writer, against whom Toplady took such exception, was not attuned to the historical context that framed his own polemical engagement. Within the see-saw of seventeenth and then eighteenth century Anglican partisanship, on what basis might we reliably assess Toplady's historical approach, most notably enshrined within the *Historic Proof*? This is not a futile question, especially given that Bebbington distinguishes between what historians set out to *do* (historiography) and the thing they write *about* (the historical process). He outlines a number of the weaknesses implicit in the 'science' of history: that the subject matter is in the past, the historian is reliant on the quality of mediation, the evidence itself may be neither reliable nor complete, and there is the problem of the historian, namely bias. Nevertheless, he accepts that the historical discipline is 'scientific in that it is critical of received opinion, rigorous in examining evidence and systematic in the presentation of its discoveries.'[69] Whilst it would be unrealistic to expect an eighteenth century researcher to

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[68] Nowell, *An Answer to a Pamphlet Entitled Pietas Oxoniensis*, pp. 37-40.

[69] David Bebbington, *Patterns in History: A Christian Perspective on Historical Thought* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018), pp. 1, 3, 4, 5.

wholly comply with contemporary method and standards, to what extent might it be possible to establish a view of Toplady's approach, when he presented his very specific interpretation of the nature of historical Anglicanism? As we assess his published work, with particular attention to the *Historic Proof*, several considerations become apparent.

The first, and perhaps most obvious, is Toplady's use of referencing. Granted that his *Historic Proof* is self-evidently a very different category of literature to Nowell's pamphlet, it is furnished with a voluminous array of footnotes as well as a comprehensive index at the rear. This was not just a means of establishing his authority, rather Toplady was, in fact, inviting his reader to check his sources and conclusions, and frequently supplying supplemental footnoted content to expand his main points. That this was not always the norm is evident from Richard Muller's comment about Jonathan Edwards: 'The sources and backgrounds of Jonathan Edwards' thought are difficult to determine, given that he seldom offered citations or references to other thinkers in his published writings except when engaging in debate.'[70] Even at his best, Nowell supplied only the most minimal hints as to his sources, whereas Toplady provided a detailed audit trail, which exposed his working to independent analysis, and encouraged his reader towards further research. Even compared to modern standards, this seems rigorous - and, significantly, it signals a rather different approach to that adopted within his more Enlightenment-focused *Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity*, which will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 4.

Next, we can observe the sheer breadth of the sources which Toplady consulted. He too resorted to Strype, but drew upon a wider range of his writings. He also engaged with Heylyn, but as befits a source which was not free of contention,[71] his treatment included a careful analysis and

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[70] Richard A. Muller, 'Jonathan Edwards and Francis Turretin on Necessity, Contingency, and Freedom of Will' in *Jonathan Edwards Studies* vol. 4, no. 3 (2014), 267.

[71] Patrick Collinson documents two of Heylyn's misrepresentations, based upon hearsay, in *Archbishop Grindal, 1519-1583* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1979), pp. 155 & 254. Nicholas Tyacke discloses Heylyn's consistent pro-Arminian and pro-Laudian sentiment in *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c. 1590-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 70-1, 150-1.

counterbalancing from other authorities. In fact, his Index contains no less than seventeen line entries dealing with Heylyn's theological and historical claims, no doubt prompted by that author's explicit endorsements of the Laudian era. This was only one instance of Toplady's use of extensive primary and secondary sources which provide a comprehensive underpinning for the scope of his treatment.[72] Wherever Toplady was seeking to establish an accurate picture of the theological convictions of key individuals such as Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer, the evidence is that he resorted immediately to primary sources (sermons, letters, theological writings, autobiographical material), rather than depend upon third-hand reportage, even where such materials may have been reliable.[73] In fact, it swiftly becomes apparent that Toplady had access to many of the key works written by the founding fathers of the Church of England, such as Peter Martyr Vermigli (whose citations he translated from the original Latin which was supplied for reference purposes), Thomas Cranmer, Nicholas Ridley, Hugh Latimer, John Hooper and Martin Bucer which allowed him to comment accurately on the scope and significance of their theological contributions.[74] One of the reasons why *Historic Proof* is so lengthy is because Toplady resisted any temptation to slim down his citations: there was no danger of extracts being wrested in order to mislead the reader, or being abbreviated to the point of constructive ambiguity.

Thirdly, it is perhaps significant that Toplady did not indulge in hagiography. His accounts of the lives and teachings of theological antecedents are generally characterised by a relentless

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[72] Sources include: Edmund Calamy; David Hume; William Prynne; Pierre Bayle; John Davenant; Nicolas Tindal; (Bishop) Gilbert Burnet; Laurence Echard; (Bishop) White Kennett; Arthur Collins; William Guthrie; John Foxe; Petrus van Mastricht; Samuel Clark; Thomas Aquinas; Augustine; Thomas Fuller; (Bishop) William Beveridge; Louis Ellies Du Pin; an extensive review of the Church Fathers (including Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp); Archibold Bower; (Archbishop) James Ussher; William Cave; John Locke; Richard Rolt; William Camden; Thomas Bradwardine; Humphrey Prideaux; (Bishop) John Ponet; Melchior Adam; Martin Bucer; William Robertson; Andrew Willet; William Fulke; John Hales; (Sir) Richard Baker; William Barlow and Henry Hickman.

[73] See his analysis of the beliefs of Hugh Latimer, in *Historic Proof*, pp. 286-325, which includes extended citations on every key aspect of Latimer's doctrine.

[74] A persuasive example of this to be found in Section XIII 'The Judgement of our ENGLISH REFORMERS' and Section XIV 'The Judgement of our ENGLISH REFORMERS concluded', in Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 259-325 and pp. 325-67.

attention to detail, rather than by an excessive reverence. One good example of this quality is his approach towards Thomas Cranmer, a pivotal figure in Toplady's narrative of a reformed Church of England, but one whose past was sufficiently complex to potentially undermine that narrative.[75] Another helpful instance was his discussion of the vestment controversy, as exemplified by Bishop John Hooper, which drew on writings from Martin Bucer and Peter Martyr Vermigli.[76]

Fourthly, another intriguing characteristic of Toplady's approach, was the way in which he handled incidental evidence. In Section XVIII, entitled *The Re-Establishment of the Church of England by Queen Elizabeth*, he embarked upon a discussion of the categories of documentary evidence arising from this period which, naturally enough, included the Thirty-Nine Articles, the supplementary Homilies and Thomas Rogers' Commentary on the Articles. Within this section, there was an extended assessment of the marginal notes which were included within versions of the Bible published over this period, since these are useful indicators of the prevailing theological climate.[77] These included 'The Great Bible' (or Cranmer's Bible, of 1537), where it becomes evident that Toplady had access to several editions of it; the 'Bishops' Bible' (1568) and the 'Quarto Bible' (1576) from which are reproduced marginal notes, covering eight pages.[78] What is significant about this piece of analysis is the combination of Toplady's laborious attention to incidental detail, plus the critical discipline where he avoided making more of this information than the data itself would sustain. The inclusion of this material, as well as Toplady's emphasis upon it betray a most judicious approach to the weighing of evidence, and tells us something about his historical method, as well as the mindset which supported it.

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[75] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 265.
[76] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 360-63.
[77] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 471-85.
[78] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 478-85.

Fifthly, it is worth noting that Toplady knew the history of the books that he resorted to as references. The pages of *Historic Proof* are littered with examples, but one relating to 'the Learned Dr *Willet's* inestimable Book. … *Synopsis Papismi*'[79] is key to the point. Toplady admitted that he did not know the publishing date of the first edition, confirmed that the third edition came out in 1600, and states that he was relying on the fifth edition of 1634. Several pages of extracts then follow, and the reader is therefore assured which edition these come from, which is an essential piece of information, given the page references. This incidental background suggests that Toplady was not a man who was simply pragmatic about his sources, but one who wished his readers to fully understand the provenance of his own work.

Sixthly, it seems important to attempt some consideration of authorial intent. No reader of his work could accuse Toplady of pretending a kind of studied neutrality in his treatment of historical or theological themes, but, as Bebbington succinctly states, 'Bias need not extinguish a historian's critical powers'.[80] That is to say, once we recognise the presence of bias (and Toplady is hardly shy about his position), is there evidence that he took reasonable and sufficient steps to tackle any potentially unhelpful implications? Firstly, it seems very probable that these first five characteristics of Toplady's approach, in combination, provide a moderating, counterbalancing effect in relation to unjustified biases. Secondly, he generally exhibits a functional familiarity with the writings and beliefs of those with whom he profoundly disagreed, although it is also clear that his performance here is at times quite variable which gives rise to some concerns. He includes extensive citations from Laud, Arminius (and associates such as Samuel Hood and Van Harmin), Heylyn and John Goodwin, as well as some detailed research into the origins of Pelagianism, Socinianism, and Arianism. His treatment of the Ranters, a seventeenth-century radical religious group which emerged from the Civil War unhelpfully links this group to the sixteenth century

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[79] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 110-113.
[80] Bebbington, *Patterns in History,* p. 7.

'Family of Love', later anathematised by James I.[81] Similarly, Toplady's treatment of the moderate puritan, John Goodwin (1594-1665), inaccurately presents him as the 'grand Ring-Leader' of the *Fifth Monarchy Men*, a group of radicals that emerged during the Civil War.[82] In Toplady's mind, the synergies presented by Goodwin's theological orientation, combined with his more inclusive engagement, allowed a jump towards a conclusion which was an inaccurate representation of the man. In a lengthy footnote, he cited Bishops Burnet and Kennet, and Dr. Echard to confirm that Goodwin's Coleman Street pulpit was open to preachers of this radical persuasion.[83] It is clear that Toplady regarded that as akin to the proverbial smoking gun, but in this matter he was incorrect. John Coffey persuasively documents Goodwin's settled opposition to the Fifth Monarchists, and support for Cromwell.[84]

The *Historical Proof* also includes a history of the 'Free-will men', early separatists (around 1550) from the Church of England.[85] Toplady's treatment of Roman Catholicism, and its affinities with Arminianism are generally careful (Section II), as is his summary of the Council of Trent's stance on the doctrine of Predestination (Section III) and on the Vatican's treatment of Jansenius (Section IV). And, whilst he would have taken issue with Hume's naturalistic presuppositionalism, this does not prevent Toplady from stating that his 'History[86], considered merely as a Composition, does Honor to the Author and the Age.'[87] There is little evidence here of 'quote-mining' as a kind of short-cut to winning an argument, but rather, as a general rule, a preparedness to articulate the granular detail of opposing views. This lends some credibility to Toplady's portrayal of Anglicanism.

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[81] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 556-61.
[82] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. XL-XLIII.
[83] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. XLI.
[84] John Coffey, *John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution: Religion and Intellectual Change in 17th-Century England*, (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2008), pp. 124, 239-40.
[85] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 53.
[86] Toplady was referencing Hume's *History of England*, vol. 6 (London: T. Cadell, 1762).
[87] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 261.

Notwithstanding, it is clear that Toplady is on his firmest ground, when dealing specifically with Reformation history, although at one point his dismissal of the influence of Melanchthon (via his *Loci Communes*, 1521) on the English Reformation is misleading.[88] The chapter on 'The Judgement of the Earliest Fathers' (Section VII) provides a contrast to the strengths observable elsewhere: here is a modest treatment of the Patristics where his minimal regard for this period becomes evident: 'I once devoted a considerable Share of Time and Attention to the Fathers. But, I scruple not to acknowledge, that, after a while, I desisted from this Study, as barren and unimproving.'[89] This may sound like simple prejudice, but it is helpful to bear in mind the elevation of esoteric, doctrinal marginalia which occurred under the later Tractarian movement, largely owing to a dependence on the Patristics.[90] Furthermore, as Peter Nockles observes, the 'Tractarian editors were both anachronistic and selective in their approach. Historical context was ignored…'[91] If Toplady was exhibiting a failing here, he was hardly an isolated example.

Indeed, his consideration was restricted to Barnabus, Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, and Polycarp, from whom he drew at least a sufficiency of testimony to indicate that they did not espouse proto-Pelagian views of human free-will, justifying the use of Barnabus and Clement on the basis of their antiquity.[92] Elsewhere, he was heavily dependent upon the much later St. Augustine ('Austin'), but that is entirely explicable, given the latter's critical engagement with Pelagius.[93] Irenaeus is not cited, but then, as Christopher Hall demonstrates, his focus was on the earlier heresy of Gnosticism, a matter that did not motivate Toplady in the same way.[94]

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[88] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 696. Compare Andrew Pettegree, 'Afterword' in Polly Ha & Patrick Collinson (eds), *The Reception of Continental Reformation in Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 235.
[89] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 124.
[90] Peter B. Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship 1760-1857*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 119.
[91] Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context*, p. 129.
[92] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 138.
[93] Nick Needham, *2000 Years of Christ's Power, Volume 1: The Age of the Early Church Fathers*, (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 1998, 2022), pp. 275ff.
[94] Christopher A. Hall., *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers*, (Downers Grove, Il., IVP Academic, 2002), p. 125-6.

Contrastingly, he had nothing to say regarding Athanasius of Alexandria, John Chrysostom or Cyril of Alexandria, all of whom had written about the sovereignty of God in ways that would have been attractive to a Calvinist polemicist. Toplady was very openly writing polemical history, but we should not assume that this somehow invalidates his credentials as a historian.

However, it should be admitted that Toplady undoubtedly fits Alan Munslow's definition of a 'historian of a particular kind', whose 'epistemology is practical and realist in that they assume the knowable reality of the past is achievable through empirical justification via their reading of "the sources"'.[95] Munslow is consistently sceptical about such a perspective, but it is difficult to see how Toplady could be anything but this, given his Lockean context, and his adoption of scholastic methodologies. Bebbington reminds us that, foundational to any discrepancy between written history and the actual past, other than the evidence itself, is 'the problem of the historian'. The 'bias of the historian enters the history he or she writes', and this must be as true of Toplady's historiography as for any later student, seeking to make sense of his writings.[96] Nevertheless, Bebbington's counterbalance is relevant: 'The [historical] discipline is … scientific in that it is critical of received opinion, rigorous in examining evidence and systematic in the presentation of its discoveries.'[97] Such characteristics certainly frame Toplady's historical analysis. James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller express concerns regarding three 'Methods and Models in the History of Doctrine' and reserve their confidence for the fourth, the 'Integral, Synchronic, or Organic Model'. This is an interpretative, historic model which gives weight to 'the matrix of ideas in a particular period', and involves a 'broader dialogue…with other theological topics and other issues', commenting that this provides a 'firmer basis for answering even the more systematic questions at

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[95] Alan Munslow, *A History of History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), p. 48.
[96] Bebbington, *Patterns of History,* p. 5.
[97] Bebbington, *Patterns of History*, p. 4.

the root of other methods'.[98] This seems to supply a very close match for what we see Toplady attempting in his published works.

The Crafting of a Magnum Opus

Unlike (Jonathan) Edwards, Toplady did survive just long enough to complete his own *grande projêt*, but the parallel here is compelling. His *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England* is a substantial work, the extensive index indicative of the breadth of the underlying scholarship. And, whilst Edwards was (to use his own words) 'throwing' theology into the 'form of an history',[99] here we see Toplady 'throwing' history into the 'form' of a theological defence. Of course, he could not resist the opportunity for polemic, which resurfaces at intervals through the 787-page work, and dominates the forty-page introduction. This section started promisingly enough, with Toplady stating that 'Before I enter on the principal Design of the present Undertaking, it may be proper to throw together some preliminary Observations, by Way of Preface; that the main Thread of our Historic Enquiry may, afterwards, procede the more evenly and uninterruptedly.'[100] Indeed, the very next paragraph referred to his preliminary sketch, *The Church of England Vindicated From The Charge of Arminianism* (1769) which was like a dress-rehearsal for this much more ambitious work. However, one's expectations of 'design' are initially unfulfilled: the introduction was substantially devoted to the rancorous interactions with John Wesley and two of his lieutenants (Walter Sellon and Thomas Olivers), subsequent to the publication of the translation of Zanchius. There was a defence of his own style of engagement, justified upon the premise of the ferocity of the incoming polemic, and there is some historical

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[98] James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller, *Church History: An Introduction to Research, Reference Works, and Methods* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 31-32.
[99] McClymond and McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, p. 183.
[100] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. ix.

content which might have been better served up later. The introduction therefore tells us little about Toplady's mind or intentions, other than the motivation to defend the Calvinistic establishment of the Church of England through historical means. It seems at times as if the nature of the polemic sits uncomfortably with the loftier motivations underpinning a literary exercise on this scale. It is clear, however, that what had happened was that his awareness of the source of theological detriment had diversified away from Nowell's progressive formulations (which were addressed in the 1769 pamphlet), towards Wesley's Arminianism, and this now framed the approach adopted within his key work. Notwithstanding, his Introduction does make his application evident: 'At a Time of such general Defection from the Doctrines of the Church Established, I cannot possibly have any sinister Ends to answer, by *asserting* those Doctrines. It cannot be to gain *Applause*: for, was That my Motive, I should studiously swim with the Current, and adopt the fashionable System.'[101]

There is a structure, or order of sorts, to this extensive treatment. In sections one to six Toplady established that the earliest dissent from orthodoxy was, in fact, semi-Pelagianism; discussed the 'Arminianisation of Geneva'; outlined the association of Roman Catholicism with Arminianism; and considered other sects which reflected Wesley's views. From section seven through to the eighteenth (with a single excursus in section eleven on 'Mahometanism'),[102] he meticulously marshalled his historical data demonstrating the mainstream orthodoxy of those doctrines described (at that time) as 'Calvinistic', from the Church Fathers, through the early, mid and late Reformation, culminating in the reign of Elizabeth I. Finally, in sections nineteen and twenty, he charted the theological decline of the Anglican Church, beginning in the reign of James I, and culminating with the Restoration in 1660. The book closed with a conclusion which took the form of a challenge, addressed to the Bishops ('your Lordships') of the Church of England, making it clear that Toplady

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[101] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. xxiii.
[102] Toplady's intention is draw clear distinctions between Islam and Calvinism, to counter the accusations of Wesley's colleague, Walter Sellon.

was pleading for a sincere and heartfelt return to its original Calvinistic foundation.[103] Until this final section, it had been unclear as to the audience that Toplady was addressing: after all, he was utterly dismissive of Walter Sellon's academic qualifications,[104] yet this book was scholarly, and magisterial in its scope. This explains why he had chosen not to pursue his argument against those, such as Nowell, who would represent the Laudian and Latitudinarian consensus within the Established Church. Indeed, Toplady was careful not to mention Nowell in the entirety of this work: it is rational to presume that he had concluded that, tactically, it was a much safer bet to pursue the argument against Wesley, who represented precisely the constituency that the bishops would despise. He therefore presented himself as the loyal churchman, contending with the 'enthusiasts' - although, actually, the character of Nowell's heterodoxy was functionally similar in nature.

Dewey D. Wallace, Jr., though apparently no great enthusiast for scholastic method, is helpful in identifying a cluster of key diagnostic cues which identify its presence within a Reformed context. These include, (a) the employment of logical method, and a sharpening of theological concepts; (b) the 'controlling place given to the doctrine of predestination', and (c) a 'defensive posture regarding a number of corollaries of predestination'.[105] If this is an accurate overview, then Toplady certainly seems to be an exemplar of the discipline.

What, then, of Calvin, in the midst of this defence of Calvinism? The criticism given by George Lawton and others who were uncomfortable over the translation of Zanchius is relevant here: 'At any rate, Zanchius plays a far bigger part in Toplady's Calvinism than does Calvin himself.'[106] In fact, section fifteen of this massive work is entitled 'Of the Share which CALVIN had, in the

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[103] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 720-31.

[104] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. xii, xv, xviii-xx.

[105] Dewey D. Wallace, Jr., *Puritans and Predestination, Grace in English Protestant Theology* (Eugene, Or: Wipf & Stock, 2004), pp. 56-60.

[106] Lawton, *Within the Rock of Ages*, p. 99.

Reformation of the CHURCH OF ENGLAND'. Whilst, at just fourteen pages, this is far from being the largest chapter, it certainly delivers on Toplady's intention of demonstrating how Calvin worked closely with Cranmer, through colleagues such as Bucer and Martyr to 'revise and correct' the liturgy of the Church of England. He asserted that it was through Calvin's influence that the Communion Office was reformed in 1550, with the remainder of the liturgy being updated in 1551, as well as the removal of explicitly Catholic elements.[107] Further revisions were to occur, but the 1552 Book of Common Prayer and the 1553 Forty-Two Articles would form the high water-mark of Continental Protestant influence within the national church. Indeed, whilst English church polity went almost entirely unreformed (bishops and diocesan courts remained in place), Philip Benedict comments that 'It is no wonder that Calvin opined that English worship lacked "that purity which was to be desired," even while he nevertheless judged all of these blemishes to be tolerable.'[108] Far from Lawton being correct in his critique of Toplady's focus, there is something different, and more constructive going on here. Through the relative parity with which he treated Luther, Calvin, Bucer, Bullinger, Beza, Vermigli and Zanchius, Toplady was demonstrating that the Reformation origins of the Church of England were not down to one man, but arose out of a pan-European theological consensus. Luca Baschera, exploring the distinctions and continuities between Calvin and Vermigli notes the compatibilities of their theological approaches, as well as the importance of scholasticism for Reformed orthodoxy for the influential Canons of Dort.[109]

Toplady established Calvin's involvement in the ecclesiastical formation of the Anglican Church through direct citations from Peter Heylyn, the Laudian polemicist; Henry Hickman the clergyman and controversialist who challenged Heylyn in print;[110] John Edwards and John Strype, a historian

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[107] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 370.

[108] Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed, A Social History of Calvinism*, p.240.

[109] Luca Baschera, 'Independent Yet Harmonious: Some Remarks on the Relationship between the Theology of Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562) and John Calvin' in *Church History and Religious Culture*, 91.1-2 (2011), 56.

[110] Stephen Wright, 'Hickman, Henry' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: *ODNB,* 2008), p.1.

whom Toplady greatly respected. Whilst Strype had been in favour of the Restoration, he drew the line at James II's Declaration of Indulgence in 1687, but remained a churchman nonetheless.[111] He is remembered chiefly for his biographical and historical works and as late as 1975, Cargill Thompson noted that 'even today the twenty-five volumes of his works in the Clarendon Press reissues of the 1820s are still a standard source for the study of English church history.'[112] Toplady's historical sources were of their time, but they were reputable. It is significant that, throughout this section, Calvin was not primarily venerated for his Calvinism, but rather for his decisive involvement in the framing of the Reformed Church of England as a national church. Having established that underlying principle, Toplady then proceeded to affirm the continuity between that formative input, and the more explicitly 'calvinistic' scholastics, such as Beza and Zanchius.[113] Consequently, the force of Toplady's argument would be considerably diluted if it appeared that the battle was only or mostly about Calvin's ideas - in fact, the rare step of compiling such an extensive index helped to reaffirm the vast range of authorities who shared the same theological space.

Reformed Scholasticism: a Growing Emphasis

Richard Muller and Wilhem Van Asselt, break down the broader spectrum of Reformed Scholasticism into three periods: Early Orthodoxy (1560-1620); High Orthodoxy (1620-1700) and Late Orthodoxy (1700-1790).[114] In accord with the model used by Matthew Barrett,[115] Kevin

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[111] G. H. Martin and Anita McConnell, 'Strype, John', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: *ODNB,* 2020), p. 2.

[112] W. D. J. Cargill Thompson, 'John Strype as a source for the study of sixteenth-century English church history', in *The materials, sources and methods of ecclesiastical history*, edited by D. Baker (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1975), pp. 237–47.

[113] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 378-80.

[114] Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), I: 3-32 & 60-84, and Willem Van Asselt, *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011), pp. 103-93.

[115] Matthew Barrett, *The Reformation as Renewal: Retrieving the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2023), p. 198.

DeYoung slightly adapts the chronology in line with Denlinger and Trueman, arguing that, consecutively, these represent phases of 'confessional solidification', 'confessional summation' and 'confessional stagnation'.[116] Significantly, Toplady's *magnum opus* referenced first phase scholastic theologians such as Zanchius, Beza and Franciscus Junius, and second-phase theologians such as Charnock, Witsius and Turretin. None from the third phase were referenced, other than John Gill, who may therefore be an exception during that period, as Toplady was also to be. This tends to support the view that Toplady was quite consciously attempting to turn the clock back to what he regarded as an ideal era: Francis Turretin and his colleague Johann Heidegger together initiated the *Formula Consensus Helvetica* of 1669, intended to address the perceived errors of Moïse Amyraut at Saumur, otherwise known as Amyraldianism.[117] James T. Dennison, Jr. notes that 'Gilbert Burnet, future Latitudinarian bishop of Salisbury' lamented the theological preoccupations of Turretin (his host) in 1686, as he sought to defend the orthodoxy of the Canons of Dort, against this new theological wave.'[118] It is this sketchy, generic approach to theology which Toplady alluded to in the conclusion of his *Historic Proof*:

> For this dreadful Declension from the Scripture and from the Church, we are, partly, indebted, to that Door of endless Prevarication, opened, to the Clergy, by Bishop Burnet, in what he entitles, his *Exposition* of the 39 Articles: a Performance, for which (notwithstanding its Merit in some Respects) the Church of England is, upon the Sum total, under no very great Obligation to his Lordship's Art and Labour.[119]

Dennison comments, cryptically, that 'Burnet's comments on the theological mood of the metropolis reflect the proclivities of late seventeenth century progressives.' Indeed this ambitious cleric seemed to regard 'the imputation of Adam's sin; the divine decrees; the vowel points of the

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[116] Kevin DeYoung, 'John Witherspoon and "The Fundamental Doctrines of the Gospel": The Scottish Career of an American Founding Father' (unpublished PhD thesis: University of Leicester, 2019), pp. 36-7.

[117] Amyrault's proposed middle way between Calvinism and Arminianism resulted in a universal and conditional doctrine of the atonement, embraced by some puritans such as Richard Baxter under the label of 'hypothetical universalism'. It seems that Turretin and Toplady's opposition to this emphasis may have been based upon a kind of 'slippery slope' argument, the former applied in anticipation and the latter retrospectively.

[118] James T. Dennison, Jr. 'The Twilight of Scholasticism: Francis Turretin at the Dawn of the Enlightenment', in Trueman and Clark (eds), *Protestant Scholasticism*, pp. 244-45.

[119] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 720.

Hebrew Bible'[120] as all sharing the same abstruse category, and certainly beneath the contemporary mind. For Toplady, such a stance was only achievable through a profound de-tuning of the critical faculties amongst representatives of his own church, for which his answer was a return to the very (scholastic) disciplines that previously sustained orthodoxy. This explains his vigorous defence of subscription to the Articles, a tactic he would have understood as sharing common cause with Turretin's Swiss Consensus, and supported by his vigorous espousal of the Synod of Dort.[121] In practice, this attempt by Turretin to hold back a wave of theological innovation was very much a temporary measure. As Dennison argues, 'The tide threatening scholastic Reformed orthodoxy was more extensive than the theology of Saumur…Gilbert Burnet was prototypical of the change about to overwhelm Calvin's citadel. Indeed, Burnet was prototypical of a change which would alter European civilisation forever.'[122] That Toplady was aware of this critical moment is clear from his own treatment of the subject, when he lamented the decline of Geneva from its original status as 'The Protestant Rome' under the direction set by Francis Turretin's son:

> The once *faithful city is become an Harlot*. The unworthy son of one of the greatest Divines that ever lived (I mean *Benedict*, Son, if I mistake not, of the Immortal *Francis Turretin*) was a principal Instrument of this Doctrinal Revolution.[123]

The contrast between father and son is no mere sleight of hand or a kind of polemical shortcut, because the transition to the next generation represented the closing of a door on the underpinnings of reformed scholasticism. And Turretin's son was not alone in his voyage towards heterodoxy, as Toplady makes it clear that he was aided and abetted by Burnet, who was instrumental in persuading Genevan leaders to 'abolish the Test of Ministerial Subscriptions, about the Year 1685', and who pursued a parallel path in Britain, albeit with less success.[124] It is not difficult to see how

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[120] Dennison, Jr. 'The Twilight of Scholasticism: Francis Turretin at the Dawn of the Enlightenment', p. 244.
[121] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 518, 519, 608-29.
[122] Dennison, Jr. 'The Twilight of Scholasticism: Francis Turretin at the Dawn of the Enlightenment', p. 245.
[123] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 68.
[124] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 68-69.

Toplady had connected the passing of Turretin, the 'last gasp' of reformed scholasticism, with initiatives to abandon a subscription to a doctrinal basis. Indeed, in his sermon of 1772, *The Doctrines of the Church of England; Proved to be the Doctrines of Christ*, the seriousness of the Feathers Tavern petition was painted in the starkest terms: 'The intentional destroyers of our national Church profess a mighty veneration for the Scriptures; and are perpetually crying out, in the much-prostituted words of the celebrated Chillingworth, "The Bible, the Bible is the religion of Protestants."' Pointedly, as he drew his sermon to a close, Toplady noted that 'I conclude, therefore, that subscription to the Bible, and subscription to the Liturgy, Articles, and Homilies, stand on one and the same bottom.'[125] Then he further added, 'May the sentiment be verified in the clergy of the establishment, at this critical and perilous juncture! Let us be careful to stand in the good old ways, and steadfastly abide by the doctrines of the reformation, which are found to quadrate so exactly with the glorious gospel of the blessed God.'[126] It is evident that, in Toplady's mind, the 'good old ways' correlated directly with the Articles which were the work of those scholastic reformed theologians that he so greatly admired. This tends to evoke Neelee's description of Edwards' stance as more nuanced than simply a product of the Enlightenment, or a receptacle for Dutch Cartesianism.[127]

This kind of connection was not a product of his own distinct outlook. Katherine Sonderegger observes that all the reformed confessions of the seventeenth century demonstrated patterns that were 'entirely as one would expect from Christians emerging out of the medieval, scholastic West… The conventional in the doctrine of God, then, reveals much more than we ordinarily expect from a domesticated and fully anticipated schema.'[128] Toplady's own 'schema', certainly as it pertained to

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[125] Toplady, *The Doctrines of the Church of England*, pp. 3 & 30.

[126] Toplady, *The Doctrines of the Church of England*, p. 31.

[127] Neelee, *Before Jonathan Edwards: Sources of New England Theology*, p. 68.

[128] Katherine Sonderegger, 'The Doctrine of God', in Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Reformed Theology*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 390.

those doctrines which we might specifically identify with 'Calvinism', may have appeared unorthodox to the likes of Nowell, but his adherence to the Thirty-Nine Articles was a direct allusion to a doctrinal continuity that flowed all the way back to the scholastics of the Medieval period. Toplady nowhere referenced the predominantly presbyterian Westminster Confession, since his primary focus lay in defending the Calvinism of the Church of England. It is worth noting, however, as Chad van Dixhoorn does, that the chapter layout of the Westminster Confession reflects that of the Thirty-Nine Articles as well as other key confessions of faith.[129] The explicit defence of the Articles in *Free Thoughts* (1771) and *The Doctrines of the Church of England* (1772) in effect grounds Toplady's own orthodoxy in that historic orthodox consensus.

And yet the mere existence of, and subscription to, the Articles was no guarantee of a kind of Calvinistic orthodoxy. Nicholas Tyacke has emphasised the significance of Burnet's *Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, published in 1699, as a kind of watershed for reformed orthodoxy within the Church of England.[130] Burnet set out to demonstrate that the Articles could be interpreted from more than one theological perspective during a period that preceded the prevalence of an Arminian consensus within the Anglican Church, presupposing that it presented an acceptable doctrinal framework, rather than the heresy that the Synod of Dort had sought to refute. The committee of the Lower House for the 1701 Convocation took their time in analysing Burnet's treatment, and were not enamoured with what they found, noting that the Articles were originally framed in such a manner as to minimise ambiguity and obscurity, the two characteristics that Burnet's argument predicated as necessary if Anglican inclusiveness could possibly incorporate two radically divergent theological systems.[131] The freethinker, John Asgill, satirised Burnett's efforts, applauding him for advancing the work of Collins, Toland and Tindall, and listing his *Exposition* alongside the

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[129] Chad van Dixhoorn, 'The Westminster Standards', in Allen and Swain (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Reformed Theology*, p. 252.
[130] Nicholas Tyacke, 'Religious Controversy', in Nicholas Tyacke (ed), *The History of the University of Oxford, vol. IV: The Seventeenth Century*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 617.
[131] Hampton, *Anti-Arminians*, p. 30.

Racovian Catechism.[132] Toplady's denunciation of him was based upon a detailed familiarity with the episode.

Indeed, in Toplady's response to Nowell (1769) he seemed to have been arriving at the conclusion that the very emergence of the Subscription Controversy was proof positive that Burnet's line of reasoning could not be valid.[133] Whilst the application is somewhat different, elsewhere he quoted Francis Blackburne (1705-87), one of the Feathers Tavern petitioners, as stating in his volume *The Confessional* that 'our first Reformers framed and placed *the* XXXIX *Articles*, and most particularly those called *Calvinistical*, as the SUREST *and* STRONGEST BARRIERS to keep out POPERY.' If this extract does not seem immediately applicable to the Calvinism/Arminian dynamic, Toplady provides the context: 'And is it possible for Words to convey clearer and more solid Proof, that *Popery* and *Arminianism* are (so far as these Points are concerned) *one* and the *same*?'[134] By appealing to a hostile witness, Toplady's argument was clear: Blackburne had no cause to love the Articles of the Church of England, but even he recognised that they categorically taught a particular system of theology, albeit one that he dissented from.

The Place of 'Absolute Predestination'

The work for which Toplady is perhaps best known, other than his hymns and poetry, remains *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination Stated and Asserted* (1769) which purported to be 'Translated, in great measure, From the LATIN of JEROM ZANCHIUS'. It is worth noting the questions which frame this work, as they may help inform us of its purpose within his oeuvre. Firstly, Zanchius himself wrote no work with this title, and it seems likely that Toplady's source material was drawn

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[132] J. C. D. Clark, 'Church, Parties and Politics' in Jeremy Gregory (ed), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism Vol. II, Establishment and Empire, 1662-1829* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 305-6.
[133] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, p. 31.
[134] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 99.

from a longer discourse, 'Observations on the Divine Attributes' which formed part of his *De Natura Dei* (1577), a work which was indebted to the structure of Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*. Christopher Burchill emphasises the significance of *De Natura Dei* which formed 'a systematic account of the entire scope of sacred history, an account which presupposed a concept of theology as a deductive science rather than the inductive method of the common-place tradition.'[135]

The historic tendency to see Toplady's decision to publish this work as if it were simply a part of a developing polemic with Wesley would appear to miss the point, given what it signals about his theological method and authorities. An example of that kind of perception is to be found in the views of John Patrick Donnelly, who asserts that Toplady's motivation was to 'oppose the Arminian tendencies in John Wesley and nascent Methodism.'[136] Patrick O'Banion, however, draws out the specific contribution here made by Zanchius in his very deliberate use of words:

> One of the most important clues for understanding what Zanchi was doing in *De natura Dei*, a clue that has been almost entirely ignored, is the convention designated the *usus doctrinae*, the use of the doctrine. By means of that convention Zanchi sought to drive his systematic theological conclusions toward practical theological application. That is to say, when weight is given to the structural and methodological role played by the *usus doctrinae* in *De natura Dei* it becomes clear that a major thrust of the book pushes toward the spiritual health of believers.[137]

These comments help to understand both Toplady's early fascination with this work (the translation was undertaken nine years prior to publication, at the age of twenty, when relations with Wesley were still cordial), as well as his reluctance to publish it, despite encouragements from John Gill.[138] Zanchius correlated very closely with the English Practical Divinity which formed the prevailing culture for church leaders such as Archbishop Grindal and William Perkins, so Toplady was going back to his Anglican roots when seeking to defend the Church of England.[139]

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[135] Christopher Burchill, 'Girolamo Zanchi: Portrait of A Reformed Theologian and His Work', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. XV no. 2 (July 1984), p. 4.

[136] John Patrick Donnelly, 'Italian Influences on the Development of Calvinist Scholasticism', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 7 no. 1 (April 1976), 81-101.

[137] Patrick O'Banion, 'Jerome Zanchi, the Application of Theology, and the Rise of the English Practical Divinity Tradition', *Renaissance and Reformation*, vol. xxix, 2–3 (2005), 98.

[138] Wright, *Augustus M. Toplady and Contemporary Hymn-Writers*, pp. 33-4.

[139] W. B. Patterson, *William Perkins & the Making of a Protestant England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 69.

Furthermore, in an age obsessed with Lockean empiricism and Newtonianism, Zanchius' methodology was refreshingly 'scientific'. Additionally, as he sought to deal with the heterodoxies of Nowell, this kind of work lent a distinctly 'elenctic' emphasis to Toplady's response. J. Mark Beach underscores this latter emphasis, stating, 'Noteworthy was the polemical thrust of this method, elucidating and refuting opposing points of view in order to come to a resolution to the question under dispute.'[140] In this context, Beach's focus is on Francis Turretin, whose writings one should recall were greatly favoured by the young Toplady during his formative years, and whose methodology therefore flows through to this particular mode of theological engagement.

In England, there had been some limited appetite for translating Zanchius' works from the original Latin into English. Robert Hill (d. 1623) translated and published in Cambridge an immense work, running to some 690 pages: *Life everlasting: or the true knowledge of one Jehovah, three Elohim, and Jesus Immanuel*. This was, in effect, an abridgement of *De Natura Dei.* He also translated Zanchius' *Confession of Christian Religion* (1599), *The Pathway to Prayer* (1610) and the *SPECULUM CHRISTIANISM, or A CHRISTIAN SURVEY for the Conscience* (1614). O'Banion details a further range of Zanchius' works which were translated and published in Cambridge by William Perkins, whose own writings referenced Zanchius, and also by John Legate the printer, and Henry Nelson. There seems to have been at that time, but not in the post-Restoration period, a close correlation between Cambridge and scholastic Calvinism, as evidenced in the work of such alumni as Laurence Chaderton, William Perkins and John Edwards. Patrick Collinson observes that in the decade from 1565, no less than two hundred and twenty-eight distinctively Puritan clergy and schoolmasters passed through Cambridge University.[141] It seems hardly a coincidence that William Barrett, in his notorious Great St. Mary's sermon of 1595, took it

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[140] J. Mark Beach, 'Francis Turretin's *Institutes of Elenctic Theology'* in Allen and Swain (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Reformed Theology*, p. 281.

[141] Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 127.

upon himself to include 'a series of side-swipes at Calvin, Martyr, Beza, Zanchius and Junius'.[142] Puritanism and scholasticism converged at Cambridge. This was a connection that Toplady drew upon as he trained his polemical guns on Nowell, in Oxford.[143]

Secondly, it seems critical to take Toplady's own prefatory comments seriously: 'Excellent as Zanchi's original piece is, I yet have occasionally ventured, both to retrench and to enlarge it in the translation…I have endeavoured rather to enter into the *spirit* of the admirable author, than, with a scrupulous exactness, to retail his very *words*.'[144] Indeed, the extent to which this translation supplies us with Zanchius' own words is quite unclear: put the publication alongside any other Toplady text, and you would be hard-pressed to detect much difference in style. In fact, the translation's tell-tale references to 'Arminians' in chapter five indicate later material and emphases within the text.[145] Toplady included a preface (eleven pages) and an introductory treatise entitled 'Observations on the Divine Attributes; Necessary to be Premised' (27 pages). This was a significant step: the explicit connecting of predestination and the divine attributes was characteristic of reformed scholasticism, and was explicitly explored in the writings of Zanchius.[146] Toplady was not simply regurgitating scholasticism, he was manufacturing it.[147] At the rear was included, 'An Appendix Concerning The Fate of the Ancients' (six pages) which was explicitly attributed to Justus Lipsius (1547-1606), suggesting that he was acting as much as an editor as a translator when producing this work. This kind of ambiguity is presupposed in Wesley's own published responses. An exercise in creative plagiarism came out in 1770, entitled *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination Stated and Asserted*, purporting to be 'By the Reverend Mr A____ T_____'.[148] This

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[142] Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 201.

[143] O'Banion, 'Jerome Zanchi, the Application of Theology, and the Rise of the English Practical Divinity Tradition', 108.

[144] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. v.

[145] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. 98.

[146] Muller, *Christ and the Decrees*, p. 122.

[147] Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination*, p. 58.

[148] Anonymous, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination Stated and Asserted* (London, 1770).

took the extensive treatise and cut it down to a minimalistic twelve-page caricature (printed on a single sheet), so it is not difficult to see why Toplady's subsequent writing bristles with outrage.[149] It appears that Toplady's experience was far from unique: Isabel Rivers documents the ways in which Wesley felt free to 'correct' other authors' work, deleting what he regarded as error, and as a result misrepresenting their stance. John Bunyan was another high-profile casualty of this approach.[150]

Wesley then followed up in 1771 with *The Consequence Proved* which ran to just eleven pages, and cherry-picked Toplady's prose for its more accessible targets.[151] Neither of these two rebuttals display any awareness of the original source for *Absolute Predestination*, and therefore treat the author as if he himself were the challenge to be dealt with, rather than a historic doctrinal position which must be carefully understood and critiqued. In fact, one only needs to compare, side by side, the theological characteristics of Toplady's original publication, and the negative Wesleyan responses, to conclude that Arminian Methodism was never intended as Toplady's original audience when he went to print. For a polemical response which went beyond a personal attack, Toplady would have to wait until 1776, when John Fletcher of Madeley published his own considered analysis of the Zanchius translation.[152] At 120 pages, this was clearly intended as a substantive response, but even so framed the whole issue via the lens constructed out of a misunderstanding: 'The doctrinal part of the controversy between Mr. Wesley and Mr. Toplady, may, in a great degree, be reduced to this question: if God, from all eternity, absolutely predestinated a fixed number of men [called *the elect*].'[153] This particular parsing of the narrative sidelined Toplady's preoccupation

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[149] Toplady, *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley: Relative to his pretended Abridgement of Zanchius on Predestination* (London: Joseph Gurney, 1771).

[150] Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780. Vol. 1*: *Whichcote to Wesley.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 252 & 219.

[151] Anonymous, *The Consequence Proved* (London, 1771).

[152] John Fletcher, *An Answer to the Rev. Mr. Toplady's Vindication of the Decrees etc* (London: G. Whitfield, 1797).

[153] Fletcher, *An Answer to the Rev. Mr. Toplady's Vindication of the Decrees etc* , p. 5.

with theological method and the systematising of theological orthodoxy within the Church of England, viewed within a legitimate historic context, and degraded the entire matter down to a 'controversy' between two dogmatic individuals. However, the real story is far more interesting, and clearly raises implications which go beyond Wesleyan Methodism.

Toplady's decision to publish *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination* alongside his more polemical *The Church of England Vindicated*, as a combinatorial response to Nowell's own pamphlet, *An Answer to a Pamphlet Entitled Pietas Oxoniensis* now falls into place. Nowell, stung perhaps by Richard Hill's pungent rhetoric, retorted that 'I believe the meetings which these men frequented, and in which some of them officiated, will justly come under the above description, and manifestly tended to the impeaching and depraving the doctrine of the Church of *England*, the book of common prayer, and the government and discipline of the church.'[154] The accusation, therefore, was that of 'impeaching and depraving the doctrine of the Church of England'. This meant that, supplementary to his polemical response, Toplady needed to evidence the fact that these 'methodistical' students were closely and faithfully adhering to that 'doctrine' which was (owing to its founders, including Zanchius) of an explicitly Calvinistic nature. This further attests to the audience at which Toplady was aiming, an audience that was not primarily or initially intended to include Wesley.

Given the significance of this translation, it is worth giving some attention to the structure and content of Toplady's treatment, beginning with his (own) introductory summary of the attributes of God,[155] which had previously been considered to be essential for any proper understanding of the doctrine of predestination. In this approach he was very definitely following the model of Zanchius. Richard Muller tells us that 'Both in his *De predestinatione sanctorum* and his *De natura*

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[154] Nowell, *An Answer to a Pamphlet Entitled Pietas Oxoniensis*, pp. 41-42.
[155] Toplady, 'Observations on the Divine Attributes: Necessary to be Premised, In order to our better understanding of the Doctrine of Predestination' in *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination,* pp. 15ff.

Dei sue de divinis attributis, Zanchi sets forth the attributes prior to his discussion of the decrees.'[156] This certainly establishes the principle that Toplady was not merely citing Zanchius as a means of establishing his own credibility, but fully understood the scholastic approach and had embraced it. The introductory section covers God's wisdom and foreknowledge, God's will, God's unchangeable decrees, God's omnipotence, God's justice and finally God's mercy. Each of these six attributes was established by a sequence of 'positions', which seem reflective of the *syllogismus practicus*, as exemplified in Zanchius' writings. Indeed, as Donnelly informs us, 'For them (Martyr and Zanchi) predestination logically relates to the divine attributes.'[157] What is interesting here, is Toplady's approach in establishing this particular sequence of the attributes of God. Zanchius in his treatment listed twenty, but Toplady does not follow that approach.[158] Turretin in his *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* lists fourteen,[159] and Gill, in his *Body of Divinity* lists twenty-four.[160] The six that Toplady does unpack are common to all three authorities, but what is intriguing is that he felt the need to adopt his own rubric, rather than simply repackage material from sources that he evidently respected. There are several possible explanations here: the limitations of space, a preselection to better contextualise Zanchius' treatment of predestination, and a desire to be (seen to be) pursuing the disciplines of the scholastic method, rather than simply reproducing the work of others. All three could well apply simultaneously, and in fact the second is the closest to Toplady's own explanation: after a reference to God's 'divers properties or attributes' which are 'essential to him, and constitutive of his very nature', he then stated explicitly 'Of these attributes, those on which we shall now particularly descant (as being more immediately concerned in the ensuing

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[156] Muller, *Christ and the Decree*, p. 110.

[157] Donnelly, 'Italian Influences on the Development of Calvinist Scholasticism', p. 98.

[158] Although it is worth noting that Muller states that the six outlined by Toplady are identical to those that formed Zanchius' prevailing emphasis: Muller, *Christ and the Decree*, p. 122.

[159] Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (Geneva: 1679-85, republished Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 1992), I: 191-253.

[160] John Gill, *Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity or a System of Evangelical Truths* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), pp 50-187.

subject) are the following ones:'[161] What then followed is his list of six, which Toplady had clearly selected because he believed that they best framed or adorned the subsequent treatment on predestination. This is significant, at least for the reason that there was no mere regurgitation of dogma occurring here: Toplady was transacting his theology in an explicitly scholastic manner, one that emulated Zanchius himself.

It is worth noting Toplady's careful use of structure as he went about defending this doctrine: in Chapter 1 (pp 43-50) he supplied definitions of his key terms: God's love; God's hatred; Election; Reprobation; God's purpose; God's foreknowledge; Predestination. Chapter 2 (pp 50-58) explains the doctrine of Predestination generally in relation to all men. In Chapter 3 (pp 59-66), Toplady outlines the doctrine of Predestination specifically in relation to the church. Chapter 4 (pp 67-84) defends the doctrine of Reprobation, and Chapter 5 (pp 84-111) argues for the open teaching of the doctrine of predestination. There is an unequal weighting of emphasis here: chapters 1 to 3 receive 8, 9 and 8 pages respectively. The chapters on Reprobation and establishing the need and priority for teaching the doctrine of predestination run to 18 and 27 pages each. It is clear from this that Toplady (or Zanchius) was not seeking to argue for the mere legitimacy of the doctrine, but sought to establish the power and persuasiveness of it based upon what was perceived to be the weakest or least presentable aspect (reprobation or 'double predestination'). This had the effect of weaponising the doctrine against the polemic of the contemporary variants of Arminianism, and it also seems to place Toplady outside of what Bebbington describes as 'moderate Calvinism' when he asserts that 'Evangelical Calvinism was also moderate in that it rejected stronger views of God's control of human destiny. Evangelicals were not fatalists'.[162] The same perspective is shared by Ryan Nicholas Danker, when he states that 'Bebbington describes this moderation principally in relation

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[161] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. 15.
[162] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 64.

to the doctrine of reprobation - the doctrine that God had destined certain persons for damnation. He argues that evangelicals generally rejected this traditional Calvinist doctrine and instead insisted that human disobedience was the root of any failure to respond to the Gospel'.[163] That may well be accurate, but it seems that Toplady had been quite intentional in grounding his response to contemporary Arminianism in the scholastic writings of the theological contemporary and equal of Peter Martyr, who supplied foundational theological substance to the confessions of the Church of England.[164] As Muller confirms, Peter Martyr's 'full definition of predestination goes beyond Calvin and points towards the full-scale description of the *ordo salutis* that we find in early orthodox writers like Ursinus. Vermigli, nevertheless, was not formulating a predestinarian system, but simply manifesting the doctrinal relationships into which the doctrine of predestination moves as exegesis builds into theological *locus* and *locus* points toward system.'[165] That description bears a very close resemblance to what Toplady was seeking to achieve with his translation of Zanchius, where his own prefacing, structuring and footnoting all underpin the inherent connectedness of the theological components. In particular, the extensive referencing to Augustine,[166] Bucer,[167] Luther,[168] Melanchthon,[169] Erasmus,[170] Aquinas,[171] Witsius,[172] Charnock,[173] Lipsius,[174] contrasts with a complete absence of referencing to Calvin in order to evidence the broader theological system.

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[163] Danker, *Wesley and the Anglicans,* p. 227.
[164] Polly Ha, 'Reformation and the Uses of Reception' and Nicholas Thompson, 'Martin Bucer and Scottish Irenicism' in Ha & Collinson (eds), *The Reception of Continental Reformation in Britain*, pp. xvi, xxi-xxii & 174-5, 181.
[165] Muller, *Christ and the Decree*, p. 65.
[166] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, pp. 17, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 30, 31, 32, 58, 60, 61, 62, 69, 70, 80, 82, 84, 90, 96, 99, 101.
[167] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, pp. 15, 19, 22, 24, 30, 31, 69, 75, 94.
[168] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, pp. 16, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 56, 58, 63, 69, 72, 91, 94, 109.
[169] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. 26, 109, 111.
[170] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. 20, 90.
[171] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. 80-81.
[172] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. 53.
[173] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. 77.
[174] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. 107.

If Bebbington is correct, that mainstream English Calvinism was self-consciously 'moderate' in nature, akin to John Newton's oft-quoted analogy 'that Calvinism, like sugar in tea, should only be served "mixed and diluted"'[175] then it seems that Toplady was quite intentionally sidestepping the notion of dilution. If he qualified as part of the evangelical constituency, then this would make him an outlier, certainly in relation to Bebbington's definitions. The inclusion of material from Lipsius, the humanistic explicator of Stoic thought in the early seventeenth century, seems to reinforce this interpretation. Toplady's own footnote suggests that this brief appendix was sourced from Lipsius' *Physiologiae Stoicorum libra tres* (1604), a reconstruction of Stoic ethics and a harmony with Christian theology. Yeager confirms that Stoic rhetoric was influential within the Scottish universities at this time, but the Enlightenment focus was distancing itself from the Christianised version, resolving itself around Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. Toplady's reaffirmation of Lipsius therefore accords with Erskine's approach in Edinburgh.[176] Lipsius's role as a reconciler of pagan and Christian worldviews is therefore emblematic of Toplady's confidence in a version of Calvinism which reconciles divine sovereignty and human liberty.

The problem with this is the one which Lawton himself suggests: Toplady may have seen himself as a 'Calvinist', but it almost seems at first sight as if Zanchius played a greater role in his Calvinism than Calvin himself.[177] Indeed, the Reformer features not at all within the pages of this translation. But even that may slightly miss the point: John L. Farthing comments that 'Calvin's spirit hovers over virtually every paragraph of Zanchi's eucharistic treatises' and later, that 'In his insistence that the Supper is not just a reminder of a transaction in the past but an instrument through which God offers believers the body and blood of Christ in the present, Zanchi is making

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[175] Danker, *Wesley and the Anglicans*, p. 227.
[176] Yeager, *Enlightened Evangelicalism*, pp. 59-64.
[177] Lawton, *Within the Rock of Ages*, p. 99.

common cause with Calvin's critique of Zwingli's eucharistic doctrine.'[178] That is to say, it could well be that Toplady's reliance on Zanchius was a political decision based upon his awareness of the derisive view of Calvin adopted by high churchmen, and the belief that the Church of England was established upon the kind of Calvinistic Scholasticism exemplified by Zanchius and Vermigli.

It is worth noting the extent to which Toplady's translation of Zanchius falls firmly within the category of Calvinistic Scholasticism as a kind of theological genre. Firstly, the mere nature of the source material, irrespective of the accuracy of Toplady's translation would convey its theological pedigree. Secondly, as we have seen in Dewey D. Wallace's discussion of the distinguishing elements favoured by the English exponents of scholastic method, dependance upon logic and metaphysics; a theological system centred on predestination; close correlation with the divine decrees; a 'militantly defensive posture' in relation to associated doctrines such as reprobation, limited atonement etc, and explicit alignment with the Synod of Dort, are all key diagnostic components.[179] If Toplady's version of Zanchius was what it purported to be, then the first of these is implied, whilst the next three elements are clearly being prioritised within the text, as the analysis demonstrates above. In relation to the fifth element, Nowell's response to Hill's *Pietas Oxoniensis* went to some length in deprecating the value and significance of the Synod of Dort, not merely by dismissing its value as a synod, but also by attacking the credentials of the English delegates who attended.[180] Milton suggests that, in this respect, Nowell was not atypical of a protracted Anglican disquiet regarding the English participation in a Reformed synod, although this may have as much to do with a disdain of continental influences as it pertains to the theology.[181]

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[178] John L. Farthing, 'Patristics, Exegesis, and the Eucharist in the Theology of Girolamo Zanchi' in Trueman and Clark (eds), *Studies in Christian History and Thought, Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*, pp. 92-93.
[179] Wallace, Jr. *Puritans and Predestination*, p. 56.
[180] Nowell, *An Answer to a Pamphlet Entitled Pietas Oxoniensis*, pp. 114-16.
[181] Milton, *The British Delegation and the Synod of Dort (1618-1619)*, pp. xviii-xx.

If the argument pertaining to Toplady's own scholasticism may be sustained, then that kind of attack would be sufficient to explain the effort that must have gone into 1769's publishing schedule. Nowell's *ad hominem* may also explain the attention Toplady lent to the qualities of the Dordrecht participants: 'The Members of this Synod formed a Constellation of the Best and most Learned Theologians that had ever met in Council, since the Dispersion of the Apostles…'[182] Milton comments that the British delegates (George Carleton, Joseph Hall, John Davenant, Samuel Ward, Walter Balcanquahall and Thomas Goad) '…can be taken to be genuinely representative of the views of Church of England divines at this time.'[183]

Muller, in his own discussion of the relationship between Calvin and Zanchius hints at the potential value to Toplady, in relation to his interactions with Nowell: 'Zanchi was hardly an imitator of Calvin' he asserts, but then goes on to expand what he means by stating, 'Zanchi presents the picture of a Reformer of the era just following that of Calvin, Vermigli, and Musculus, whose views had much the same foundation as theirs, but who, because of his immersion in the systems, techniques, and philosophy of late medieval scholasticism, was able to add another dimension to Reformed theology in the sixteenth century - the dimension of detail and clear continuity with the medieval theological tradition.'[184] It seems to be that 'dimension of detail and clear continuity' which Toplady prized, as he sought to deal directly with the plasticity and revisionism inherent in Nowell's stance. Dolf te Velde echoes this view: 'On the basis of the foregoing exposition, we can state that Calvin and Zanchi show substantial agreement in their understanding of predestination, both as election and as reprobation,'[185] whilst nevertheless stressing that the two men approached their subject in quite different ways. In support of that

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[182] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 610.
[183] Milton, *The British Delegation and the Synod of Dort (1618-1619)*, p. xviii.
[184] Muller, *Christ and the Decree,* p. 111.
[185] Dolf te Velde, '"Soberly and Skillfully": John Calvin and Jerome Zanchi (1516-1590) as Proponents of Reformed Doctrine', *Christian History and Religious Culture* 91.1-2 (2011), 59-71.

author, Muller's view is that, despite the adverse publicity that Zanchius received (largely due to his dispute with the Lutheran preacher Marbach, at Strasbourg), it would be quite inaccurate to accuse Zanchius of determinism. He emphasises that 'Zanchi's definition and his sophisticated approach to the minutiae of system is scholastic in terms of its method and approach to theology and insofar as it recognises and acknowledged roots in the theology of the late middle ages…but in no way presses toward a deterministic theory either of the divine authorship of sin, or of the negation of human responsibility, or of the utterly empirical induction of assurance from the effects of the decree.'[186] Toplady was therefore not employing Zanchius in support of an extreme, deterministic version of predestination.

Toplady's Scholastic Limits

This chapter has sought to argue that, certainly when it came to combatting the heterodoxy of Nowell and his constituency within the Church of England, Toplady quite intentionally and implicitly adopted the tools and disciplines supplied by the scholastics. That does not mean that he uncritically accepted all that lay behind Zanchius, notably the influence of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*, the work which came to replace Peter Lombard's (1096-1160) *Sentences* as the primary framework underpinning systematic theology in the thirteenth century. Christopher Schwöbel confirms that the *Summa* was influential to the teaching of Peter Martyr Vermigli, Martin Bucer and Richard Hooker (1554-1600), especially the latter 'in creating an Anglican theology of worship and church order, in the English context.'[187] Later he goes on to develop this significance, referring

[186] Muller, *Christ and the Decree*, p. 113.
[187] Christopher Schwöbel, 'Reformed Traditions', in Philip McCosker and Denys Turner (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to The Summa Theologiae*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 324-5.

particularly to the 'practical divinity' found in Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*.[188] If the *Summa* had been influential to Vermigli and Bucer, then, in all probability, it would also have contributed towards Zanchius' own approach. Indeed, Burchill commenting on both Vermigli and Zanchius, states that 'Moreover, and this particularly true in the case of Zanchi, the influence of St. Thomas Aquinas was a noted feature of their work.'[189] One would not appreciate this fact from Toplady's own writing: *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination* is generously footnoted with citations from Augustine, Luther, Bucer, Bishop Davenant, Charnock and Lipsius, which are suggestive of Toplady's editorial role, rather than being carried-over directly from Zanchius' original text. One isolated footnote refers to Aquinas as 'a man of some genius, and much application: who, though, in many things, a laborious trifler; was yet on some subjects a clear reasoner, and judicious writer'.[190] This brief reference betrays, perhaps, the sense of unease that we encounter later in his *Historic Proof*. Here, Aquinas was dismissed in just over one page, where Toplady confessed to possessing his *Summa Theologiae* as well as his *Commentaries* on the Gospels and Pauline Epistles. He commented that 'To collect all the Semi-pelagian Passages, with which those two Performances are fraught, would be a Task equally prolix and unprofitable' and concluded that Aquinas would 'shake Hands from his Grave, with his younger Brethren, the modern Arminians.'[191] Schwöbel quotes H. R. McAdoo's findings that, in addition to Hooker, Archbishop John Bramhall, and Bishops Lancelot Andrewes, Robert Sanderson and John Wilkins were also influenced by Aquinas in their quest for a 'reasonable theology'.[192] In the context of his Calvinistic defence, only Sanderson was mentioned

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[188] Hooker published the first four books for *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity: Eight Books* in 1593. Book 5 was published in December 1597, and books 6-8 posthumously. Collectively, they supply a view of Anglican spiritual culture in distinction from Presbyterianism.
[189] Burchill, 'Girolamo Zanchi: Portrait of A Reformed Theologian and His Work', 4.
[190] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. 80.
[191] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 105.
[192] H. R. McAdoo, *The Spirit of Anglicanism: A Survey of Anglican Theological Method in the Seventeenth Century* (London: A&C Black, 1965), pp. 383f.

by Toplady, describing him as a 'valuable Prelate', and noting his hearty dependence upon Calvin's *Institutes*.[193]

It would perhaps be unreasonable to quibble if Toplady found Aquinas wanting, in a work which was unashamedly devoted to defending the predestinarian teachings of the Church of England, but it is helpful to underscore Aquinas's significance for this kind of project. Schwöbel goes on to conclude that the real influence of the *Summa* was to be 'found in matters of theological method, and questions of theological cosmology and anthropology' as well as providing the tools to critique Hobbesian philosophy.[194] Francis X. Clooney SJ supplies another welcome angle, identifying the value of the *Summa* as a 'model for disputation, demonstrating how to foster honest and fruitful arguments among traditions.'[195] Indeed, R. Scott Clark confirms that the *disputatio* was essential to Antoine de Lay Faye's (1540-1615) system for preserving the truth of Reformed orthodoxy, stating that 'La Faye envisioned the Reformed disputation system as a gathering for fraternal, theological and moral correction.'[196] Toplady's ambivalence towards Aquinas does not appear to have been shared by many of the Reformers that he respected: David Sytsma documents a significant number of pivotal theologians who were grounded in Thomist theology (Bucer, Bullinger, Vermigli, Zanchius, and even Zwingli and Oecolampadius).[197]

Once that principle is accepted, then it is hard to view either Toplady's *Doctrine of Absolute Predestination* or his *Historic Proof* as anything other than an intentional contribution towards the preservation of orthodoxy, dependent upon this historic methodology. Muller discusses the character of this discipline at considerable length, drawing the important conclusion that the

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[193] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 672.
[194] Schwöbel, 'Reformed Traditions', p. 326.
[195] Francis X. Clooney SJ, 'Non-Abrahamic Traditions' in McCosker and Turner (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to The Summa Theologiae*, p. 345.
[196] R. S. Clark, 'The Authority of Reason in the Later Reformation: Scholasticism in Caspar Olevian and Antoine de La Faye', in Trueman and Scott (eds), *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*, p. 125.
[197] David S. Sytsma, 'Thomas Aquinas and Reformed Biblical Interpretation: The Contribution of William Whitaker' in Svenson and VanDrunen (eds), *Aquinas Among the Protestants*, p. 51.

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries' understanding of 'scholastic' drew a clear distinction between it and alternative methods such as catechetic and exegetical or purely polemical.[198] Given this accumulated background, it seems reasonable to attribute Toplady's dependence upon scholastic method, alongside his lukewarm reception of Aquinas' *Summa* to be a direct product of Zanchius' own 'extensive exegetical critique' of the Thomist categories, as noted by Matthew Barrett.[199] Toplady's disdain would therefore very well be the result of an extensive familiarity with Zanchius' own work.

Perhaps it was therefore an unfortunate function of timing, or perhaps a loss of awareness of a key Protestant tradition that led to Wesley's ill-conceived response. Either way, Toplady's more general invitation to *dispute* in the Thomist manner triggered the more specific Wesleyan bad-tempered spat that has coloured subsequent perceptions of the protagonists.

It is worth comparing Toplady's treatment of Aquinas with that of Hooker. The former received the briefest of mentions, whereas the latter is never mentioned at all, surprisingly receiving no attention in either *The Church of England Vindicated from the Charge of Arminianism* or in the *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England*. Hooker's *Lawes* were the most significant bequest to Anglicanism and although only the first four were published in 1593, A. S. McGrade states that 'There is reason to believe that Hooker had drafted all eight books of the *Laws* by 1593, when the first four were published'.[200] This was therefore a major work, conceived as a whole, and with serious ecclesiastical intent. Patrick Collinson picks up on its significance when he raises the prospect that Hooker 'was not so much defensively recapitulating Anglicanism

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[198] Richard A. Muller, *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), p. 31.
[199] Barrett, *The Reformation as Renewal: Retrieving the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church*, pp. 175-76.
[200] A. S. McGrade, 'Hooker, Richard' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: *ODNB*, 2004), p. 9.

as inventing it'.[201] This naturally leads to the issue of the kind of Anglicanism Hooker was inventing, the answer to which is framed by his primary admirers which consisted of Locke and the Latitudinarian divines, Benjamin Whichcote, William Chillingworth, Edward Stillingfleet and Burnet. Tellingly, Hampton confirms that the Latitudinarians embraced a doctrine of God which had been 'worked out by Socinian and Remonstrant writers of the early seventeenth century' in order to specifically exclude 'certain tenets of Reformed belief' and which 'involved the wholesale abandonment of medieval patterns of thinking on the matter, a pattern of thinking which was shared by both Reformed and Roman Catholic theologians.'[202]

Alongside this, Beiser tells us that 'The main purpose of Hooker's *Lawes* was to defend the Anglican cause against the Puritans' and, further, that 'Hooker's debate with the Puritans thus returned to that dispute about the rule of faith with which the Reformation began.'[203] Monahan argues that Hooker's (political) thinking was actually 'Counter-Reformational' in that it explicitly harked back to a theological constituency which did *not* include Luther and Calvin, in fact arguing that a model 'approximating continental Calvinism was not appropriate to the contemporary English scene'.[204]

It seems that Toplady felt that Hooker's life's work did not correlate easily with his own evangelical experience and trajectory, given the implied intention of unravelling the Reformation's impact upon the English church. Beiser is clear that the Puritan-Anglican controversy was ultimately grounded in the authority of Scripture, and that Hooker's approach resulted in the elevation of natural law over revelation, the redefinition of good and evil into something that looks a lot like Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism, and made a fundamental break with the Protestant

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[201] Patrick Collinson, 'Hooker and the Elizabethan Establishment', in *Richard Hooker and the construction of Christian community*, A, S. McGrade (ed.), (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS Press, 1997), p. 151.
[202] Hampton, *Anti-Arminians*, p. 220.
[203] Beiser, *The Sovereignty of Reason*, pp. 47, 48, 50.
[204] Arthur P. Monahan, 'Richard Hooker: Counter-Reformation Political Thinker', in *Richard Hooker and the construction of Christian community*, McGrade (ed.), pp. 204 & 207.

tradition of nominalism.[205] Given the cumulative impact of Hooker's theological contributions, the resultant version of Anglicanism would certainly not have been one that Toplady would wish to defend, or even acknowledge, although at this point he departs from the approach adopted by the influential John Edwards. Griesel comments that Edwards was not averse to citing Hooker, alongside Andrewes and Ussher.[206] This explains why Toplady took such care with his sources, perceiving a problem arising from Hooker's Thomist influences, when it came to defending the Calvinistic settlement of the Church of England.[207]

A Distinctive Calvinism

That Toplady was a Calvinist within the Church of England is beyond dispute. But what kind of Calvinist was he? If we accept the prevailing idea that the 'moderates' (such as John Newton) were confessing predestinarians, but would not affirm 'double predestination' (or reprobation), then Toplady must necessarily occupy another position. He clearly believed that the doctrine of predestination 'should be openly preached and insisted upon' and gave his reasons for that position.[208] He argued, and did so solidly on the basis of Scriptural evidence, in favour of the doctrine of reprobation,[209] but also made clear that whilst the doctrine was 'plainly deducible from the 17th Article of the Church of England',[210] it was at the same time 'A doctrine we are not obliged to wade into.'[211] To establish that latter point, Toplady quoted at some length from a confession of faith published shortly before their executions by Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Hooper, Rogers, Saunders and Bradford. His consistent affirmation of the Synod of Dort betrays no evidence of

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[205] Beiser, *The Sovereignty of Reason*, pp. 62-65.
[206] Griesel, *Retaining the Old Episcopal Divinity*, p. 137.
[207] Sytsma, 'Thomas Aquinas and Reformed Biblical Interpretation: The Contribution of William Whitaker' in Svenson and VanDrunen (eds), *Aquinas Among the Protestants*, p. 53.
[208] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. 84ff.
[209] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. 67ff.
[210] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 470, 574 & 688.
[211] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 463.

dissent from the 'five pointers' who responded to the Remonstrants in 1618-19[212] but it is certainly worth noting that, in the late eighteenth century, within the Anglican Church, his view would have been a minority one, as Milton mentions in the official archive of the Church of England Record Society.[213]

If John Newton, the converted slave-trader be held out as an example of moderate Calvinism, perhaps it is worth hearing his own words on the matter: 'If you mean by a rigid Calvinist, one who is fierce, dogmatical, and censorious, and ready to deal out anathemas against all who differ from him, I hope I am no more such a one than I am a rigid papist. But as to the doctrines which are now stigmatised by the name Calvinism, I cannot well avoid the epithet rigid, whilst I believe them: for there seems to be no medium between holding them and not holding them…'[214] In this extract, Newton perceived there to be a set of doctrines which comprise 'Calvinism', which in all probability would have been the five points which emerged from the Synod of Dort. Furthermore, he seems here to explicitly disavow some kind of watered-down, halfway house such as Amyraldianism. A little later, to the same recipient, he stated 'I am an avowed Calvinist: the points which are usually comprised in that term, seem to me so consonant with Scripture, reason (when enlightened) and experience, that I have not the shadow of doubt about them. But I cannot dispute, I dare not speculate. What is by some called high Calvinism, I dread…'[215] Here is another straightforward affirmation of the 'points' of Calvinism, but this hints at a post-Dort understanding whereas (as we have seen), Toplady saw himself as defending a historic schema or system under the label of 'Calvinism'. It seems doubtful, therefore that, in terms of theological substance, there is in fact very much to distinguish Toplady's stance from that of the 'moderate' Newton - so we must look elsewhere for the contrast. One key differentiator is suggested by the extent of each man's

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[212] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 608-28.
[213] Milton (ed), *The British Delegation and the Synod of Dort (1618-1619)*, p. xx.
[214] John Newton, 'Fourteen Letters to the Rev. Dr. ****', in *The Works of John Newton, Vol. 4* (London: George Virtue, 1839), p. 469.
[215] John Newton, 'Fourteen Letters to the Rev. Dr. ****' in *The Works of John Newton*, *Vol. 4*, p. 494.

published material: Newton barely mentions the topic of Calvin or Calvinism, and even when he does it takes a heavily caveated form:

> They who professedly hold and avow the doctrine of an election of grace, are now called Calvinists; and the name is used by some persons as a term of reproach. They would insinuate that Calvin invented the doctrine; or, at least, that he borrowed it from Austin, who, according to them, was the first of the fathers that held it. It is enough for me that I find it in the New Testament. But many things advanced upon the subject by later writers, I confess I do not find there. If any persons advance harsh assertions not warranted by the word of God, I am not bound to defend them. But as the doctrine itself is plainly taught, both by our Lord and his apostles, and is of great importance, when rightly understood, to promote the humiliation, gratitude, and comfort of believers, I think it my duty to state it as plainly as I can.[216]

This extended citation is given as it forms one of the longest references to the topic, out of four passing mentions in Newton's collected writings, and it evidences both an affirmation as well as a simultaneous distancing from the subject, possibly due to the way the term was used by the doctrine's opponents within the Anglican Church. Perhaps the locus of demarcation lies between Newton's reluctance and Toplady's open avowal, one that he repeated shortly prior to his death.[217] Newton's affirmation resulted in a cluster of brief paragraphs in his life's works, whereas one single example of Toplady's oeuvre supplied 734 scrupulously-argued pages on the *Historic Proof* of the Anglican Church's Calvinism. This suggests a basis for differentiation which cannot be comprehended by the terminology of 'high' or 'moderate' Calvinism. A perusal of the indices of Newton's *Works* confirm this point: barring the most fleeting of references to Augustine, Luther, Melanchthon, Owen and Jonathan Edwards, not one of Toplady's universe of authorities features within Newton's writings. This is suggestive of a singular disparity between the two men's methodological focus, rather than a differentiation based upon distinct theological components (such as predestination). In turn, this is highly suggestive that the key differentiation was due entirely to Toplady's reintegration of scholasticism with his Anglicanism.

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[216] John Newton, 'Sermon XLVI, Accusers Challenged' in *The Works of John Newton, Vol. 3*, p. 389.
[217] Toplady, *The Reverend Mr. Toplady's Dying Avowal of His Religious Sentiments* (London: J. Matthews, 1778), p. 7.

Chapter 3

Toplady's Sense of Anglican Identity

> My Arm's made bare for your Defence,
> To save my Church from Satan's Pow'r;
> Depart, depart, come out from thence,
> Defile yourselves with Sin no more:
> Be pure, ye Priests who preach my Word,
> And bear the Vessels of the Lord.[1]

Introduction

This chapter seeks to establish the point that, whilst Toplady demonstrated clear affinities with the evangelical cause in general, and Calvinists in particular, he was pre-eminently an Anglican, one that believed the basis of the Church's Establishment to be under threat, and who therefore sought to mount an effective defence of that Establishment. It will be seen that Toplady's *idea* of Anglicanism took a particular form which contrasted with other, prominent, models prevalent at that time, and that he expressed that idea, not merely through polemic, but through a carefully-researched and highly granular contextualisation. I will argue that what makes Toplady's stance on Anglicanism distinctive is his exceptional leveraging of historical theology and historiography as a primary tool for framing the founding characteristics of the Church of England, an approach which is predicated by its negation of *both* Latitudinarian and Laudian traditions.

A High View

Toplady's attitude towards his priesthood within the Church of England expressed itself in various ways. Wright documents how, initially, Toplady's early Arminianism proved an obstacle for him:

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[1] Toplady, 'Select Paraphrases XIII', *Hymns and Sacred Poems on a Variety of Divine Subjects* (Dublin: S. Powell, 1759), p. 87. Toplady wrote very little verse which explicitly referred to the Church.

'From a child, as he tells us, he had been "intended for the ministry" of the Church of England, but after his awakening under Morris he made a special study of the 39 Articles, which he found, to his dismay, to be Calvinistic.'[2] That disappointment of 1756 was followed by the discovery of Manton's *Discourses on the Seventeenth of John* in 1758: '"When I am in heaven," he said, "I shall remember the year 1758 with gratitude and joy;"…His principles having become Calvinistic, and therefore unison with those of the 39 Articles, he at once abandoned his idea of quitting the Church.'[3] There was nothing half-hearted about Toplady's defence of his Anglicanism, as he described his objective 'To vindicate the best of visible churches…'[4] and elsewhere comments that 'In nothing did the wisdom of our reformers more strikingly appear, than in connecting the purest doctrines with the best form of ecclesiastical government and discipline.'[5] In a letter to 'Mr. F', dated 27 November 1777, he stated, '…I am thoroughly persuaded, was the glorious company of apostles to live again on earth at this very time, and to live in England, not one of them, I verily believe, would be a dissenter from our established church: though they would all deeply lament the dreadful state of spiritual, of doctrinal, and of moral declension, to which the greatest part of us are reduced.'[6] Such a statement is all the more significant, given Toplady's close connections with dissenters - indeed, that connection may well be the reason why William Gibson lists him amongst 'other heterodox clergy', despite the strength of his confessional convictions.[7]

It is also interesting to note that Toplady's own admission of the 'dreadful state…of… declension' was clearly not, for him, a sufficient motive to secede from the Church of England. So, whilst he may have been realistic about the extent of theological and moral drift within the Church of England, there is no evidence that he ever lost his admiration for its doctrinal formulations.

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[2] Wright, *Augustus M. Toplady and Contemporary Hymn-Writers*, p. 19.
[3] Wright, *Augustus M. Toplady and Contemporary Hymn-Writers*, p. 21.
[4] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, p. 3.
[5] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 262.
[6] Toplady, 'Letters' in *Works*, p. 879.
[7] Gibson, *The Church of England 1688-1832, Unity & Accord*, p. 203.

Speaking to the clergy in 1772, Toplady stated, 'That the whole chain of doctrines, comprised in our public standards as a Church, are perfectly coincident with that system of religious truths which God the Son made the grand subjects of his own personal ministry on earth, will, I hope, be sufficiently proved…'[8] If that seems a big claim, it is worth noting that the arguments raised by Toplady in his pamphlet condemning the Feathers Tavern Petition only make sense if they are seen to emanate from a writer who holds the highest view of the Thirty-Nine Articles as a basis for confessional orthodoxy as well as unity.[9] We do not, for instance, find him writing about vestments, or ceremonies, or sacraments, or the location of the altar:[10] throughout his writings, the relentless focus is on theological orthodoxy.

The evidence therefore is that Toplady nurtured the highest of regards for the Anglican Church, as embodied by the Articles, homilies and liturgy, a somewhat different emphasis to the alternative culture of a resurgent Latitudinarianism. John Gascoigne informs us that '…most of the Latitudinarians continued to subscribe to the Articles, *justifying any doubts about the doctrine they embodied* by arguing that such oaths meant no more than a declaration of loyalty to the Church of England.' [my own emphasis italicised][11] That contemporary stance had its historical antecedents, with John Spurr confirming that 'Simon Patrick (1625-1707), for instance, told one waverer that the required subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles was understood by "all that I know" as a subscription to articles of peace and communion, not to articles of faith.'[12] Edmund Law (1703-87) was the only bishop to break ranks and vote for the Feathers Tavern Petition, but the broader Latitudinarian subscription seems to have been somewhat thin and formulaic when contrasted with Toplady's convictions. Jake Griesel, in his study of John Edwards, the Cambridge theologian and

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[8] Toplady, *The Doctrines of the Church of England*, p. 4.

[9] Toplady, *Free Thoughts*.

[10] Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists,* pp. 52, 55, 116-18.

[11] John Gascoigne, 'Anglican Latitudinarianism and Political Radicalism in the Late Eighteenth Century', *History*, February 1986, Vol. 71, No. 231, 25.

[12] John Spurr, 'Latitudinarian and the Restoration Church', *The Historical Journal*, Mar. 1988, vol. 31 no. 1, 78.

polemicist, appropriately comments that 'Tillotson defin[ed] faith merely as 'a firm belief of the history and doctrin of the Gospel'. As he explores the implications of Latitudinarianism on the core doctrine of justification, Griesel comments that 'Tillotson did not explain what he meant by 'trust', but he certainly did not mean *fiducia* as understood by the Reformed…'[13] This would have been a quite natural byproduct of a culture which emphasised natural theology and a broader, structural unity, whilst Toplady's roots were firmly embedded in the continental Protestant scholasticism of Bucer, Vermigli and Zanchius. For Toplady, the convinced Calvinist, there were further implications: Griesel notes that Tillotson's version of the doctrine of justification was a close match for that of Episcopius the Remonstrant.[14] The Tractarian, John Henry Newman made a similar observation some years later: 'Elsewhere, Newman traced the origins of the Latitudinarian and rationalist 'virus' in the Church of England to the influence of the Dutch Arminians, the Erasmian Hugo Grotius and Episcopious on Laud's liberal acolytes, Chillingworth and Hales.'[15]

Of course, emphases such as Latitudinarianism were in and out of fashion, as Benjamin Hoadly discovered when the Tory High Church clergy proscribed the views of his party in the Convocation following the 1710 election.[16] Notwithstanding, through the mid 1700s, 'Hoadly's Latitudinarian appointees were legion', frequently to senior positions and well-endowed livings. Hoadly's policy of comprehending Dissent made life difficult for Wesley's Methodism, and Gibson speaks of the 'roll call of Hoadly's heterodox Anglican appointees' in the Winchester Diocese.[17] This backdrop helps to frame the contrarian nature of Toplady's own elevated view of confessional orthodoxy, as well as his firm opposition to the Feathers Tavern Petition. Gascoigne makes the point that Unitarians who left the Established Church derived their intellectual presuppositions from the

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[13] Griesel, *Retaining the Old Episcopal Divinity*, pp. 132-33.
[14] Griesel, *Retaining the Old Episcopal Divinity*, p. 134.
[15] Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context*, p. 202.
[16] William Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate: Benjamin Hoadly, 1676-1761* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2022), p. 112.
[17] Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate: Benjamin Hoadly, 1676-1761*, pp. 244-246.

Latitudinarian tradition,[18] and Toplady spoke of '…*this* grand Consolation…that *Arians, Socinians, Pelagians*, &c cannot, with any Color of Decency, pretend that their mistaken Opinions have the Sanction of *Law* and *Establishment*.'[19] Given the obvious continuum from Latitudinarianism through to various colours of heterodoxy, Toplady's own antidote was to adopt a high view of confessional orthodoxy which, in practice, meant upholding the Articles. In this approach, he was distinctly contrarian to contemporary expressions of moderate Anglicanism.

Toplady's Articulation of Anglicanism

Other than his earlier compendia of poetry, Toplady's first two serious publications did not arrive until 1769: *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination Stated and Asserted* and *The Church of England Vindicated from the Charge of Arminianism*. Whilst the former was initially published anonymously, both books made it clear that the author was a cleric in the Church of England. Within the former, there is the briefest allusion to 'Calvinistic doctrines …considered and defended as the Palladium of our Established Church' and a regretful reference to the erosion of Calvinistic orthodoxy within the Church of England[20] - but that is the sum total of Toplady's treatment of Anglicanism within that text. The same may not be said about the second volume, which is a vigorous defence of what he conceived to be the historic establishment versus the polite post-Restoration formulation espoused by Thomas Nowell.[21]

And this was not an end to the focus. In 1772, Toplady published his discourse *The Doctrines of the Church of England; Proved to be the Doctrines of Christ*: this and two other pamphlets published in 1770 and 1771 depend wholly upon his view of the authority of the Thirty-Nine

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[18] Gascoigne, 'Anglican Latitudinarianism and Political Radicalism in the Late Eighteenth Century', p. 32.
[19] Toplady, *Free Thoughts*, pp. 14-15.
[20] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination* p. vi.
[21] Nowell, *An Answer to a Pamphlet, Entitled Pietas Oxoniensis in a Letter to the Author*.

Articles, encapsulated in the loftiest of ways: 'I shall arm myself, this Afternoon, with a two-fold Weapon: with the *Bible*, in one hand; and our Church-*Articles*, in the other. I shall appeal at one, for all I have to say, to the Authority of GOD's unerring Oracles; and to their faithful Epitome, the Decisions of the Church of England.'[22] The same kind of rhetoric is characteristic of *The Doctrines of the Church of England*, where Toplady, reflecting on the Feathers Tavern Petition of 1770, described those promoting the initiative as, '…the insidious and the daring…on full scent after every measure, which art can suggest, or insolence avow, to subvert an establishment built upon the foundations of the prophets and apostles, having Jesus Christ himself for its chief corner-stone…'. Later, he described the petitioners as 'The intentional destroyers of our national Church…'[23]. Irrespective of the actual motivations of Blackburne and his collaborators, there is no suggestion here of a tentative response, as Toplady apparently saw this as a battle over fundamentals. As he embarked upon a presentation[24] of fifteen 'brief hints' of orthodoxy, he sought to focus his audience's attention thus: 'The object, then, of our present attention is, To weigh the principles of the Church of England in the balance of the sanctuary, by examining, What were those doctrines, which the Lord of Life and glory made it his business to inculcate, during his continuance on earth?'[25]

However, it swiftly becomes apparent that the fifteen 'hints' are not wholly coterminous with the Thirty-Nine Articles - there are implicit and sometimes rather opaque correlations with Articles 1, 2, 4 (very indirect), 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, whilst Article 17 does receive a considerable amount of attention. Some of the doctrine that Toplady emphasised (God's providence, final perseverance and the immortality of the soul) received no explicit attention within the Articles, so it seems that Toplady's intention had less to do with 'weighing' the Articles, than on emphasising a

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[22] Toplady, *A Caveat Against Unsound Doctrines*, p. 19.
[23] Toplady, *The Doctrines of the Church of England*, pp. 3-4.
[24] This address was originally delivered to the clergy at the Archdeaconry of Exeter on 12 May 1772.
[25] Toplady, *The Doctrines of the Church of England*, p. 7.

range of connected theological themes which were inimical to the anti-subscription objectives of the Feathers Tavern petitioners. Indeed, it almost seems as if he were seeking to call the petitioners' bluff, by pointing instead to the real, substantive points of theological contention, rather than the 'mere issue' of subscription itself. Within his 1770 publication, *A Caveat against Unsound Doctrines*, the relation to the Articles is actually rather more explicit, with citations from Articles 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17 and 31[26] - but this was a public sermon, rather than an address to the clergy. In practice, this meant that Toplady restricted his consideration of orthodoxy to encompass: original sin; justification; the value of good works; the place of good works prior to justification; Christ's sinless atonement; predestination and election, and the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice. This is a more evangelistic emphasis, which contrasts with the broader theological scope of the treatment delivered to clergy in *The Doctrines of the Church of England*, which also addressed: the deity of Christ and the Trinity; the sufficiency of Scripture; the inspiration of the Old Testament, and which (via its footnotes) placed particular emphasis on Articles 1, 9, 11, 17 and 31.[27]

In 1771, Toplady weighed in on the subscription debate with his pamphlet *Free Thoughts on the Projected Application to Parliament For The Abolition of Ecclesiastical Subscriptions.* This argued for retaining the Articles as a fundamental benchmark of orthodoxy, one which presupposed an abiding value in their objective reliability and relevance. Indeed, he protested,

> Would it be for the *Credit* of the Protestant Religion, in general, and of the Church of England, in particular, to be perpetually shifting and tacking about, never continuing in one stay, but (to use the Expression of a certain Arminian) always Flitting and "tossing from System to System"? Our *Articles* have already passed *one* Revisal, since their first Publication in 1552. Our *Liturgy* has been review'd no fewer than *four* Times. Must we be incessantly Doing and Undoing?[28]

This line of reasoning is dependent upon the closeness of the correlation between the Articles and the fundamental truths of the Christian faith, which Toplady identified with the creedal

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[26] Toplady, *A Caveat Against Unsound Doctrines*, pp. 22, 30, 35, 41, 42, 53, 56.

[27] Toplady, *The Doctrines of the Church of England*, pp. 8, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22.

[28] Toplady, *Free Thoughts*, pp. 17-18.

formulations of the Reformation.[29] Nowhere does that correlation receive a clearer expression than in the 1774 publication, *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England* where his Calvinistic convictions blend seamlessly into his Anglicanism, for these two themes were so interwoven in Toplady's mind that it is impossible to separate them. In this, his most substantive work, he established a direct link between the Articles themselves, and the Calvinistic theology that undoubtedly inspired them whilst he also tracked Calvin's influence in the composition process.[30] It is, however, also quite possible that Toplady was merely reflecting a prevailing and longstanding appreciation of the Articles as a confessional placeholder for the idea of orthodoxy: Stephen Hampton documents this trend through Archbishop Whitgift's 1583 campaign to enforce subscription, Thomas Rogers' 1585 commentary on the Articles (*The English Creede*), as well as sundry university lectures (John Prideaux and Samuel Ward) and doctrinal disputes (Richard Montagu and George Carleton). He comments that 'It is clear, therefore, that the Thirty-Nine Articles were accepted as the normative statement of the Church of England's beliefs…they simply hold more theological weight than the opinions of individual churchmen.'[31] Given that context, *appealing* to the Articles in connection with a re-assertion of doctrinal orthodoxy was more a device to cite the cumulative authority of the founders and formulations of the Established Church. The danger of such an approach, as John Edwards had previously noted, was a kind of tokenism, whereby the Articles could be rendered down into a 'nose of wax'.[32] Significantly, without divulging his citation, this metaphor was deployed by Toplady, in an identical polemical context, in his response to Nowell.[33]

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[29] Toplady, *Free Thoughts*, p. 5 and *Historic Proof*, p. 260ff.

[30] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 262, 368, 370, 378.

[31] Stephen Hampton, 'Confessional Identity' in Anthony Milton (ed) *The Oxford History of Anglicanism Volume 1: Reformation and Identity, c. 1520-1662* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 214-5.

[32] John Edwards, *A Free Discourse Concerning Truth and Error, Especially in Matters of Religion* (London: Jonathan Robinson, 1701), p. 425.

[33] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, p. 19.

Toplady had no patience for such pragmatism, but he did not merely regard the Thirty-Nine Articles as authoritative: his focus on creedal formulae went back much further. Writing under the pen-name 'Ecclesiastes', he published a short article in the May 1776 edition of *TGM*, entitled 'Concise History of the Apostles' Creed, the Nicæne Creed, the Athanasian Creed, and the Te Deum.' He described the Apostles' Creed as 'that excellent and ancient formulary' and 'a valuable compendium of the christian faith', the Nicæne Creed as 'a most admirable form of sound words' and attributes the naming of the Athanasian Creed as due to the fact that 'it so perfectly accords with the system which that great and good man drew from the scriptures…'[34] In that last case, he conspicuously cited Waterland's 'learned and masterly' *History of the Athanasian Creed* [35] in stark contrast to Tillotson's 'impious wish "that the church of England was fairly rid of the Athanasian Creed".' His writings contain relatively few references to the 'Latitude Men', so it seems significant that this rare mention is in relation to the upholding of historic creedal orthodoxy. Indeed, the paucity of such references appears to be a form of courtesy: elsewhere he states, 'As for *Hammond, Bull, Tillotson, Sharp* and *Stillingfleet*; they are names not to be mentioned without honour. Yet it does not follow that Arminianism is either right in itself, or the doctrine of our church, because adopted by these otherwise eminent and worthy persons. Nor do the greatness of their names, and the brightness of their talents, sanctify the errors they might happen to patronise, or one jot mitigate the crime of subscribing to articles they did not believe.'[36] Toplady's distinctive articulation of Anglicanism was as connected to his rejection of confessional tokenism as it was to his endorsement of Calvinistic doctrine.

From this perspective, what Toplady set out to achieve with his *Historic Proof* was not novel. He extensively referenced Archbishop James Ussher (1581-1656), who had published his own

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[34] 'Ecclesiastes', 'Concise History of the Apostles Creed, the Nicæne Creed, and Athanasian Creed, and the Te Deum', *TGM for May 1776*, 218-220.

[35] Toplady is referring here to Daniel Waterland's *A Critical History of the Athanasian Creed* (1723), intended as a rebuttal of Samuel Clarke's Arianism.

[36] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, pp. 14-15.

treatise (*A Discourse of the Religion Anciently Professed by the Irish and Brittish*) in 1631. Ussher had undertaken research which demonstrated that early British and Irish Christians had access to a vernacular version of the Bible text[37] and upheld doctrines such as grace, predestination and justification[38], whilst also rejecting Roman distinctives.[39] Indeed, Ussher established a focus on historical chronology which clearly influenced Toplady's own direction, Gibson commenting on '… the broad preoccupation with antiquity, including the attempt of Archbishop James Ussher of Armagh to date events back to the Bible.'[40] But this was not an isolated example: John Owen (1616-83), ordained as an Anglican priest under Charles I, and rising to the post of vice-chancellor of Oxford University (1652-57) wrote in a similar way, listing 'the greatest and most learned prelates [of the Church of England] in the foregoing ages, such as Jewell, Whitgift, Abbot, Morton, Ussher, Hall, Davenant, Prideaux etc…'[41] as exemplars of a Calvinistic Protestantism. Owen may not feature in the *Historic Proof* but, barring Morton, all those authorities cited in Owen's list are also referenced within this work. Toplady's sources in respect of historic Calvinism are relentlessly (but not exclusively) Anglican, reinforcing the argument he was seeking to advance - except for one intriguing omission, which is worth mentioning because of its connotations.

William Perkins (1558-1602) is described by Philip Benedict as 'the central theological influence' within the Cambridge tradition of practical divinity: 'He was not only England's first systematic Reformed theologian to attain international stature, but also, in the words of the great mid-seventeenth century Dutch theologian Gijsbert Voetius, "the Homer of practical Englishmen to this day."' Benedict goes on assert that 'Perkins was easily the most preeminent English churchman

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[37] James Ussher, *A Discourse of the Religion Anciently Professed by the Irish and British* (Dublin: John Jones, 1687, reprinted 1815), p. 7.

[38] Ussher, *A discourse of the religion anciently professed by the Irish and British*, pp. 13-21.

[39] Ussher, *A discourse of the religion anciently professed by the Irish and British*, pp. 22-30.

[40] Gibson, *The Church of England 1688-1832, Unity & Accord*, p. 11.

[41] John Owen, 'A Vindication of Some Passages in a Discourse Concerning Communion with God' (1674) in *The Works of John Owen, vol. 2* (Edinburgh: Johnstone & Hunter, 1850-53), p. 304.

and theologian of his remarkable generation.'[42] There is a consensus amongst historians such as W. B. Patterson,[43] Patrick Collinson[44] and David Hall[45] that Perkins was critical to the development of historic Anglicanism, so it is telling that, other than some repeated but oblique references to his distinctive 'Golden Chaine'[46] motif, Toplady never once mentioned Perkins by name.[47] There are very likely three reasons for this. Firstly, whilst Perkins' theology may have been practical in its emphasis, and as we have seen, Toplady was explicitly reprising the scholastics,[48] Perkins was a consistent exponent of a supralapsarian view of the decrees, one which Toplady consciously eschewed.[49] Secondly, Jonathan D. Moore confirms that Perkins was '…commonly seen as [a] renowned leader[s] of "the Puritan movement",…having climbed the hierarchy of "Puritan" colleges.'[50] It is likely that it is this close association with Puritanism (although Perkins remained a conforming Anglican) which would have been unhelpful to Toplady's pro-Anglican polemic, partly because of the way in which Archbishop Laud used the term to tarnish his enemies' reputation.[51] But the Laudian influence was not the only reason for Toplady's de-emphasis on the Puritans: whilst Spurr is reluctant to define Latitudinarianism solely by its moderation, or its affinities for experimental science or rationality, he is quite definite about its resolute antipathy towards anything smacking of puritanism.[52] And, thirdly, Perkins had been highly influential on a subsequent

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[42] Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed, A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 318-19.

[43] Patterson, *William Perkins & The Making of a Protestant England*, pp. 43-44.

[44] Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 125.

[45] Hall, *The Puritans, A Transatlantic History*, p. 18.

[46] William Perkins, 'A Golden Chaine' in *The Workes of That Famous And Worthy Minister of Christ in the University of Cambridge, Mr. William Perkins* (London: John Legatt, 1626).

[47] For example, in *A Caveat Against Unsound Doctrines*, p. 25; also in *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, pp. xi, 85, and *Jesus Seen of Angels*, p. 16.

[48] Patterson, *William Perkins & The Making of a Protestant England*, pp. 75-6.

[49] Muller, *Christ and the Decree*, p. 170. See also, Patterson, *William Perkins & the Making of a Protestant England*, p. 82.

[50] Jonathan D. Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism: John Preston and the Softening of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B, Eerdmans, 2007), p. 29.

[51] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 689 and Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, pp. 166-7.

[52] Spurr, 'Latitudinarian and the Restoration Church', pp. 65, 69, 75, 76, 77, 80.

generation of Calvinistic clergy, including John Edwards, upon whom Toplady was more directly dependent.[53] Indeed, it is almost possible to read Edwards as a proxy for the theological legacy bequeathed by Perkins, in the writings of Toplady.

This background swiftly becomes evident within a discursus on this topic towards the end of his *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England*.[54] Toplady was clearly concerned about reputational contagion arising out of the historical usage of the term 'Puritan', commenting that 'Even Peter Heylyn found himself constrained to draw a line between Calvinists and Puritans.'[55] In fact, Toplady devoted an extended section of this work to combatting, as he saw it, the unhelpful correlation between Puritanism and Calvinism, arguing that '…the term, *Puritan*, belonged, in its primary Application, to *Those* Persons, and to Those Persons *alone*, who dissented from the *Government*, the *Discipline*, and the *Ceremonys*, of the Church of England.' He asserted that, during Elizabeth's reign, the term 'Puritan' was not applied to 'Church-men themselves', that this was a later development (during James' reign), instigated by 'a temporizing *Italian* Papist [viz. *Antony de Dominis*, once Archbishop of *Spalato*]'.[56] The Hampton Court Conference of 1604 represented the turning point in Puritan fortunes, despite the moderate representations of the delegates. Patrick Collinson says that, 'As with the Jansenists of the France of Louis XIV, it was the singularity of the puritans and their very existence as a disaffected party within the Church which provoked alarm and offence more than any of their doctrines. In the agitation which had continued throughout James's first year, as in the concerted resistance which Bancroft would later provoke, there was what Samuel Rawson Gardiner called "a presumption of a presbyterian temper", whether or not presbyterian principles were openly advocated.'[57]

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[53] Griesel, *Retaining the Old Episcopal Divinity*, pp. 98, 137.

[54] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 711-716.

[55] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 716. The implication is that Heylyn's own vested interests might have led him to a blurring of distinctions.

[56] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 711.

[57] Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, p. 462.

This narrative explains why Perkins was a casualty of the framing of Toplady's pro-Calvinistic, pro-Anglican polemic, because of his historic associations. This in turn hints at the broader discussion of categories, when seeking to understand this period in church history - from the twin perspectives of historiography and confessional identity. Stephen Hampton, discussing the contributions of Peter Lake and Isaac Stephens, states, 'Lake and Stephens are certainly not the only historians who have tried to move beyond the binary opposition of Puritan and Laudian, in their analyses of the Early Stuart Church. As long ago as 1973, Nicholas Tyacke identified a 'mainstream of Calvinist episcopalianism,''[58] 'Calvinist Conformism' was a distinct category, whose advocates took care to avoid being associated with those two other constituencies. Hampton argues that a tendency to view this period through the lens of a binary conflict between Puritanism and Laudianism, to the neglect of Calvinist Conformity, is a product of a conflict model in historiography, and goes on to list prominent conformist divines whose theology was inherently Calvinistic, including Carleton, Ward, Davenant, Hall, Downame, Featley and, of course, Prideaux.[59] According to Toplady, the anti-puritan polemic was also the byproduct of sectarian interests of the time, stating that 'In the succeeding reign of Charles, *Laud* kept up the Ball which *De Dominis* had raised: and by Degrees, every conscientious Son of the Church, who was *Protestant* enough, to maintain her Doctrines; and *English-man* enough to support the Civil Constitution of the Kingdom; was, at Court, treated as a *Puritan*.'[60]

Furthermore, there are the preferences of the constituencies themselves to be considered. Hampton, describing the period of the late seventeenth century, states that ''Reformed' was, therefore, an appellation they [the 'Anglican Reformed after 1662'] would have happily embraced. 'Calvinist', with its seedy foreign overtones, and its hinterland of regicide and Presbyterianism, was

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[58] Stephen Hampton, *Grace and Conformity, The Reformed Conformist Tradition and the Early Stuart Church of England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 9.
[59] Hampton, *Grace and Conformity*, pp. 10 & 258ff.
[60] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 711.

not.'[61] This is striking. Toplady's aversion to the label of Puritanism seems characteristic, and clear, but his preference for the appellation 'Calvinist' (rather than 'Reformed') was contrarian to the tendency identified by Hampton, partly because the focus of his polemic was against the Arminianising of the Church of England, but also because Laud had been happy to co-opt 'Reformed' terminology in order to enforce his version of conformism.[62] Right at the end of his *Historic Proof*, he argued that '*Arminianism* is the poysonous Wood, to which the Waters of our National Sanctuary are primarily indebted for all their Embitterment. In particular, *Arianism, Socinianism*, practical *Antinomianism*, and *Infidelity* itself, have ALL made their Way through that Breach, at which *Arminianism* entered before them.'[63]

Mapping Toplady Within Eighteenth century Anglicanism

The historiography of the eighteenth century Church of England is not a straightforward matter to navigate, with William Gibson describing it as 'profoundly ideological'. He surveys the trends within Victorian and Marxist revisionist accounts of this period, one of which was modernist and the other radical in focus, making the point that 'Like the Victorians, radical and Marxist historians had their own agenda'. He comments in a number of places that the 'separation of religious history from the 'mainstream' of political and social history affected the ability of the revision of the eighteenth century Church to influence the trend of historical writing.'[64] Indeed, the nature of this kind of historical treatment does not cohere easily with Toplady's own pro-Anglican polemic, which exemplifies Gibson's maxim that 'To the eighteenth century mind, philosophy, religion, and politics could still be treated as a unity'.[65] When he repeatedly put pen to paper, the result was a

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[61] Hampton, *Anti-Arminians*, p. 7.
[62] Norman, *Saving the Church of England*, p. 15.
[63] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 722.
[64] Gibson, *The Church of England 1688-1832, Unity & Accord*, pp. 4, 9.
[65] Gibson, *The Church of England 1688-1832, Unity & Accord*, p. 5.

'connected' sequence of writings which reprised historical theology (*The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*), philosophy (*The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted*), historical research (*Historical Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England*), current events (*Free Thoughts on the Projected Application to Parliament for the Abolition of Ecclesiastical Subscriptions*), politics (*Moral and Political Moderation Recommended*), the developing field of natural philosophy or science (*Sketch of Natural History*) and other topics.

A good example of the kind of revisionism which affects our view of eighteenth century Anglicanism may be found in 1860, when Mark Pattinson (1813-84), later Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford, contributed an essay entitled 'Tendencies in Religious Thought, 1688-1750' to the Broad Church collection, *Essays and Reviews*. B. W. Young informs us that the author '…felt the defence of their faith by eighteenth century theologians was in every way intellectually unsatisfactory.' Young observes that 'At root, theology had died out, according to Pattinson, because "the supremacy of reason" had replaced it as a means of understanding religion…'[66] Clearly, Pattinson's essay covered a period (slightly) earlier than Toplady's activity as a religious polemicist, but it was typical of the prevailing approach at that time. Young affirms that 'It is indisputable that 'reason' was the dominant category of eighteenth century theology…'[67] but then goes on to demonstrate, through an extensive summary of contemporary theologians and writers, why Pattinson's argument that 'theology had almost died out' was invalid. The Anglican luminaries he cites to prove the opposite include Robert South; John Edwards, the Cambridge divine; George Bull, the Bishop of St. David's; William Cave; William Reeves; William Warburton; Daniel Waterland and William Law. All of these divines were writing during the hotly-contested post-Restoration period, overlapping with the growing volume and significance of Enlightenment

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[66] B. W. Young, 'Theology in the Church of England' in Jeremy Gregory (ed), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism Volume II: Establishment and Empire, 1662-1829* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 394-5.

[67] Young, 'Theology in the Church of England', p. 396.

influences, and barring Reeves, all are referenced in Toplady's writings. All of them were engaging in various species of 'defence', and it is therefore unsurprising that he followed this pattern of culturally-engaged Anglicanism when he published his first two works in 1769, the translation of Zanchius and the anti-Nowell polemic. Toplady may have been familiar with the writings of South, Bull, Edwards, Cave and Waterland, but the keenest impact on him came from Edwards' *Veritas Redux*, and his 1696 pamphlet, *Some Thoughts Concerning the Several Causes and Occasions of Atheism*, which Toplady seems to have leveraged in order to highlight the dangers to Anglicanism posed by 'arminianising' trends.[68] Indeed, Toplady's model of engagement is a remarkably close match for what Gibson describes: 'Young suggests that the clerical culture of the eighteenth century was committed to fruitful intellectual controversy. Anglicanism was marked not by the deadening rationalism of traditional history, but by a richness and diversity of intellectual activity.'[69]

Pattinson was, however, reprising a common idea, namely that the *impact* of 'Enlightenment thinking' had been to relegate the role of theology itself, within the larger intellectual project of European culture. Beiser reflects this sense when he asks the question 'How did reason become the rule of faith at the end of the eighteenth century when it was not even a candidate for this title at the end of the sixteenth century?'[70] Later in his treatment, he presents an argument for the incubation of reason as a cuckoo in the nest of the church, progressively supplanting the very faith it was recruited to defend.[71] Beiser has in mind the more mainstream defenders of Christianity during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and argues that the most significant boost to the establishment of rationalism (as a driving force) began with the Cambridge Platonists (Henry More, Ralph Cudworth et al) and then fed through into emerging Latitudinarianism (John Tillotson, Gilbert

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[68] Eg. Edwards, *Veritas Redux*, pp. 521, 522.
[69] Gibson, *The Church of England 1688-1832, Unity & Accord*, p. 19.
[70] Beiser, *The Sovereignty of Reason*, p. 5.
[71] Beiser, *The Sovereignty of Reason*, p. 17.

Burnet, Edward Stillingfleet, Thomas Tenison) within the Church of England.[72] However, exactly the same phenomenon was also occurring at the more extreme edge, inhabited by the deists and freethinkers: Toland's *Christianity Not Mysterious, or, A Treatise Shewing That There is Nothing in the Gospel Contrary to Reason Nor Above It and That No Christian Doctrine Can Be Properly Called a Mystery*, published in 1695, would be a good example of this trend. With this kind of backdrop, it is perhaps easy to dismiss Toplady's stance as anachronistic, given his vocal commitment to what he called 'Calvinism', albeit with a relatively light emphasis on Calvin himself. Pertinently, Beiser states 'As soon as we look at the early theology of the Reformation, it becomes clear that it posed a grave challenge to the rationalism of the Enlightenment. Luther and Calvin firmly upheld doctrines that conflict with the principle of the sovereignty of reason.'[73] However, as noted elsewhere, Toplady's firm commitment to both the Enlightenment emphasis on reason (Chapter 4) *and* Calvinistic scholasticism (Chapter 2) renders him somewhat inconvenient to Beiser's conflict model, and this may actually hint at his insight into the fruits of the kind of denatured confessionalism arising out of the contribution of the Latitudinarians. Leslie Stephen, writing in 1876, directly in response to Pattinson's essay, concluded that Chillingworth and then Tillotson had given Hume exactly the tools and rhetoric he required to pursue his agenda of radical scepticism.[74] Toplady's recourse to the very intellectual disciplines abandoned by Tillotson and his cohorts (those integral to Reformed scholasticism), in combination with a vigorous engagement with Enlightenment thinking, enabled him to re-contexualise Anglicanism, as well as reframe the model of advocacy. That sense of continuity is made explicit as he analysed contemporary instances of heterodoxy by means of a historical lens: 'Arians and Socinians profess to believe the Bible. Papists, Arminians, and Pelagians, profess the same…The Socinian goes but one step farther

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[72] Beiser, *The Sovereignty of Reason*, p. 134.
[73] Beiser, *The Sovereignty of Reason*, p. 20.
[74] Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century Vol. 1*, pp. 76-77.

than the Arian; and the Deist goes but one step beyond the Socinian.'[75] Further, his recognition that '…the solemn three-fold Band of *Subscription*, *Assent*, and *Approbation*, does not (as already observed) *perfectly* answer the End of its Intention'[76] seems to intentionally contrast with the trifold Reformation components of justifying faith: knowledge (*notitia*), assent (*assensus*) and trust (*fiducia*).[77] In Toplady's mind, the former represents a pared-back, insubstantial downgrade from the latter, and cannot therefore fulfil its intended purpose. Indeed, it is the implicit Enlightenment-framed rejection of scholasticism within the Church of England which he seems to have in mind, when he responds to Nowell, citing Wesley's reframing of the status of the Articles:

> They, who believe the doctrines of the church, as they stand in her articles, without sophistication and disguise? Or they, who, with Mr. Wesley and some others, subscribe the articles not *as articles of faith*, but either as *ecclesiological definitions of terms*, or at most *as determinations which are not clear*? By this loose, haggling way of evading the force of church-decisions, and weakening the sacred ties of solemn and repeated subscriptions; the spiritual fence of our establishment is broken down and trod under foot…[78]

These were the theological formulations which were the fruit of Reformed scholastics such as Zanchius, Vermigli, Bucer, who, in following scholastic method, intended to frame the Articles with clarity. Later, he extended his argument in order to refute the subjective glosses which Nowell was imposing on these scholastically-derived Articles, in order to advance his particular heterodoxy: 'You seem to take for granted, that you have a right to put *your own sense* on the articles to which you subscribe. But this is by no means the case. Our *Articles*, like the prophecies, are *not of private interpretation*. You and I, and every subscriber, are, by express declaration of authority, pin'd down to the plain, *literal and grammatical meaning* of each article.'[79] The attack on the Articles, whether this came from Wesley, or Latitudinarianism, or the Feathers Tavern petitioners, was a product of the more general Enlightenment antipathy towards scholasticism.

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[75] Toplady, *The Doctrines of the Church of England*, p. 29.
[76] Toplady, *Free Thoughts*, p. 33.
[77] Griesel, *Retaining the Old Episcopal Divinity*, p. 130.
[78] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, p. 17.
[79] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, p. 23.

Robert G. Ingram observes that, 'In the wake of the seventeenth century English religion-political wars, people sought again to establish truth on a firm and permanent basis.' He references the instabilities implicit within 'rationalistic metaphysics' and 'the language of 'reason' while simultaneously abandoning that metaphysical project' which, cumulatively point us in the direction that Toplady ultimately pursued: 'Instead, far more tried to ground truth in history, since it had been recorded and was thus recoverable.'[80] Roger D. Lund provides a useful corroboration of this idea when, quoting J. A. I. Champion, he states that '…deists and freethinkers attempted to undermine the exclusive claims of Christianity "not by denying God but [by] rewriting the history of religion… radicals such as Charles Blount and John Toland sidestepped propositional debates about the existence of God, and proposed alternative histories of the Christian past."'[81] If history was becoming weaponised, as a means of attacking the uniqueness of Christianity, then this could well explain why Toplady's greatest attempt at a defence of the Church of England was his *Historic Proof*, demonstrating his status as an Enlightenment thinker with the capacity to refute the new heterodoxies. This also suggests why he commenced his polemical efforts with the translation of a historical theological work, one that fed directly into the foundational roots of his beloved Anglicanism.[82] Indeed, the decision to translate Zanchius hints at Toplady's grasp of history and sense of its pivotal relevance to the present, although it appears to bemuse George Lawton: 'This continental Calvinist certainly gripped Toplady, but it is not easy to say why. It seems to spring out of his reading as an undergraduate.'[83] In fact, it is far more likely that it reflects Toplady's conviction that relevant principles could be derived from the study of historical narratives, for, back in 1563, Zanchius had found himself in a vitriolic dispute with Johannes Marbach, president of the

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[80] Robert G Ingram, 'The Church of England, 1714-1783' in Gregory (ed.), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism Volume II*, p. 59.

[81] Roger D. Lund (ed.), *The Margins of Orthodoxy: Heterodox writing and cultural response, 1660-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 22.

[82] Especially when it is considered alongside the publication of *The Church of England Vindicated*, in the same year.

[83] Lawton, *Within the Rock of Ages*, p. 99.

Lutheran church in Strasbourg. The two-year battle comprised many interactions, some of which were distinctly unflattering to both parties, but what is clear is that it was fundamentally about Marbach's opposition to Zanchius' doctrine of Predestination. That Zanchius was the loser in this dispute is evident from the subsequently drafted *Consensus* (1563), but it is equally evident that the reason for this lay in Marbach's superior skills as a bureaucrat and political operator. James M. Kittelson tells us that 'As a bureaucratic infighter Marbach was a formidable opponent…In addition, having been president of the church for over ten years now, Marbach was intimately acquainted with the workings of the civil authorities. He was therefore extraordinarily well-informed about the progress of the case and able to intervene almost at will.'[84] Toplady's decision to publish the Zanchius translation was therefore grounded in a historical awareness of the importance of defending theological orthodoxy against the more urbane and powerful forces that at that point in time operated within the hierarchy of the Church of England, the kinds of forces that could summarily expel six students from Oxford in 1768 on charges of 'Methodism' and 'enthusiasm'.[85]

One does not need to look far to discern the significance of this episode in Toplady's own thinking. A historical supplement, entitled 'Some Account of the Life of Jerom Zanchius', was inserted into the text of *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination* in a later edition.[86] Here, he dealt with the Strasbourg controversy, including a footnote on Marbach, linked to the comment that 'Not content with Zanchy's concessions, several of the Strasbourg bigots persisted in raising a controversial dust…' Marbach is described as 'a turbulent, unsteady theologist, pedantic and abusive; a weak, but fiery disputer, who delighted to live in the smoke of contention and virulent

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[84] James M. Kittleson, 'Marbach vs. Zanchi: The Resolution of Controversy in Late Reformation Strasbourg', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* , vol. 8, no. 3 (October 1977), 31-44.

[85] S. L. Ollard, *The Six Students of St. Edmund Hall, Expelled from The University of Oxford in 1768* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1911).

[86] This is available in a later edition, included within the *Works*, published by Walter Rowe. It does not even feature in the 1793 reprint of *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*.

debate.'[87] This is consistent with Kittelson's analysis, and again supports the view that Toplady's use of Zanchius, in conjunction with his own defence of the Church of England, was intentional, reflecting his underlying awareness of the parameters framing the contemporary debate. This undermines and corrects Pattinson's derogatory assessment of the intellectual deficiencies within Anglican thought during this period, as Toplady was applying the accumulated disciplines and insights of historical theology: in effect, he was carrying forward and reapplying earlier standards of theological rigour to his contemporary context, which included a similar form of conflict in Oxford. In fact, Pattinson's claim may reasonably be dismissed, from the perspective of at least one influential Anglican theologian, who was clearly a formative influence upon Toplady, namely John Edwards.

Following his retirement (due to ill-health), Edwards published more than forty books, but what is remarkable about this feat is not so much the scale of output, but rather the breadth of engagement. Daniel Norman says that 'Edwards became a primary combatant in the pamphlet wars against some of the most determined and gifted intellects of his day who were intent on eliminating what they perceived as rigid dogmatism in the Church of England by dismissing doctrines such as the Trinity as nonessential.'[88] Norman includes amongst the list of combatants, the 'mathematician and theologian William Whiston and philosophers Locke and Clarke', but this only scratches the surface of the scope of Edwards' intellectual range. Later written works dialogued with the hypercalvinist Tobias Crisp (and his son Samuel), Isaac Newton and a range of socinian and remonstrant thinkers such as Stephen Nye, William Sherlock and Daniel Whitby. He dedicated books to Bishop Simon Patrick and Archbishop Thomas Tenison. Whilst he had clear issues with Latitudinarianism, he engaged positively and proportionately with John Tillotson, and respectfully

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[87] Toplady, 'The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination' in *The Complete Works*, p. 671.
[88] Norman, *Saving the Church of England,* p. 9.

with Gilbert Burnet, whilst critiquing his commentary on the 39 Articles.[89] Of particular interest, was Edwards' preoccupation with Locke's *The Reasonableness of Christianity* which was published (anonymously) in 1695. This book triggered a pamphlet war, drawing in bishops, archbishops and mathematicians, and Godfreid Leibnitz because of its attack on the doctrine of the Trinity - and Edwards was the first author to respond to it, by expanding the content of his, about to be published, *Some Thoughts Concerning the Several Causes and Occasions of Atheism* (1695). It is significant that Locke, considered to have been a leading Enlightenment philosopher, was then drawn into a protracted pamphlet debate with Edwards, and apparently was unable to address the cleric's arguments. Bishop Stillingfleet of Worcester was also drawn into the debate, so it is clear that Anglican thinkers considered the Lockean polemic problematic, and were equipped and motivated to deal with it.[90] Edwards is an exceptional example of this capability, and he was clearly the model that Toplady assimilated into his own mindset. That is to say, he set out to distance himself from Peter Heylyn, the 'absolute creature of Archbishop *Laud*', whose '*Quinquarticular History* is the most laboured effort, ever yet made, to father Arminianism on the church of England'.[91] In a similar way, Toplady made it clear that his stance, when it came to defending Anglicanism, did not reflect the approach adopted by Messrs Burnet, Bull and Waterland, whom he tended to group together as exemplars of heterodox thinking.[92] No, it was to be Edwards' model of vigorous, Calvinistic advocacy that he most closely associated with, advancing him, via an extended citation, as the favoured, contrasting alternative.[93] Toplady describes this authority as 'The great and famous *Dr. John Edwards*…both a member of the university of *Cambridg*e, and one of its brightest ornaments.'[94]

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[89] Norman, *Saving the Church of England*, pp. 97, 101.
[90] Norman, *Saving the Church of England*, p. 56.
[91] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, pp. 38-40.
[92] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, pp. 15, 18, 20, 28.
[93] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, pp. 21-22.
[94] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, p. 50.

In like manner, Toplady exhibited certain correlations with the broader Anglican Church at the time, as well as instances of disengagement. Gibson documents a very particular emphasis on providentialism, and on the clerical response to the monarch, occasioned by the accession of William and Mary in 1688. This drew in Gilbert Burnet, who with 'a clique of court propagandists carefully fostered providentialism to legitimise William's rule',[95] as well as other Anglican (Latitudinarian) theologians such as Benjamin Hoadly and William Sherlock. Later, Gibson draws out the significance of this kind of emphasis: 'The importance of this providential ideology was that Anglicans of all shades, and many Dissenters, could unite around this providential ideology, using the events of James II's reign to show God's providential involvement in the world.'[96] Whilst Toplady seems not to have been interested in the question of the legitimacy of William, he did choose to dwell at some length on the topic of providence, initially as a way of re-asserting the authority of Peter Martyr, as one of the theological heavyweights underpinning the establishment of the Church of England.[97] He also used this theme as the means of introducing Bradwardin, Boëthius, Ridley, Latimer, Hooper, Bradford, as well as the Helvetic Confession, into the historical framing of the church, although the focus was relentlessly soteriological, rather than civil or ecclesiastical.[98]

Again, another late seventeenth and early eighteenth century preoccupation of the Anglican Church was 'Comprehension', managing the awkward interactions between Conformity and Dissent, ushered in by the Toleration Act of 1689. King William's presbyterian background was undoubtedly an impetus, favouring the idea of Comprehension, a view that was enthusiastically endorsed by Burnet in his *Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles* (1699), and then by Tillotson and Stillingfleet's Latitudinarianism which emphasised the kind of 'natural and moderate' Christianity

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[95] Gibson, *The Church of England 1688-1832, Unity & Accord*, p. 39.
[96] Gibson, *The Church of England 1688-1832, Unity & Accord*, p. 43.
[97] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 352-4.
[98] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 213, 217, 218, 220, 282, 292, 294-5, 328, 437, 446, 494.

which they supposed could easily absorb Dissent, given a certain flattening of definitions.[99] For those espousing such a position, the Test Act of 1673 rankled, as it permitted 'occasional conformity' for those Dissenters seeking public office. Walsh and Taylor confirm this trend neatly:

> Many liberals urged that the Church should be made more inclusive, either by efforts to negotiate the comprehension of the Dissenters, or at the very least by assuaging some of their animus against the Establishment. The Church's doctrinal formulae could be purified. Some of the dogmas which had expressed the religious views of earlier ages had now become obsolete and hindered the advance of religious knowledge.[100]

They then go on to hint that scholasticism was a perceived part of the problem, and it is therefore helpful to explore Toplady's own response to this particular ecumenical movement, at this time. The 1689 Toleration Act, under William and Mary, introduced some new elements of relative freedom for non-conformists, within admittedly circumscribed limits.[101] This was not, however tantamount to a completely new open and embracing culture, certainly as stalwarts of the Established Church interacted with newer dissenting variants. To listen to the words of Thomas Nowell, defending the expulsion of the six Methodist students from St. Edmund Hall, Oxford, it would be difficult to imagine that the Act had very much relevance in practice. In the opening paragraph of his response to the author of *Pietas Oxoniensis*, he drew a clear distinction between those who did the expelling ('true friends of learning and religion') and those who took exception to the expulsion ('a set of men, who are enemies to both').[102] In the ensuing pages, a catalogue of charges is repeated against the six students, which justify the action taken on the basis that the miscreants had 'been tainted with calvinistical and methodistical principles'.[103] This was certainly not the language of toleration, and in fact presented a somewhat binary view of religion in the eighteenth century, at least from Nowell's perspective. Jeremy Gregory hints at the Act's

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[99] Gibson, *The Church of England 1688-1832, Unity & Accord*, pp. 48-51.

[100] John Walsh, Colin Hayden & Stephen Taylor (Editors), *The Church of England c. 1689-1833, From Toleration to Tractarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 37-8.

[101] Henry Gee & William John Hardy (eds), *Documents Illustrative of English Church History Compiled from Original Sources* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1896), pp. 654-664.

[102] Nowell, *An Answer to a Pamphlet*, p. 1.

[103] Nowell, *An Answer to a Pamphlet*, pp. 26ff.

limitations, when he states that it 'did not envisage any form of toleration for Roman Catholics or Unitarians, let alone those of non-Christian faiths. Freedom of worship was only granted to Protestant Dissenters, who, moreover, could legally only worship in registered meeting houses with the door open and if the minister subscribed to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church…except those concerning baptism and church government.'[104] This might help explain why John Wesley took his time in his decremental drift away from conformity.

In fact, the theme of religious freedom and toleration had been a hot topic ever since the Reformation, with two more recent figures, William Penn and the philosopher John Locke having made prominent representations on this matter. Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration* had been published the same year as the Act that introduced its limited freedoms.[105] The problem here was that Locke's 1695 *The Reasonableness of Christianity* had argued for such a depleted, doctrinally minimalist version of the faith, that it provoked a pamphlet war in defence of key tenets such as the Trinity. This drew in an Archbishop (Tillotson), three bishops (Stillingfleet, Fowler and Burnet), and a host of others, including John Edwards (who was the first to respond to Locke).[106] It is quite likely that this spat, combined with Locke's advocacy of toleration led to something of a backlash amongst representatives of the Establishment.

Given the fierceness and focus of Toplady's pro-Anglican polemic, as well as his predilection for the granular detail of the 'confessional' basis of the Church of England, the expectation might be to see him as embodying a narrower view of Toleration. In fact, his position was more complex than might be expected. Firstly, in both *The Church of England Vindicated* and *Historic Proof*,

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[104] Jeremy Gregory, 'Introduction' in Gregory (ed), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism Volume II*, p. 9.

[105] Robert Louis Wilken, 'The Christian Roots of Religious Freedom' in Timothy Samuel Shah & Allen D. Hertz (eds.), *Christianity and Freedom, Volume I: Historical Perspectives*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 79.

[106] Norman, *Saving the Church of England*, p. 47.

Toplady identified the arrival of Pelagianism[107], in the wake of Arianism[108] as a key diagnostic in the doctrinal drift of the early church.[109] Secondly, he drew a direct equation between the old Pelagianism and the newer Arminianism, stating 'That these are the doctrines of the *Arminians* now, as they were of *Pelagius* then, needs no proof' and 'Who sees not, that Arminianism is the old Pelagian trump turned up anew?'[110] It is clear that, in Toplady's mind, the tenets of Wesleyan or Latitudinarian Arminianism merited no more toleration *now*, than the heresies of Pelagius deserved *then*. In this respect, he was consistent with John Edwards before him, who attacked Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism because of their then close connection with Tillotson's rational divinity, and associations with 'Popery, Socinianism…sceptics, enthusiasts, deism and atheism'.[111] Jake Griesel comments that 'The fact that [Daniel] Whitby waded beyond Arminianism into the deeper waters of Pelagianism dawned not only on Reformed churchmen like Edwards, but also on Arminians such as Jonathan Edwards of Oxford, who condemned Whitby's views.'[112] It would seem that Toplady would not have been persuaded by attempts to make that kind of differentiation, but rather viewed Arminianism and Pelagianism as existing on a kind of heterodox continuum, resulting in equivalent detrimental outcomes when it came to doctrinal definitions. In fact, he saw the contemporary theological landscape as indicative of a discernible downgrade: 'From whence I infer, that our new Anti-calvinists are as much *degenerated* from their *fore-fathers*; as those fore-fathers degenerated from the purity of the Protestant faith in general, and from that of our own national church in particular.'[113] His subsequent affirmations of the Lambeth Articles (1595)[114] as well as the Synod of Dort (1618-19),[115] both of which were intentionally oriented towards defining Arminianism as

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[107] Pelagius: 390-418 AD.
[108] Arius: 250-335AD.
[109] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 51ff and *The Church of England Vindicated*, p. 6ff.
[110] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, pp. 8-9.
[111] John Edwards, *The Preacher* (London: J. Robinson, 1705), Vol. 1, pp. 30-33, 35.
[112] Griesel, *Retaining the Old Episcopal Divinity*, p. 86.
[113] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, p. 48.
[114] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, pp. 51-59.
[115] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, pp. 61-67.

heretical, leads the reader to the inevitable conclusion that the chances of ecumenical concourse with proponents of such beliefs would be vanishingly small. In this respect, Toplady's stance is consistent with Gibson's analysis: 'This conservative response was an attempt to assert the unity of the Church on a doctrinal basis; it identified unity with dogmatic homogeneity in a way that was absent in the first half of the eighteenth century.'[116]

Because of his approach, Toplady, as with Edwards before him, was to attract the kind of opposition which presupposed him to be some kind of lone extremist: Wesley's strategy of plagiarising and price-gouging in relation to the translation of Zanchius seems strangely personal, as does his circulation of (false) rumours of Toplady's alleged recantation and spiritual despair just prior to his death.[117] These are not the actions of someone who is merely seeking to correct false ideas, and seems to assume that Toplady was an isolated purveyor of the beliefs that Wesley found so repugnant. In fact, nothing could be further from the actual position during this period. There had been a vigorous theological backlash to the Arminianism of Laud,[118] and then to the publication of George Bull's *Harmonia Apostolica* in 1670, even though Tillotson, Fowler and Sherlock shared the same emphases. Thomas Barlow and Thomas Tully spearheaded the response in Oxford, both through public lectures and their own publications, forming a rallying point for others such as John Wallis, Edward Reynolds, Ezekiel Hopkins and many others listed earlier. Hampton emphasises that this was clearly no minor variation in emphasis, one that could be smoothed over by a commitment to ecumenism: 'Like Barlow and Tully, Beveridge thinks that the Socinian understanding of faith, as meaning the same thing as obedience, is a dangerous opinion and one which must be resisted.'[119] Hampton goes on to state that 'Barlow's lectures and Tully's book are without doubt the most important statements of the Reformed position on justification to have been

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[116] Gibson, *The Church of England 1688-1832, Unity & Accord*, pp. 107.
[117] Toplady, *Mr Toplady's Dying Avowal*, pp. 4, 5.
[118] Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, pp. 240, 243.
[119] Hampton, *Anti-Arminians*, p. 121.

produced by Anglican writers after the Restoration. Nevertheless, the views they enunciated were actually quite widespread within the Church…Barlow and Tully are in fact the visible tip of a far larger Reformed iceberg.'[120] This is an important context for Toplady, and helps to frame his perception of what Anglicanism was, and therefore where accommodations were possible.

Nevertheless, there are hints here of a 'broader view' which frames Toplady's Anglicanism. This becomes conspicuously apparent in his 1771 pamphlet, *Free Thoughts on the Projected Application to Parliament for the Abolition of Ecclesiastical Subscription*. He addressed the challenging issue of conscience which was apparently a key driver behind the Feathers Tavern's petition to widen theological diversity within the Church of England:

> For, is *scrupulousness of Conscience* PECULIAR to *Arians, Socinians*, and *Pelagians*? Have not the ORTHODOX *their* Scruples also?…Besides: those of our reformed Brethren, who are restrained, from falling in with the Church, by *Scruples* TRULY *conscientious*; are under no sort of Obligation to put a Force upon *Conscience*, by *Smothering* their Scruples. They are at unrestrained Liberty to indulge *any* Scruples that can arise, and to follow Conscience whithersoever she goes. If, therefore, Conscience is *all*, Conscience has no reason to complain.[121]

This is an interesting paragraph, since it hints strongly at the limited appeal of conscience *within* the Anglican Church, whilst affirming the legitimacy of the freedoms for pursuing the dictates of conscience *outside* within nonconformity. Not for Toplady Nowell's disdain of any religious convictions which may fall outside of the purview of a recalibrated post-Restoration conformity. From this framing device, he then moved on to consider the kind of world envisioned by the Feathers Tavern petitioners: 'Let us, for a Moment, suppose the superseding Scheme to have taken full Effect. We will imagine the Liturgy, Articles, and Homilies, to be actually shorn of their Orthodoxy: and Subscription to be totally rescinded…We shall be as far, or farther from Unity, than ever.'[122] For Toplady, this idea of a kind of normative heterodoxy within the Established Church is something that would actually have a contra-ecumenical effect. Unity, unless the product of a

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[120] Hampton, *Anti-Arminians*, p. 127.
[121] Toplady, *Free Thoughts*, pp. 19-20.
[122] Toplady, *Free Thoughts*, p. 20.

thinly-disguised pragmatism, is the direct result of a shared commitment to orthodoxy, embodied by faithful subscription to the Articles, but Toplady expressed an even broader perspective than this:

> Remote as I am, and hope ever to be, from *Arianism* and *Socinianism*; I yet most sincerely wish that neither Arians nor Socinians might, as such, lye, in any Respect, at the Mercy of their Fellow Creatures. I should rejoice, unfeignedly, to see the *Act of Toleration* no longer clogged with the following *restrictive* Clause: 'Provided that nothing in this Act shall be construed to extend to give *any* Ease, Benefit or Advantage - to any Person that shall deny in his Preaching, or Writing, the Doctrine of the Blessed TRINITY as it is declared in the aforesaid Articles…of Religion.' The Toleration of *Protestants* should, by every Law both of God, of Nature, and of Civil Policy, be *absolutely unlimited.*[123]

Here he was advocating a broader and more generous model for toleration, one which maintained unity *within* the Anglican Church, by retaining subscription, and yet at the same time fostered a free market for beliefs and ideas within the broader civil society, albeit facilitated by a distinctively Protestant ethos. Gregory describes the 1689 Toleration Act as 'a disappointing and limited affair' of 'grudging nature',[124] whereas Toplady's view seems distinctly more radical and all-embracing, by comparison, which may be surprising, given his otherwise strictly Calvinistic confessional emphasis. But in this matter, he was consistent, deploring an approach where,

> No Dissenting Minister is legally entitled to the Benefit of the Act of Toleration, until he has, at the General, or Quarter Session of the Peace, *declared* his APPROBATION *of*, and likewise *Subscribed to*, all the Thirty-Nine Articles, except the 34th, 35th, 36th, and the first Clause of the 20th. This is, to very many Dissenting Protestants, a *real* Grievance, and calls for Legal Redress. GOD forbid, that *the Church* should ever accommodate her Doctrines to the Religious Mistakes of those who differ from her: but, surely, *the State* ought to be the Common Guardian of every well-behaving Protestant, without excepting one…A Toleration, truly Protestant, requires a more generous and expanded Basis.[125]

Thus, in one paragraph, Toplady managed to affirm a high view of Anglican doctrinal orthodoxy, alongside an equally high view of toleration, a view which is, itself, dependent upon a self-consciously Protestant worldview. This correlates with David Hempton's dismissal of the 'conventional narrative of the rise of religious toleration', which sees it as a product of the increasingly secular worldview, arising 'as a result of the Enlightenment and the consequent

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[123] Toplady, *Free Thoughts*, p. 28.

[124] Gregory, 'Introduction' in Gregory (ed.), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism Volume II*, p. 30.

[125] Toplady, *Free Thoughts*, p. 29.

triumph of reason over enthusiasm.'[126] Hempton goes on to explain that 'The ideological roots of religious toleration have been traced through a predominantly Protestant line…In this narrative, arguments for religious toleration stemmed primarily from religious belief itself…'[127] This description does seem to be an extraordinarily close match for what Toplady was arguing in the pages of his 1771 *Free Thoughts* pamphlet. His framing of the concept of toleration is theologically-driven, and apparently not immediately derived from Enlightenment influences.

How did his approach work out in practice? We have already noted the range of his influences and the breadth of his network of contacts, but there is an intriguing document, published within his 'Works', entitled *Excellent Passages From Eminent Persons*. This takes the form of an alphabetical topical index of quotations (ranging from 'Acceptance' through to 'Zeal'), each one identifying the author or source.[128] This database of extracts may originally have been compiled for Toplady's own use but it represents an exceptionally wide range of sources.[129] Clearly, within this listing there are respectable Anglican divines, but also presbyterians, baptists, puritans and ejected nonconformists, as well as those who might fall outside of his notions of orthodoxy, such as the highly contentious Tobias Crisp. The breadth of Toplady's scholarship is evident from other publications (eg. The *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England*), but this collection of extracts is indicative of his catholicity of taste across a range of denominational contexts. This ecumenical outlook worked itself out in practical ways. During the 1770s, he became closely associated with Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, and commenced preaching regularly in her Connexional chapels, even as his health began to decline more significantly.[130] In 1776, he found himself drawn by the

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[126] David Hempton, *The Church in the Long Eighteenth Century* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), p. 120.

[127] Hempton, *The Church in the Long Eighteenth Century*, p. 123.

[128] Toplady, 'Excellent Passages from Eminent Persons' in *Works*, pp. 556-607.

[129] Thomas Case, William Gurnall, John Arrowsmith, William Dodd, Thomas Manton, Tobias Crisp, Samuel Rutherford, Martin Madan, Ambrose Serle, Thomas Boston, James Hervey, John Owen, John Gill, William Romaine, Henry Venn, John Ryland, William Cave, Thomas Brookes, Rowland Hill, John Newton, Joseph Allein, Samuel Clarke, John Sladen, Bishop Burnet, Thomas Haweis, John Bunyan.

[130] Schlenther, *Queen of the Methodists*, p. 108.

Countess into the Mulberry Gardens Chapel controversy, acting as mediator amidst the parties to dysfunctional project mismanagement.[131] Ryle's descriptions of him as a rancorous and friendless individual would suggest that he would be unqualified for such a role, but he seems to have approached the matter with great care and performed his task to the satisfaction of the worshippers at the chapel.[132]

Also in 1776, he accepted the call to become the minister at the French Calvinistic Reformed Church in Orange Street, Leicester Square.[133] Although this was not an Anglican Church, it had been licensed for public preaching by the Bishop of London. From January 1775 through to the autumn of 1776, Toplady was the acting editor of *TGM*, founded in 1766.[134] He not only edited the periodical, but contributed a substantial amount of content under several pen-names, such as Minimus, Ecclesiastes, Concionater, Abdiel, Historiophilus, Gallicus, Clerus, Tola and Alotli. In fact, Toplady defies any kind of simplistic analysis: a rigorous and devoted Establishment man, who was also able to function fruitfully across a broad spectrum of ecclesiastical circles, demonstrating latitude in his various dealings, but without surrendering to doctrinal minimalism.

The Defence of Anglicanism

A need of a theological defence, and therefore of a *defender*, presupposes that there is something specific to defend of a theological nature, but Anglicanism's historic 'broad-church' appeal renders such definition a challenge. J. C. D. Clark hints at the matter, when describing the 'hegemonic position' (of the ideal national church) into the 1820s: 'This was especially so in England. The idea of an "*Ecclesia Anglicana*" had a millennium of varied development behind it

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[131] Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady*, pp. 289-90.
[132] Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady,* p. 292.
[133] Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady,* p. 297.
[134] Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady,* p. 312.

by 1660; the Thirty-Nine Articles of 1563 had drawn upon older assumptions in referring without explication to "Every particular or National Church" (Article 34).'[135] Article 34 does, in fact allow for considerable flexibility in respect of the 'Traditions and Ceremonies', allowing them to be 'changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word.' That flexibility is further emphasised by the statement 'Every particular or national Church hath authority to ordain, change, and abolish, Ceremonies or Rites of the Church ordained only by man's authority, so that all things be done to edifying.'[136] The wording of the Article is careful - the same approach to adaptation or contextualisation is not provided for in relation to doctrine - so, when one looks for a benchmark for what should be regarded as permanent, one necessarily looks to the Articles themselves, and also to the Homilies (which are defined in Article 35). That the Articles themselves should be binding upon 'every person under the degree of bishop which does or shall pretend to be a priest or minister of God's holy word and sacraments' was made clear in the 1571 'Subscription (Thirty-Nine Articles) Act', which passed into law, over Elizabeth's objections.[137] This was not an end to the matter: in 1628, Charles I added a declaration to the *Articles of Religion*, 'prohibiting the least difference from the said Articles' and emphasising 'the settled continuance of the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England now established; from which we will not endure any varying or departing in the least degree.'[138] In the 1662 Uniformity Act, under Charles II, the emphasis was primarily upon the book of Common Prayer, but there is an injunction placed upon governors of colleges and universities to 'subscribe unto the nine-and-thirty Articles of Religion mentioned in the statute made in the thirteenth year of the reign of the late Queen Elizabeth, and declare his unfeigned assent and consent unto, and

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[135] J. C. D. Clark, 'Great Britain and Ireland' in Stewart J. Brown & Timothy Tackett (eds), *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Enlightenment, Reawakening and Revolution 1660-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p.54.

[136] The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, No. 34.

[137] Gee & Hardy (eds.), *Documents Illustrative of English Church History*, p. 477.

[138] Gee & Hardy (eds.), *Documents Illustrative of English Church History*, p. 519.

approbation of, the said Articles…'[139] This same uncommonly long ecclesiastical Act, incorporates a further reference to the 'nine-and-thirty Articles', as containing an overarching or governing power, via the 'six-and-thirtieth Article' which relates to the 'Consecration of Archbishops and Bishops, and Ordaining of Priests and Deacons', ensuring that they should 'subscribe unto the said Articles'.

It may seem as if the Articles had effectively functioned (as they were intended) 'for the avoiding of diversities of opinions, and for establishing of consent touching true religion'.[140] The reality, however, was that the Articles had been become a tool which legitimised successive waves of repressive legislation: (The Corporation Act (1661), the Quaker Act (1662), the first Conventicles Act (1664), the Five Mile Act (1665), the second Conventicles Act (1670), and the first and second Test Acts (1673 & 1678), all in pursuit of 'uniformity'). Grant Tapsell comments, succinctly, that, 'By 1714, the Church of England had thus experienced a half-century of re-establishment that had not created religious uniformity.'[141] It is not difficult, therefore, to see the practice of subscription or of conformity to have become a defining characteristic of Anglicanism, rather than the substance of the Articles themselves. Given that background, it is possible to view the Feathers Tavern Petition as an attempt to create a new kind of ecclesiastical identity, one which was not dependent upon legislation. J. C. D. Clark confirms that in that respect the initiative failed [142] and Toplady's strong antipathy to the Petition, which presented itself as a binary issue, took the form of a confessionalism which emphasised the substance and the historical origins of the confession, rather than the mere act of subscription.

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[139] Gee & Hardy (eds.), *Documents Illustrative of English Church History*, p. 611.

[140] Gee & Hardy (eds.), *Documents Illustrative of English Church History*, p. 618.

[141] Grant Tapsell, 'The Church of England, 1662-1714' in Gregory (ed.), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism Volume II*, p. 37.

[142] J. C. D. Clark, 'Church, Parties, and Politics' in Gregory (ed.), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism Volume II*, p. 311.

One way of clarifying Toplady's position, is to look more closely at his 'Letter to the Revd. Dr. Nowell', entitled *The Church of England Vindicated from the Charge of Arminianism*, published in 1769. Whilst this is an extended argument about church history and doctrine, it does tell us a great deal about *sources*, and Toplady was rigorous with his citations. On one single page, Toplady marshalled his Anglican heavyweights, namely Abbot, Grindal, Ussher, Williams, Davenant, Downham, Carlton, Hall, Beveridge and Hopkins - all Calvinistic bishops, whom he asserted believed and maintained the church's 'fundamental doctrines'. He followed this with the pointed comment that 'After all, truth does not depend upon names. The doctrines of the church are to be learned from the articles and homilies of *the church herself*: not from the private opinions and homilies of some individuals who lay hold on the skirt of her garment, call themselves by name, and live by her revenues.'[143] The point of this comment lies in the contrasting list of authorities, favoured by Nowell: Bishop Bull, Dr. Waterland, Dr. Henry Hammond, Archbishop Tillotson, Bishop Sharp and Bishop Stillingfleet as well as Archbishop William Laud.[144] This particular group of names represented the Laudian and Latitudinarian trends within Anglicanism, which Nowell was seeking to establish as normative. It is quite clear that Toplady was having none of it, and he cited the case of Bishop Bull who appears to have been unable to unequivocally affirm his subscription to the Articles, despite being challenged to do so by Thomas Tully.[145] 'Bull, in his answer, only huddles the matter up, and slides over it, as well as he can, in this slight, equivocating manner' stated Toplady, then quoting Bull's own response to Tully (in both Latin and English) which comprised an evasion, depending on the *a priori* assumption that '…the determinations of the church, in behalf of the Calvinistic principles, are not sufficiently *clear*, but *dark* and *ambiguous*.'[146] He parodied this position, asserting that, 'After this rate, *any* unbelieving

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[143] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, p. 15.
[144] Nowell, *An Answer to a Pamphlet*, p. 75.
[145] Tully had been Principal of St. Edmund Hall, and later Dean of Carlisle.
[146] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, p. 16.

subscriber whatever, when taxed with dishonesty and prevarication, need only cry out, with bishop Bull, "The determinations of our church are not *clear*"…But a *determination*, which is *not clear*, is in reality *no* determination at all: and either the church has absolutely determined *nothing*, and is a church without any fixed principles; or her determinations are *clear* and *peremptory*…'[147] Toplady's argument appears to be that, either the Articles in question (frequently the bone of contention was Article 17) purport to state something definite, or they do not. If they do not (that is to say, they were intentionally formulated in order to obfuscate, or to carve out a doctrinal hinterland of pragmatic ambiguity), then why would subscription to the same Articles then be a problem for certain clerics? Why the Feathers Tavern petition? Clearly, both approaches cannot simultaneously be true, and the position espoused by Nowell was actually self-defeating. Toplady then added further fuel to the fire, by outlining the further nuances on this matter, originating from John Wesley, who had argued that Articles were merely intended to provide definitions, rather than state doctrines.[148] Given Nowell's implacable opposition to Methodism, this would have been a difficult pill for him to swallow, and Toplady then rammed home the implications in the clearest terms:

> …who are to be deemed *Methodists* and *Sectarians*? They, who believe the doctrines of the church, as they stand in her articles, without sophistication and disguise? or they, who, with Mr Wesley and some others, subscribe the articles not as *articles of faith*, but either as *ecclesiastical definitions of terms*, or at most as *determinations which are not clear*? By this loose, haggling way of evading the force of church-decisions, and weakening the sacred ties of solemn and repeated subscriptions; the spiritual fence of our establishment is broken down and true under foot…[149]

In fact, Wesley's stratagem, to which Toplady refers here, was merely one step down a road which eventually took him a long way from the 39 Articles. Frank Baker comments that 'In 1755 Wesley had said that the Methodists could not in conscience renounce "the doctrine of the Church, contained in the Articles and Homilies"' but that in 1775, John Fletcher 'had advised Wesley to

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[147] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, p. 16.
[148] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, p. 17.
[149] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, p. 17.

publish "the 39 Articles of the Church of England, rectified according to the purity of the gospel".' Wesley followed that advice, but in 1784 the inevitable trend continued when 'he reduced the 39 to 24' (omitting Articles 8, 13, 15, 17, 21 and 23, which he had entertained doubts about). A few years later, a further nine were omitted (3, 18, 20, 26, 29, 33, 35, 36 and 37) and of those which remained, he excised anything else he found distasteful.[150] Clearly, Wesley's later actions represented more fully the break of Wesleyanism with the Church of England, and post-dated Toplady's death in 1778, but the clarity of Toplady's perspective appears to have been confirmed by the subsequent events: 'Thus the gap of prevaricating subscription being once opened, "*we may,*" to use Dr. Waterland's own words, "*bid adieu to principles*," and, between one subscriber and another, the church of England will have no settled doctrines left…'[151] Toplady took great care to map out the equivalence between the Arminian subscribing to Calvinistic Articles, and the Arian or Socinian subscribing to Trinitarian Articles, but then anticipated the objection embodied in the form of the Latitudinarian Bishop Gilbert Burnet, whose 1699 *Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, set out to redefine them as not Calvinistic. This occasioned a lengthy citation from John Edwards' *Veritas Redux* (pp. 521-22), demonstrating that the Cambridge divine had already most effectively addressed that kind of approach.[152] In fact, Edwards had not been in any danger of mincing his words, when he described Burnet's *Exposition* as a source of 'dissimulation', stating that 'It seems to teach our Clergymen to Equivocate', before going on to highlight the obvious point that the compilers of the Articles were Calvinists by conviction and would therefore be unlikely to have drafted them in such a way as to permit either an entirely ambiguous position on cherished doctrines, or to support an antagonistic interpretation.[153]

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[150] Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2000), pp. 249-50.
[151] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, p. 19.
[152] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, pp. 21-22.
[153] Edwards, *Veritas Redux*, pp. 521-22.

Nowell's perspective on the doctrinal formulations of the Anglican Church was therefore doubly defeated: internally contradictory and unsustainable, but also scholastically refuted some sixty-two years previously. Indeed, he was, as Burnet was before him, guilty of equivocation: Toplady grimly and relentlessly pulled the rationale which justified Nowell's own, private, interpretation of the Articles to pieces, exposing the underlying motivations and errors which allowed such a stance.[154] There is a further angle to this issue which is certainly worth exploring. Toplady's indebtedness to John Edwards is clear, both theologically and polemically. In fact it appears that Edwards formed the model upon which Toplady chose to base his own brief ministry. Clearly, there is a danger to such an approach if it could be argued that Edwards was some marginalised, lone echo of a long-defunct orthodoxy within the post-Restoration church. This is a position which has been suggested by Nicholas Tyacke[155], Jeongmo Yoo[156] and Dewey D. Wallace.[157] All such writers depend upon extracts from Edwards own writings which articulate a perceived marginalised position,[158] no doubt born out of the pressures of conflict. However, Jake Griesel has documented an extensive listing of some 122 post-Restoration Reformed conformists within the Church of England, contemporary to Edwards, many of whom were active in contending for the Calvinistic basis of the Articles.[159] Edwards may have been a prolific author, and of the kind of profile which drew incoming fire from the heterodox, but he stood with a substantial company of likeminded compatriots such as Henry Compton, the bishop of London; William Jane, Regius

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[154] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, pp. 23-26.

[155] Nicholas Tyacke, 'From Laudians to Latitudinarians: A Shifting Balance of Theological Forces' in *The Later Stuart Church, 1660-1714*, edited by Grant Tapsell (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), pp.70-80.

[156] Jeongmo Yoo, *John Edwards (1637-1716) on Human Free Choice and Divine Necessity: The Debate on the Relation between Divine Necessity and Human Freedom in Late Seventeenth Century England* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), pp. 44-45.

[157] Dewey D. Wallace, *Shapers of English Calvinism, 1660-1714: Variety, Persistence, and Transformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 222.

[158] This would quite naturally hint at the existential impact of widespread criticism and anti-Calvinistic polemic from the likes of Charles Leslie, Thomas Harriett, John Carpenter, Edmund Elys (1633-1708), Robert Lightfoot, Daniel Whitby.

[159] Griesel, *Retaining the Old Episcopal Divinity,* p. 125.

Professor of Divinity at Oxford; Robert South; John Hall, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford and William Delaune, President of St. John's College at Oxford. There were many others with similar credentials - and this ignores those that fell into an earlier generation (1660-88) who were equally vigorous in defending the Calvinistic orthodoxy of the Church of England, and whose writings Edwards referenced. It is intriguing to note that the characterisations of Edwards as a marginalised loner were effectively repeated, later on, in some of the accounts of Toplady's life and ministry.[160]

Edwards was no lone-wolf, some throwback to a forgotten age from which Anglican doctrinal formulations had progressed to a new consensus. He was a vociferous protagonist on behalf of a substantive and active minority within Church of England in the post-Restoration period, and the fact that his significant works were regularly reprinted testifies to the demand that existed at this time for resources which argued for Calvinistic orthodoxy. Stephen Hampton pertinently comments that when William Beveridge, Bishop of Asaph, published his (Calvinistic) *Exposition of the XXXIX Articles* in 1710, this did not occasion nearly the degree of controversy as Burnet's own latitudinarian, Arminian commentary did a decade previously.[161] Clearly, the old Reformed consensus persisted within the collective memory of Anglican clergy, even if few felt motivated to defend it, and this is an important component of the intellectual backdrop to Toplady's work, one which hints at the nature of both continuity and collegiality. Griesel, in his survey of Calvinistic contemporaries to Edwards, refers to an interaction between William Turner and Joseph Bingham, where Bingham 'agreed with Turner that the Church of England's Articles on free will, grace, justification, and election agreed with the Gallic Confession - in other words, that the Articles are Reformed.'[162] The *Confessio Gallicana* was adopted in Paris in 1559, and was based upon a draft

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[160] Ryle, *Christian Leaders of the Last Century*, pp. 360, 363.
[161] Hampton, *Anti-Arminians*, p. 35.
[162] Griesel, *Retaining the Old Episcopal Divinity*, p. 111.

of thirty-five Articles, prepared by Calvin himself. The correlation between the two sets is evident, and Hampton also emphasises the doctrinal continuity with the Second Helvetic Confession of 1566, especially in relation to Article 17.[163] Toplady drew out the significance of the latter, by quoting directly from its own preface: 'The Church of England, the Church of Scotland, the Reformed Churches in France, all the Dutch Churches, together with many of the Protestant Churches in Poland, Hungary, and Germany, testify'd their Approbation of the said Helvetic Confession.'[164] David Steinmetz, in describing Bullinger's editorship of the Second Helvetic Confession of 1566, pertinently emphasises that 'It alone of all the Reformed confessions could claim to be universal.'[165] and Toplady made a point of emphasising Bullinger's role, as well as quoting extensively from the Helvetic Confession to demonstrate how the content correlated well with the Thirty-Nine Articles.[166] This seems to be a significant point where Toplady's self-identification as an Anglican comes very clearly into focus: the continuity with historic, European and theological antecedents was for him a holistic matter. The scholastic DNA is interwoven with these historical formulations which cumulatively informed Toplady's perception of conforming Christianity, and it is this which led him to such a vigorous espousal of the Thirty-Nine Articles. His model of Anglicanism was dependent upon a high view of historical continuity, theological consistency and an international confessionalism which stood in stark contrast to the parochially-constricted views of Nowell. Such a model requires defending because it is always prone to reductionism: the murky and undefined Articles of Burnet's conception are scarcely a sufficient motivation for the kind of conviction which would lead to a vigorous defence.

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[163] Stephen Hampton, 'Confessional Identity', p. 218.

[164] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 492-6.

[165] David C. Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings, From Geiler von Kayserberg to Theodore Beza* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 98.

[166] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 494-6.

Chapter 4

Toplady: Enlightened and Enlightening?

Thou seest I grope in endless Night
Until thou in my heart appear;
Kindle the Flame, O Lord, and light
Thine everlasting Candle there:
Thy Presence puts the Shadows by;
If thou art gone, how dark am I![1]

Introductory Historiography

To Johann Friedrich Zöllner is attributed the perhaps overused question, 'What is enlightenment?'[2] A supplementary question is that of 'When?', especially given that J. G. A. Pocock advocated replacing the singular term with the plural 'Enlightenments'.[3] John Redwood assigns the years between 1660 and 1750 to the phenomenon in England,[4] but Anthony Pagden seems to view it as a continuous thread, arising from the Reformation, a rolling process 'which might never be completed'.[5] A consensus appears to regard 'the Enlightenment' as an intellectual movement, focusing primarily on a critical enquiry into what constitutes human betterment, or the 'science of happiness' in the here and now.[6] Carl L. Becker observed that such a focus almost necessarily involved a de-emphasis of theology, philosophy and deductive logic, whilst preserving a form of faith in progress, albeit without the supernatural - based upon a belief in the perfectibility of human nature.[7] As Clare Jackson observes, the new Enlightenment optimism regarding secular

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[1] Toplady, 'Petitionary Hymn X', *Hymns and Sacred Poems on a Variety of Divine Subjects*, p. 14.

[2] Anthony Pagden, *The Enlightenment and why it still matters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 5-6.

[3] Edelstein, *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy*, pp. 7-28.

[4] John Redwood, *Reason, Ridicule and Religion: The Age of Enlightenment in England 1660-1750* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976),

[5] Pagden, *The Enlightenment and why it still matters*, p. 21.

[6] Ritchie Robertson, *The Enlightenment, The Pursuit of Happiness 1680-1790* (London: Penguin Random House, 2020), p. 1.

[7] Carl L. Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers, Second Edition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1932 & 2003), pp. 17 & 31.

advancement replaced traditional models of theodicy with doctrines that linked linguistic evolution to the inevitability of human progress. The publication of Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* in 1751 was a keynote moment in framing this kind of narrative.[8] Inevitably, this new, overarching story of humanity did not just impact on metaphysics: it fed through to the limitless optimisms of Baconian science, to Adam Smith's 'invisible hand', governing economic matters and the nation's prosperity, and it influenced fictional literature (Daniel Defoe's *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe,* 1719).[9] Dorinda Outram charts the rapid growth of production in the here and now (new institutions, the democratisation of cheap literature, the lower price of consumer goods, the self-identifying 'Republic of Letters', even the proliferation of coffee-houses).[10]

The Enlightenment spanned the late seventeenth century and ran through to the late eighteenth century, culminating (perhaps) in the rather shocking full-stop of the French Revolution, which provided a contrast to the optimistic idealism of an enlightening movement. Into the latter part of this continuum emerged Toplady as a thinking, writing contributor, his significant works commencing in 1769. He was therefore a child of the 'Enlightenment' if the working understanding is that period, covering the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which combined the scientific revolution and the 'Age of Reason'. Certainly, the kinds of concepts which were meat and drink to thinkers such as Locke, Hume, Newton and the *philosophes* had been around long enough to become mainstream within the intellectual networks that framed Toplady's activities. His published output covered a period of only nine years (perhaps a little longer if we include the extant diary entries), which is a fragment of the extended timeline of intellectual developments over this period. This chapter begins an exploration of Toplady's interaction with Enlightenment ideas, and

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[8] Clare Jackson, 'Progress and Optimism' in Martin Fitzpatrick, Peter Jones, Christa Knellworth and Ian McCalman (eds), *The Enlightenment World* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 177, 178, 181.
[9] Jackson, 'Progress and Optimism' in Fitzpatrick, Jones, Knellworth and McCalman (eds), *The Enlightenment World*, pp. 183, 186.
[10] Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 13, 17, 18.

concludes in chapter 5 with a discussion of that definitively 'enlightened' protestant phenomenon, evangelicalism. The objective here is to explore Toplady's model of engagement with Enlightenment themes, its strengths and weaknesses, and to connect that model with his own influences and emphases, whilst recognising that his priority was not cultural commentary but public theology. In this consideration, it will be seen that his approach was far from monolithic: he often dips lightly in and out of Enlightenment motifs in a way that requires interpretation on the part of the reader, and it is clear that his polemic was framed substantially by his scholasticism, rather than primarily by an intellectual engagement with Enlightenment themes.

Toplady's Enlightenment Context

It is strange to note that Toplady's biographers generally pay little attention to the broader societal culture that helped to frame his thought. To date, Ella's treatment is the most compendious and yet, when he bemoans the paucity of good biographical material, there is no reference to the wider historical context or its potential significance, despite the rise of evangelicalism during this period.[11] For writers such as Row, Middleton, Ryle and even Wright, the excuse might be that they were so immersed within Enlightenment culture that it was, to them, largely unnoticeable - or that the real significances of this period only became retrospectively apparent.[12] This would be more difficult to argue when it comes to Lawton and Ella, writing in 1988 and 2000, given the extensive historiography available to them by that time. It might be suggested that this was in part a function of the readership for whom their treatments were intended, and yet it is conspicuous that when Ella provides his reasons for producing a new biography of Toplady he refers to doctrine, historical neglect, the lack of definition and continued relevance without once mentioning how we should

[11] Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady*, p. 39.

[12] It is worth noting that Edelstein argues consistently that the concept of 'the Enlightenment' was not a post-facto interpretation invented by historians to make sense of this period. Edelstein, *The Enlightenment, A Genealogy*, p. 13.

understand Toplady within his cultural context.[13] To be sure, that context requires unpacking. Outram highlights the sheer diversity of the Enlightenment phenomenon.[14] Gertrude Himmelfarb argued that Enlightenment thinking manifested itself in three quite different forms in Britain, France and America.[15] Ian Hunter suggests that, within the University of Halle in Brandenburg alone, there were at least three rival Enlightenment movements.[16] Neither is the use of the word itself devoid of terminological ambiguity. J. G. A. Pocock contrasts uncapitalised enlightening processes, with a distinct, capitalised, phenomenon, concluding that '…when we look at the processes of enlightenment in the Protestant Netherlands, Protestant Switzerland, and the Huguenot diaspora, we find that Enlightenment to have been very largely a continuation of the Synod of Dort…'[17] Christopher Hill speaks of 'the European Enlightenment' in exactly the same sense and context as he refers to 'the English Revolution', suggestive of a similar historical framing. He seems to view the 'Enlightenment' as a very specific time-constrained phenomenon, one defined in a Lockean sense.[18] Richard Ashcraft appears to define 'eighteenth century Enlightenment thought' in very specifically rationalistic, skeptical and secular terms, seeing it as a distinct philosophical system.[19] Lastly, Ronald Paulson views the phenomenon as something that resembles a clearly-defined event, one which is in its own way comparable to the Reformation, rather than the looser, less easily classified smorgasbord of intellectual phenomena which arose in different locations across post-Reformation Europe.[20]

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[13] Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady*, pp. 41-43.

[14] Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 1.

[15] Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French, and American Enlightenments* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004).

[16] Ian Hunter, 'Multiple Enlightenments: Rival *Aufklärer* at the University of Halle, 1690-1730', in Martin Fitzpatrick, Peter Jones, Christa Knellwolf and Ian McCalman (eds), *The Enlightenment World*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 576-95.

[17] J. G. A. Pocock, 'The definitions of orthodoxy', in *The Margins of Orthodoxy: Heterodox writing and cultural response 1660-1750*, Roger D. Lund (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 36.

[18] Christopher Hill, 'Freethinking and libertinism', in Lund (ed.) *The Margins of Orthodoxy*, pp. 58 & 64.

[19] Richard Ashcraft, 'Anticlericalism and authority', in Lund (ed.) *The Margins of Orthodoxy*, pp. 86 & 88.

[20] Ronald Paulson, 'Henry Fielding and the problem of Deism', in Lund (ed.) *The Margins of Orthodoxy*, p. 241.

The Enlightenment was associated with the new cosmopolitanism.[21] Paul Hazard quotes Jean de Bruyère's comment on Free-thinkers: 'Some complete their demoralisation by extensive travel, and lose whatever shreds of religion remained to them. Every day they see a new religion, new customs, new rites.'[22] This observation related to the modern appetite for travel, the English elite putting the finishing touches to their education, the philosophers (Locke, Leibniz) who went abroad to expose their minds to new experiences. Hazard makes the point that 'The great classics were not given to moving about; for the wanderers, we must wait for Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau'[23] and emphasises that this new restlessness was shared by the English with the Italians, the French and the Germans. Nor was this new nomadism merely a European feature - the period saw a great flourishing of travel books, marvelling over the customs, religious beliefs, dress, foods, flora and fauna in Japan, China, Turkey, and the Americas.[24] William J. Bulman describes the assimilation of cultural, religious and political novelties by travellers, and their adoption into a new, relativistic, elite secularity.[25] The fascination of orientalism had historic roots, Archbishop William Laud having donated 1,300 Arabic manuscript treasures to the Oxford Library between 1635 and 1640 and Bulman concludes that the Anglican Church actually led the way when it came to orientalism.[26] A similar bias may have led to the undoing of John Wesley, a matter which Toplady gleefully seized upon in 1771 in his *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley*. Frank Baker supplies more detail than Henry Rack[27] of the affair of 'Erasmus' a self-proclaimed Greek Orthodox Bishop, who conveniently became available to break a gridlock hindering the ordination of Methodist preachers.[28] Less convenient were Erasmus' suspect credentials and maverick behaviour which

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[21] Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 600ff.
[22] Hazard, *The Crisis of The European Mind 1680-1715*, p. 12.
[23] Hazard, *The Crisis of The European Mind 1680-1715*, p. 5.
[24] Hugh Dunthorne, 'The Dutch Republic: "That mother nation of liberty"', in Fitzpatrick, Jones, Knellwolf and McCalman (eds), *The Enlightenment World*,, p. 93.
[25] Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, p. 42.
[26] Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, p. 44.
[27] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 303.
[28] Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, pp. 200-1.

were a substantial embarrassment to Wesley, one which Toplady was only too happy to exploit, as another instance of a naïve association with an undiscerning Enlightenment patronage of foreign authorities.[29]

Toplady's own peregrinations were, by contrast, no doubt considerably restricted by his personal frailty: other than his education in Trinity College Dublin,[30] commencing in 1755, his travels were largely confined to Somerset, Devon and London.[31] This would at least have rendered his interaction with European thought intentional, rather than mirror the kind of undiscriminating, magpie consumption of his contemporaries who had the means and the freedom to travel. Sometimes, the direction of the traveling influence worked the other way around: Ella records that the Baptist, John Gill added Toplady to his extensive visitation list, given his frail state of health, whilst in London.[32] Compared to the wider geographical context for the dissemination of enlightened ideas, the impression may be gained that Toplady's intellectual horizons were constrained by his physical limitations, but it is quite probable that London provided few obstacles to unfettered study. Martin Fitzpatrick notes that 'London could be a generator for Enlightenment elsewhere (as Paris would for distant parts of France) and an exporter of ideas, yet it could also receive ideas from the Continent not only directly from Holland or France but also via Scottish thinkers.'[33] Voltaire, no less, commented on the demonstrable spiritual and intellectual ecumenism of London,[34] which Pagden views favourably, compared to the more 'menacing intellectual presence' on the other side of the channel.[35] In fact, it is plausible to suggest that Toplady's English

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[29] Toplady, *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley*, pp. 25-27.

[30] Toplady's time in Ireland lasted from 1755 to 1760, but his biographers supply little detail on this phase of his life. Ella tells us that he fellowshipped with Strict Baptists in Dublin because he could not find an Anglican minister who adhered to the Thirty-Nine Articles. Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady*, p. 72.

[31] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A.B.', in *Works*, pp. 3, 11, 14-16, 19, 31-34.

[32] Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady*, p. 78.

[33] Fitzpatrick, 'Introduction', in Fitzpatrick, Jones, Knellwolf and McCalman (eds), *The Enlightenment World*, p. 82.

[34] Voltaire, *Lettres Philosophiques*, ed. René Pomeau (Paris: Flammarion, 1964), p. 47.

[35] Pagden, *The Enlightenment and why it still matters*, p. 107.

localisation was in no way a hindrance to his grappling with the latest ideas: Porter states that, 'Throughout the eighteenth century *Aufklärer* of all nations revered English government, society and opinion as the pure crystal of Enlightenment.'[36] He highlights England's specialism in 'freethinking, empiricism and utilitarianism' and emphasises the way in which English thinking opted for comprehension, rather than polarities.[37]

Toplady's own brief history was inextricably intertwined with the capital, and Ella's observation concerning London's openness to evangelical Anglicanism (in contrast to outlying parish patronages) during this period is illuminating.[38] The coexistence of vigorous evangelical articulation of the Christian faith with this key geographical nexus of Enlightenment ideas suggests that the two worlds were not at that time inimical, and therefore frames the kind of insightful and subtle engagement which we encounter in Toplady's writings.

The Language of Light and Reason

The citation opening this chapter is the second stanza from *Petitionary Hymn X* which, in its fourth stanza, continues with:

> Thy Light O send me from above,
> All other Lights are nothing worth;
> Light up in me the Lamp of Love
> To guide me through this Labrynth Earth.[39]

During Toplady's lifetime, this terminology was routinely deployed to establish the authority or credentials of the author. Isaac Newton had published his *Opticks* in 1704, and Roy Porter notes that after Newton came Joseph Priestley, author of *The History and Present State of Discoveries*

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[36] Roy Porter, 'The Enlightenment in England', in Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (Editors) *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 1.
[37] Porter, 'The Enlightenment in England', in Porter and Teich (eds) *The Enlightenment in National Context*, pp. 4 & 13.
[38] Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady*, p. 25.
[39] Toplady, *Hymns and Sacred Poems, on a Variety of Divine Subjects*, p. 14.

Relating to Vision, Light, and Colours (1772).[40] Toplady was redeploying a theme which had already received considerable historical emphasis: William Gearing (1625-90) had claimed that 'God did not only lighten that Luminare magnum, his holy Scripture, but lightened also luminary minus, a less light, the light of reason; by help of arts and sciences.'[41] The Latitudinarian, John Tillotson, utilised the same vernacular[42] and Charles Wesley composed verse memorably reflecting the experience of evangelical conversion:

> Long my imprisoned spirit lay
> Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
> Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,
> I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
> My chains fell off, my heart was free,
> I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.
> My chains fell off, my heart was free,
> I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.[43]

In Germany, pietists such as Leibniz, Tschirnhaus and Francke had devoted the terminology of light to theological purposes, leveraging an earlier (1633) philosophical work by the Czech pedagogue, Johann Amos Comenius', *Natural Philosophy Reformed by Divine Light*. This made it to London in 1651.[44] But the language of light was also employed by Enlightenment thinkers with divergent views: D'Alembert, editor of the *Encylopédie*, enthused in his Elements of Philosophy, that 'the discovery and application of a new method of philosophizing. … The fruit or sequel of this general effervescence of minds has been to cast a new light on some matters and new shadows on others.'[45] Many commentators such as Ernst Cassirer have highlighted the pivotal role of the light

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[40] Porter, *Enlightenment*, p. 45.
[41] William Gearing, *The Arraignment of Pride, or, Pride Set Forth, with Causes, Kinds, and Several Branches of It*, (London, 1660), p. 144.
[42] John Tillotson, *The Works of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson* (London, 1748), vol. 7, p. 181.
[43] Charles Wesley, 'And Can It Be That I Should Gain', written in 1738 and first published in *A Collection of Tunes, Set to Music, as they are commonly sung at the Foundery* (1742). In *The Methodist Hymn Book* of 1933, it was first set to the tune 'Sagina'.
[44] Kelly Joan Whitmer, *The Halle Orphanage as Scientific Community, Observation, Eclecticism, and Pietism in the Early Enlightenment* (Chicago, Il: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), pp. 37, 57.
[45] D'Alembert, 'Éléments de Philosophie' in *Mélanges de Littérature, d'Histoire, at de Philosophie*, nouvelle édition, six volumes, (Amsterdam, 1759), vol. 4, pp. 3-6.

vs darkness motif within the extensive literature.[46] Indeed, Jonathan Israel shows how this new movement emphasising intellectual clarity and progress then transitioned through to the Illuminati, a radical secret organisation founded in Ingolstadt in 1776, spreading right across Central Europe and including Herder, Goethe and others within its ranks.[47] That the more democratic, enlightening tenets of the *philosophes* could translate so rapidly through to a new version of Gnostic elitism is indicative of how powerful the 'light vs dark' motif was for the human psyche, and also how prone to manipulation it was. John Gascoigne outlines the pivotal moment whereby 'light' became culturally synonymous with human reason.[48] David Manning discusses the role of 'enlightenment language' within the context of the establishing of theological positions, and especially in the service of advancing religious polemic, the flip side of which was the intent to render other theologies ridiculous.[49] Given this background, it would be reasonable to expect Toplady to deploy his renowned polemical skills via this common strategy. After all, the Genevan Reformation motto was *post tenebras lux*.[50] Calvin himself used the language of light in order to underscore the clarity and illuminating power of Reformation theology, in comparison to the darkness of the Romish system.[51]

Clearly, a range of competing intellectual constituencies were committed to the application of the 'language of light' and Toplady's usage is pervasive and intentional within his devotional and poetical works. The 1860 compilation entitled *Hymns and Sacred Poems on a Variety of Divine Subjects* divided the contents up into six subcategories. Within the first ('Petitionary Hymns') there

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[46] Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951 & 2009), p. 47.
[47] Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind, Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 73.
[48] John Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the age of the Enlightenment. Science, religion and politics from the Restoration to the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 115.
[49] David Manning, 'Theological Enlightenments and Ridiculous Theologies: Contradistinction in English Polemical Theology', *Religion in the age of Enlightenment, Vol. 2* (New York: AMS Press, 2010), 214.
[50] 'After darkness, light'.
[51] Calvin, *Institutes*, bk. 1, chap. 1, para 2. (Henry Beveridge (translator), (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845))

are seventeen which explicitly invoke this 'enlightened language', some 38% of that content. Within the second ('Hymns of Thanksgiving') allusions to light account for 13%; within 'Select Paraphrases' some 20%; within 'Hymns of Invitation' zero; within 'Occasional Pieces' 11%; within the Appendix 25% and within 'Occasional Hymns and Poems', some 21%. For the purpose of this analysis, only those compositions which specifically mention light or illumination have been considered - but there are many others where 'sight' or 'viewing' are treated as metaphors of the experience of faith - thus, in 'Petitionary Hymn' No. XIX, there is the single line reference, 'Be Thou the Eyesight of the Blind', which contrasts with the far more extended treatment in No. XX ('Christ the Light of his People'), where it is clear that Toplady has meditated at some considerable length on the appropriateness of the metaphor of light, as a conveyor of the experience of spiritual regeneration. One question might be whether he was deploying the motif as a means of parrying Enlightenment polemic, or whether this was merely evidence of his traditionalism, but on another level the question is immaterial: it is probable that he was covering both emphases, simultaneously, through the deployment of a shared lexicon.

It is immediately apparent that the 'language of light' seems to be too closely married to his own experimental sense of faith to be a mere device, employed in the endless polemical adventures of the eighteenth century. But there is some minimal inferential evidence that Toplady attempted to work out a more nuanced application of this metaphor: in Petitionary Hymn No. XXXIII, in verse 4 we encounter the following lines:

> Are we not, without thy Light,
> Darken'd with Egyptian Night?
> Light of Light, thy Pow'r exert,
> Lighten each benighted Heart![52]

Here, he seemed to be affirming the sheer futility of other forms of 'enlightenment' which excluded the supernatural activity of the enlightening God of the Christian faith. The night that

[52] Toplady, *Hymns and Sacred Poems,* p. 37.

darkens was here of a very specific kind - *Egyptian* night, hardly an incidental reference, since it combined allusions to the Exodus[53] with the enlightened fascination with the Orient, and the rehabilitation of Islam under the aegis of Henri de Boulainvilliers' apologetic biography of Muhammad (1730), which subsequently influenced Voltaire and Edward Gibbon.[54] Edelstein comments that the Jacobins boosted the authority of their political agenda by leveraging Egyptian symbols and gods.[55] Reimarus praised Mohammed's rationalist credentials,[56] and the Enlightenment period saw a resurgence of interest in Egyptology, following Vitaliano Donati's archaeological expedition in search of antiquities (1759-62).[57]

It appears that Toplady deployed the enlightening metaphor more explicitly within his poetical writings. This may be because the very nature of poetical composition lent itself more to the use of allusion as a device, and the more creative mode of expression facilitated the freer linkage of ideas. There was also the wider British tradition of a fruitful Christian involvement in poetry (Milton, Bunyan, Herbert, Cowper, Wesley, Doddridge, Watts etc) - Toplady clearly saw himself as part of that cultural stream where the medium quite naturally lent itself to worship and devotional expression.[58] Given the spectrum of theological and philosophical backgrounds represented by his peer group, that is at least suggestive that the 'language of light' was a device that equipped him to move back and forth between traditional and more progressive Enlightenment foci.

Otherwise, notwithstanding Toplady's tendency towards intemperate expression (especially when provoked), he was rigorous in sustaining an approach which was resolutely historical and theological. He seems to have had such confidence in the merits of his scholasticism, that he did

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[53] Exodus 10: 21-29. 'Egyptian Night' is one where a providential God operates within the material world, even when humans are deprived of light.
[54] Ibn Warraq, *Defending the West, A Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2007), pp. 35-6.
[55] Edelstein, *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy*, p. 103.
[56] Robertson, *The Enlightenment,* p. 638.
[57] Angela Scattolin Morecroft, *The Enlightenment Rediscovery of Egyptology: Vitaliano Donato's Egyptian Expedition, 1759-62* (London: Routledge, 2019).
[58] Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady*, p. 156ff.

not feel the need to invoke other rhetorical tools in the service of his apologetic. A third valid explanation is that, whilst Toplady did understand himself to be engaging within an environment where 'enlightening influences' were operative, he regarded the primary problem as a *theological* one, for which he intentionally deployed theological tools in response. However, it seems that he also took steps to deploy this theme of enlightenment tactically, as is evident within his first serious publication, the translation of Zanchius' *Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*.

It may safely be assumed that the bulk of this key work is intended at least as a straightforward translation from Zanchius' original Latin, leaving the twelve pages of Preface explicitly as Toplady's own words. Here, he commended the strength of the original, 'from beginning to end, a regular chain of solid argument', confirmed by 'some of the greatest lights that ever shone in the Christian church' (referring to Augustine, Luther, Bucer Melanchthon).[59] This deploys 'enlightened' terminology in a theological context, and it was also an oblique reference to *la Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*, initiated in 1687 with the confrontation between Charles Perrault (Modern) and Nicolas Boileau (Ancient), an argument which flared up again from 1714-16.[60] The quarrel was a watershed moment, highlighting the tension between the 'new' *esprit philosophie*, with all that this entailed, and the accumulated wisdom of the ancients (mostly pagan writers). Edelstein supplies an indication of how Diderot and D'Alembert set about resolving this 'quarrel', when indexing their citations and authorities within the *Encylopédie*. The 'Top Thirty' authorities listed in decreasing order of frequency of citation do (only) include St. Paul and Augustine as Christian sources, but these are utterly overwhelmed by citations from Pliny, Ptolemy, Cicero, Aristotle, Virgil, Hippocrates, Homer, Horace, Plato, Ovid as well as 'moderns' such as Galileo, Newton and Descartes.[61] It was as if both Renaissance and Reformation had been wholly

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[59] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. v.
[60] Helena Taylor, 'État Présent, The Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns', *French Studies*, Vol. LXXIV, No. 4 (2020), 605-20.
[61] Edelstein, *The Enlightenment, A Genealogy*, p. 50.

eclipsed and bypassed by the new light, an omission that Toplady was setting out to correct in his preface, pivoting from ancient to modern, as well as simultaneously highlighting the value of Zanchius as a scholastic theologian. The same approach underpinned his monumental *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England*, proving that Toplady could out-do the *philosophes* when marrying ancient to modern. Perhaps as importantly, the association of the 'enlightenment' metaphor with Reformed Scholasticism provided a powerful riposte to the interminably anti-scholastic focus of the *philosophes*.[62]

There is more here of a similar vein. Toplady deployed the metaphor of 'Revelation holding the lamp' to truth and culture, suggesting the superiority of an independent, external source of light over the subjective insight derived from human reason alone.[63] Lest we conclude that he was denigrating human reason, he went on to state that 'Reason and revelation are perfect unisons, in assuring us, that God is the Supreme, Independent *First Cause*; of Whom, all *secondary* and *inferior causes* are no more than *effects*.'[64] When it comes to understanding our world and circumstances, Toplady argued that 'Providence neither acts *vaguely* and *at random*, like a blind archer, who shoots uncertainly in the dark',[65] but he was not at all complacent about the extent of his own insights, noting (realistically) that 'I am in some measure enlightened'.[66] To be sure, he was aware of 'enlightened' terminology and understood why it was important and why it was being used, but his own adoption of it was characterised by restraint and subtlety, providing indirect referencing in a work that was otherwise relentlessly theological. In this focus, Toplady was sharing the approach adopted by John Erskine (1721-1803), especially in his *Theological Dissertations* (1751ff). Jonathan Yeager documents the careful path that Erskine plotted through

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[62] Edelstein, *The Enlightenment, A Genealogy*, pp. 28, 29, 33, 81, 97
[63] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. viii.
[64] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. x.
[65] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. xi.
[66] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. xiv.

the demands of rationality whilst also faithfully applying Calvinistic orthodoxy.[67] Furthermore, Erskine's reluctance to venture into printed polemic was paralleled in the need for Gill's encouragement prior to to the publication of Toplady's Zanchius translation.[68]

Toplady, Whig Politics & Secularism

The late eighteenth century was a melting-pot of civic ideas, as much for Britain as for the rest of Europe, where the age-old dynamic between Church and State was still being navigated with great caution, even whilst Latitudinarianism sought to flatten out the theological contours of faith, in the interest of accessibility.[69] George III, greatly exercised at the end of the first twelve months of revolution in America, appointed a day for a 'General Fast'. The King 'disliked and distrusted eighteenth century radicals' and, more to the point, was a devout Anglican who still believed that God intervened in the material world and its events.[70] A national day of prayer and fasting was called for on 13 December 1776 and John Bullion tells us that few of the clergy deviated from unswerving support of a military solution. Accordingly, in churches through Britain, prayers were given for the defeat of the unjust rebellion and victory for the British forces. Sermons delivered on the day subsequently found their way into pamphlets: Richard Hurd, Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry clearly interpreted the Revolution as a sign of divine punishment on the nation.[71] Richard De Courcy, vicar of St. Alkmond's in Shrewsbury bemoaned America's decline from prosperity, opulence and grandeur into rebellion and anarchy, and indulged in a little premature triumphalism.[72]

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[67] Yeager, *Enlightened Evangelicalism*, pp. 89, 90, 98, 99.
[68] Yeager, *Enlightened Evangelicalism,* p. 96.
[69] Martin Fitzpatrick, 'Latitudinarianism at the parting of the ways', in Walsh, Haydon and Taylor (eds), *The Church of England c. 1689-c.1833*, p. 211.
[70] John L. Bullion, 'The "Ancien Regime" and the Modernising State: George III and the American Revolution', *Anglican and Episcopal History*, vol. 68, no. 1 (March 1999), 67-84.
[71] Richard Hurd, *A Sermon Preached Before The Right Honourable The House of Lords in the Abbey Church of Westminster on Friday, December 13, 1776* (London: T. Cadell, 1776).
[72] Richard De Courcy, *National Troubles a Proper Ground for National Humiliation, Two Sermons on ii Chronicles XX. 3, 4* (Shrewsbury: T. Wood, 1776), pp. 9, 11.

Indeed, on the very same day, General Charles Lee of the rebel forces was captured by the British 16th Dragoons.

Toplady also ventured into this territory, preaching a sermon (on Philippians 4: 5) entitled *Moral and Political Moderation Recommended* at St. Mildred's in the Poultry, London. Later, in 1795, this was published posthumously in pamphlet form, wherein the editor's preface refers quite specifically to 'the present agitated state of Europe'.[73] At no point did Toplady refer directly to the Americas or to the Revolution in his text, indeed he took great care to avoid the kinds of patriotic platitude which came so easily to many clerics at the time. Bullion tells us that from 1776 through to 1779, 'Anglicans prayed and worked for the defeat of men who were rebelling against the king and Parliament and in the process were opposing that proper subordination and lawful government the church participated in creating and sanctioned by its words and deeds.'[74] The surprise is that Toplady, the devout Anglican, not only did not follow this pattern, but rather went out of his way to dissent from it. In his opening paragraph, he referred to the 'manifest impropriety of a Christian minister's taking too deep and too acrimonious a part, in matters of merely civil concern.'[75] In fact, he appeared to hold profound reservations about the capacity of clerics to contribute anything meaningful on such topics: 'Few men, indeed, have been more prone to dabble in politics, than some divines. And, it must be added, that, in general, few men have acquitted themselves more lamely, upon that subject, than those revered daubers with untempered mortar. For one Dean Tucker, who draws a sensible pen on the occasion, an hundred ignorant and mercenary scribblers emerge from their concealments, to darken counsel by words without knowledge.' This was a well-aimed critique of the kind of vacuous political utterances which form a definable clerical genre, and it is significant that Toplady highly regarded Josiah Tucker (1713-99) who, in his *Four Tracts*

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[73] Augustus Toplady, *Moral and Political Moderation Recommended* (London: T. Chapman, 1795).
[74] Bullion, 'The "Ancien Regime" and the Modernising State',72.
[75] Toplady, *Moral and Political Moderation Recommended*, p. 5.

provided 'the first closely-reasoned argument for American Independence'[76] Indeed, Salim Rashid asserts that not only had Tucker 'analysed the American conflict more accurately than his contemporaries', but that his proposals actually predated those of Thomas Paine.

This being the case, Toplady's sobering message was that the clergy had better avoid meddling in politics unless they were as well informed as Tucker - and he was a distinct outlier, largely unappreciated at the time. In fact, it is notable that Toplady's sermon on this auspicious national day avoided two opposing ends of the secularising spectrum: (a) where the 'church' simply becomes a mouthpiece for the state, or (b) where the clergy begin to operate as a kind of dissenting political opposition, implicitly acknowledging the primacy of political secularity. His differentiation was in fact explicit: 'On the one hand, we are to sound the trumpet, not of secular, but of spiritual alarm: And, on the other, to proclaim unto them that mourn, and to them that believe in Zion, "The joyful news of sin forgiv'n, of hell subdu'd, and peace with heav'n."'[77] Lest he be misinterpreted, Toplady affirmed his commitment to the 'constitution of my country', his Royalist loyalties, and his endorsement of Britain's system of 'qualified liberty' which he deemed composed of both civil and religious liberty.[78] But his real focus was on applying his text to the social ills which afflicted both nation and church: lust, unbelief, insensibility, envy, profaneness, avarice, discontent, impiety and impenitency.[79] There is something *Hogarthian* in this listing, redolent of 'A Harlot's Progress' (1732) or 'The Rake's Progress' (1733), and it feels as if Toplady was alluding to a perspective about which some kind of popular consensus had coalesced around morality plays and novels (Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, 1742).[80] Each sin was listed in order, alongside a contrapuntal allusion to the impact of the practical effects of faith, and then he stated, 'And, may

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[76] Salim Rashid, '"He Startled … As If He Saw a Spectre": Tucker's Proposal for American Independence', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 43, no. 3 (July-September 1982), 439.

[77] Toplady, *Moral and Political Moderation Recommended*, p. 7.

[78] Toplady commends his audience to read the, (i) Magna Charta, (ii) Petition of Right, (iii) Bill of Rights, and (iv) Coronation Oath. Copies of all four documents are included as an Appendix within this publication.

[79] Toplady, *Moral and Political Moderation Recommended*, pp. 20-23.

[80] Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People*, pp. 125-8.

such of us, as are awakened, by grace, to the experimental knowledge, love, and imitation of Christ, be led, farther, and deeper, into acquaintance with God, and communion with his blessed Spirit.'[81] The stance taken by Toplady here was subtle and significant. Firstly, he felt he had something better to offer than Hogarth: Langford says about the moralising artist, 'Hogarth had no desire to spoil his market by making his satire too pointed. Nor did he have any very constructive view to offer. The public were left to deplore, and to buy.'[82] Rather than the cynical pragmatism of the marketplace, Toplady drew his reader back to the worldview of Philippians IV.

Secondly, he avoided the temptation of a sellout, where religion became commoditised as the means of baptising a specifically secular endeavour. Thirdly, he refrained from treating the causes of strife or warfare as sociological (and therefore secular) factors, which might in turn be remedied by secular measures. His diagnosis identified them clearly as spiritual, and therefore amenable to a specifically Christian solution. Fourthly, he set the bar higher than did the *philosophes*: the population needed to be 'awakened', not merely 'enlightened'. And fifthly, his forensic diagnosis of social conditions enabled him to apply his biblical text with relevance and specificity, rather than simply wrench a text out of context to fit the occasion.

Within the two-volume collected *Works*, Walter Row included a selection of seventy-eight letters, all written by Toplady. In aggregate, they paint the picture of a socially-adept individual, clearly at ease with a wide range respected acquaintances (Selina, Countess of Huntingdon; Ambrose Serle; Richard Hill; John Ryland, Jr.; Joseph Priestley, amongst others). Included here are seven lively letters to the historian and socialite, Catherine Macaulay, in which Toplady touched on history, whig politics, the contemporary culture and even managed to include a joke about predestination.[83] Several qualities emerge from this correspondence. Firstly, the evidence of

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[81] Toplady, *Moral and Political Moderation Recommended*, p. 23.
[82] Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People*, p. 126.
[83] Toplady, 'Letter XX1' in *Works*, pp. 844-5.

gentility and lightness of touch, the display of Enlightenment sensibilities is a persuasive foil to Ryle's portrait of a dour, friendless individual. Secondly, he demonstrated an ability to persist in a disagreement (over the moral character of Oliver Cromwell, of whom Mrs Macaulay disapproved with some energy) without for one moment abandoning his courteous and diffident framing of the issue.[84] This provides a notable contrast to the interactions with Wesley. Thirdly, there was an explicit conversation going on about politics, one in which he was predisposed to defer to Mrs Macaulay's 'sublimely virtuous' political theory, and where he recorded a more sustained engagement on the topic of a three-volume publication, entitled *Political Disquisitions*, published in 1774 by the Whig politician, James Burgh. It is apparent that Burgh had adopted a determinedly Arminian view of God's inability to override human moral evil, leading Toplady to conclude to Mrs Macaulay that, '…your friend Burgh is much better qualified for political disquisitions than either for theological or for metaphysical ones.'[85] It is not as if Toplady had no political convictions: amongst other things, he shared a Whiggish sympathy for the American colonialists with another key Enlightenment evangelical, John Erskine.[86] But he held these views with a lightness that contrasts markedly with his theological dogmatism.

It should be observed that these qualities of interaction are not unique to his exchanges with Mrs Macaulay, although they are most conspicuous within the context of their warm relationship. In a letter dated January 20, 1778, written to Joseph Priestley, he pressed his arguments against the scientist's materialistic philosophy with some vigour, whilst remaining consistently courteous and appreciative of the his published work (notably, his *Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit*, 1777). The depth of Toplady's studies is evident here, not least in the way he counterbalanced George Berkeley's arguments for immaterialism.[87]

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[84] Toplady, 'Letter XX1, Letter XXII, Letter XXX' in *Works*, pp. 844, 845, 851.
[85] Toplady, 'Letter XL1' in *Works*, p. 857.
[86] Yeager, *Enlightened Evangelicalism,* p. 153.
[87] Toplady, 'Letter LXXV' in *Works*, p. 880.

This absence of rancour in the midst of indications of dissent runs alongside gentle observations about the contemporary culture: 'As we live at a period when to be in debt, and to be in fashion, are almost inseparable ideas…'[88] Langford records economic conditions where rising demands for produce were accompanied by rising commodity prices, mobs attacking mills and farmhouses, increasingly straitened circumstances for those on 'settled stipends' and an unresponsive government when real wages were on the decline.[89] Toplady's primary focus may have been theological, but there is no evidence here of a disconnect from the Enlightenment culture around him. His correspondence shows him transitioning easily between the two worlds.

An Enlightened Stance?

If some of the retrospective models of the Enlightenment are heavily dependent upon a conflict model, it is worth remembering that Toplady's own story has been framed in this way.[90] Across the Channel, the initiative by André-François Le Breton to bring out a (French) translation of Chambers' *Cyclopaedia* (1728), published in Britain, embodied that culture of conflict. The project swiftly came under Diderot's editorship, assisted by d'Alembert, who borrowed the genealogical tree of knowledge from Bacon's *De dignitate et augmentis scientiarum* (1624). However, d'Alembert went well beyond borrowing: the scheme was adapted with reference to Lockean thought, and Bacon's prominent ecclesiastical history disappeared entirely, save the label. Contrastingly, according to Robertson, a new natural history section with many subdivisions assumed a position of prominence. The significance of this is not accidental: 'With religion thus out of the way, a large area is covered by the study of man, and an even larger one by the study of nature, both of which are branches of philosophy. Thus "theology is effectively dechristianized".

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[88] Toplady, 'Letter XXX' in *Works*, p. 850.
[89] Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People*, pp. 438, 444, 448, 450, 452, 456.
[90] Lawton, *Within the Rock of Ages,* p. 98.

At the very least, theology's claims to intellectual respectability are put in doubt.'[91] The *Encyclopédie* represented the weaponisation of knowledge against the perceived evils of religion and superstition, reflecting the French emphasis on anti-clericalism. In the minds of the *philosophes* at least there was a genuine ideological battle to be fought.

Yet, as Carl Becker demonstrated, if there was such an ideological battle between rationalism and superstition, it was, apparently, defined by theological presuppositions.[92] In this, Sorkin is fully in agreement: 'Contrary to the secular master narrative, the Enlightenment was not only compatible with religious belief but conducive to it.'[93] Indeed, Hazard argues that Deism was often a more palatable option for would-be atheists.[94] Sorkin's case-studies, however (William Warburton, Jacob Vernet, Siegmund Jacob Baumgarten, Moses Mendelssohn, Joseph Valentin Eybel and Adrien Lamourette), take us in the direction of a more radical, revisionist approach to theology, rather than the invoking of a (then) derided scholasticism that Toplady deployed within his polemic. J. C. D. Clark argues that '…eighteenth-century Anglophone debates were centrally and independently about the nature of "God", not about the working out of some secularising alternative concept…' but that the divine nature was prone to a form of generic redefinition, becoming quite unlike Toplady's scholastic framing of the divine attributes.[95]

Only a few years after Toplady's death, the distinctive German Lutheran thinker, Johann Georg Hamann would be interacting incisively with Mendelssohn's 'implicit atheism', in recognition that the radicalism of the religious Enlightenment could so easily undermine itself.[96] There would be a push-back against these prominent Enlightenment themes, and it is of course feasible that we should

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[91] Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, p. 415.

[92] Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth century Philosophers*, pp. 63, 66-67.

[93] Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, p.3.

[94] Hazard, *The Crisis of the European Mind*, p. 256.

[95] J. C. D. Clark, '"God" and "the Enlightenment", The Divine Attributes and the Question of Categories in British Discourse', in William J. Bulman and Robert G. Ingram (eds), *God in the Enlightenment*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 215, 221, 226.

[96] Betz, *After Enlightenment*, p. 261.

regard Toplady as an articulator of the 'counter-Enlightenment', a term coined by Isaiah Berlin to describe a loose grouping of thinkers who 'denied the supremacy of reason and pleaded for the importance of feeling; who were interested not in universal civilisation, but in local and particular cultures; who thought that polished modern culture suppressed the creative energies of primitive ages and of uneducated peoples.'[97] It may be notable that Toplady's brief window of contribution predates the work of those earlier thinkers more normally associated with that movement (Rousseau, de Maistre, Burke, von Schelling, de Bonald, Herder, Hamann and Jacobi), although William R. Everdell argues that we should '…relax the cultural boundaries as well as the chronological' when seeking to understand both the Enlightenment and counter-Enlightenment 'as terms that apply to movements that arise repeatedly in the history of thought.'[98] Toplady's chronological positioning isn't the only defining parameter of note: in fact, there is minimal correlation between his approach and that of the counter-*philosophes*. Darrin McMahon observes that 'opposition to the *philosophes* did not begin until 1778', the year of Toplady's death.[99] This suggests that he was either an advanced pioneer or an anomaly when compared to this intellectual reaction, but given his *a priori* commitment to Reformed scholasticism, the latter seems more probable: Toplady was not to be defined *by* the Enlightenment but rather by his invocation of this historic legacy of the Reformation. In any case, McMahon describes the character of the early responses of the anti-*philosophes* in a way that shows the disconnect to Toplady's commitment to the scholastic approach: 'Spanning a range of genre and form, the writing of this period tended to be simplistic and reductive, consciously avoiding the detailed theological arguments of formal Christian apologies and directing itself, on the whole, to a lay audience.'[100] Given that prominent

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[97] Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, p. 777.
[98] William R. Everdell, *The Evangelical Counter-Enlightenment, From Ecstasy to Fundamentalism in Christianity, Judaism, and Islam in the 18th Century*, (Boston, MA: Boston Studies in Philosophy, Religion and Public Life, 2022), p. ix).
[99] Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment, The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 19.
[100] McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment, The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity*, p. 27.

evangelicals such as Whitefield, Wesley and Edwards were also making their contributions prior to, and quite contrary to this ethos, and given Toplady's close associations with them, it seems reasonable to view him as pursuing a project which is not wholly defined by the counter-Enlightenment response.

Brad Gregory has focused on the lack of a coherent Enlightenment discourse about God.[101] That is to say, the more traditional, binary and polarising views of Enlightenment thought tend to ignore not only the disparity of the prevailing epistemologies at the time, but also the pivotal role that Christian theology had to play in even defining the terms of reference.[102] D'Alembert may have 'adapted' Baconian epistemology with a pair of scissors, but that did not in itself produce a new model of understanding created, as it were, *ex nihilo*. Beiser also demonstrates that the 'freethinking' controversy which Toland initiated in 1696 when he published his work of scepticism, *Christianity Not Mysterious,* was wholly dependent upon the Protestant Reformation, which had provided the intellectual foundations for his rationalism.[103]

Gregory's commentary is pertinent to the assessment of Toplady's engagement with some variants of Enlightenment scepticism. Alluding to the proliferation of conflicting dogmatic stances arising throughout the Reformation period, he concludes that 'its deadlocked theological controversies forced the Enlightenment discourse about God in a rationalist and natural-theological direction for any theorist who sought to offer a persuasive *supra-confessional* view about God.'[104] That is, instead of God revealed as the metaphysically transcendent being represented by orthodox Christian theology, he became redefined as merely one of a pantheon of hypothetical forces *within*

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[101] Brad Gregory, 'The Reformation Origins of the Enlightenment's God', in Bulman and Ingram (eds.) *God in the Enlightenment*, p. 202.

[102] Alan Kors, *Atheism in France*, *1650-1729: Volume I - The Orthodox Sources of Disbelief* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), p.103.

[103] Beiser, *The Sovereignty of Reason*, pp. 259, 262.

[104] Gregory, 'The Reformation Origins of the Enlightenment's God', p. 205.

the material universe.[105] This led to the erroneous notion that because God was essentially made of the same stuff as everything else, then he could necessarily become an object upon which the new Enlightened empirical tools could operate. Such an idea led inexorably, via Spinoza's naturalistic determinism,[106] to David Hume's argument from nature: 'A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined.'[107] From this perspective, God becomes a prisoner of his own created reality, and is therefore subject to a thousand cumulative edits, as our perceptions of the material world inevitably undergo change over time.

This systemic philosophical shift partly explains why Toplady launched his main, polemical publishing strategy with the translation of Zanchius' *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*. Firstly, as Edelstein confirms, the exponents of the new rationalism saw themselves as dispelling the 'darkness of scholasticism', a re-imagining of intellectual activity which evolved through Bacon, Descartes and others.[108] William J. Bulman details how the education of the Anglican, Lancelot Addison (1632-1703) might have started out with influences such as Jean Calvin and Girolamo Zanchi, but very swiftly was overtaken by 'an eclectic, critical form of late humanist erudition'. He confirms that 'Oxford, Cambridge and many of their counterparts on the continent promoted the intellectual innovations of the Enlightenment far more than they inhibited or opposed them.'[109] By contrast, Toplady's university education occurred at Trinity College, Dublin, an environment where, despite the inroads made by Baconianism, and then Cartesianism and finally

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[105] Alan Kors, *Epicureans and Atheists in France, 1650-1729* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 140-143.
[106] Steven Nadler, *A Book Forged in Hell, Spinoza's Scandalous Treatise and the Birth of the Secular Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), pp. 14-15.
[107] David Hume, 'An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, Section X "Of Miracles"' in *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*, (Dublin: J. Williams, 1779), pp. 122-3.
[108] Edelstein, *The Enlightenment, a Genealogy*, pp. 23, 28, 29.
[109] Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, pp. 29, 30-31.

Lockean empiricism, Michael Brown confirms that lingering scholastic influences still played out within the General Synod, the bardic community and the academic hierarchy within Trinity College.[110] This would suggest that Toplady experienced a broader range of formative intellectual influences than those which shaped the backgrounds of Addison, Erskine and Philip Doddridge.[111] Indeed, Liam Chambers argues that Ireland was an effective exporter of scholasticism across European universities, during the early to mid-eighteenth century. Neither scholasticism nor Cartesianism were monolithic at that time.[112] Toplady, as a lively young scholar, was exposed to all the main permutations and would, especially, have had ample opportunity to reflect upon the variant that underpinned the Established Church that he dedicated himself to serve.

Beiser, however, is clear that Locke's aim was both to defend experimental philosophy and attack scholasticism.[113] This was part of a longer-term trend: Roy Porter documents the delights of Cartesianism for those academics who wished to celebrate reason and free-will at the expense of scholasticism and Calvinism.[114] Thus, Toplady's translation and publication of a work of scholastic theology whilst simultaneously emphasising the place of reason and experience may reasonably be seen as a clear statement of intent.[115] Secondly, this engaged, head-on, with the key Enlightenment theme of determinism, but in the process reinstated a personal Creator-God at the heart of the question, rather than the blind forces much beloved of the modern Atomists, who drew heavily on the ideas of Democritus and Epicurus, channeled via Spinoza and Hobbes.[116] Spinoza had

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[110] Michael Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2016), pp. 51, 124, 126, 216.

[111] Strivens, *Philip Doddridge and the Shaping of Evangelical Dissent*, pp. 68-9, 70, 71.

[112] Liam Chambers, 'Irish Catholics and Aristotelian Scholastic philosophy in early modern France, c. 1600-c.1750' in McEvoy, J., and Dunne, M., (eds), *The Irish Contribution to European Scholastic Thought* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), pp. 212-30

[113] Beiser, *The Sovereignty of Reason*, p. 256.

[114] Roy Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason, How the Enlightenment Transformed the Way We See Our Bodies and Souls* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), pp. 83, 84.

[115] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, pp. ix, x.

[116] Alan Kors, *Naturalism and Unbelief in France, 1650-1729* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 77-78.

prompted a great deal of 'materialist speculation', which was taken up and controversially promoted by Julien Offray de La Mettrie in his most famous work, *L'Homme Machine* ('Man a Machine'), published in 1747.[117] Montesquieu published *Spirit of the Laws* (1749) which argued that human behaviours were determined by physiological, psychological, environmental and historical factors, consistent with the 'organic machine' model espoused by La Mettrie.[118] 'Predestination is analogous to the mind and intention', stated Toplady, in opposition to a reframed universe, governed by mindless forces, without *telos*.[119] This particular emphasis emerges again in his 1772 response to Wesley, *More Work for Mr. John Wesley*: 'Here, perhaps, the unblushing Mr. Wesley may ask, "Are, the Elect, then, mere *Machines*?" I answer, No. They are made *willing* to obey, *in the Day of God's Power*. And, I believe, nobody ever yet heard of a *willing Machine*.'[120] Thus, the universe in general, and people in specific could not be reduced to a piece of complex clockwork, like an astrolabe or orrery.[121]

Thirdly, in presenting such a distinctively Calvinistic view of God and his purposes, Toplady had effectively rescued him from the limitations of rationalistic redefinition. In this sense, the reaffirmation of historic Reformed doctrine parallels *la Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*, providing a very specific model for direct and confident engagement. This methodology was actually implicit in his preface where Toplady argued 'If the universe has a *Maker*, it must have a *Governor*: and, if it has a Governor, his will and providence must extend to all things, without exception. For my own part, I can discern no medium between absolute Predestination, and blank Atheism.'[122] In this (theological) model, the Creator sits outside of the created order, which is

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[117] Darrin M. McMahon, 'Pursuing an Enlightened Gospel', in Fitzpatrick, Jones, Knellwolf and McCalman (eds), *The Enlightenment World*, pp. 170-2.
[118] Jane Rendall, 'Feminizing the Enlightenment', in Fitzpatrick, Jones, Knellwolf and McCalman (eds), *The Enlightenment World*, pp. 256-8.
[119] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. x.
[120] Toplady, *More Work for Mr. John Wesley* (London: James Mathews, 1772), pp. 22-23.
[121] Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 284-286.
[122] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. ix.

subject to him - rather than the inverted order conjured by the new models of rationalism. Toplady had clearly recognised that this new, naturalistic worldview could easily translate to atheism. There was another clear indication encapsulated by his approach: commencing a publication strategy with a scholastic theologian (Zanchius), combined with his broader habit of careful referencing back to the Patristics, demonstrated that Toplady was playing the *Philosophes* at their own game, matching their rigour, demonstrating continuity with the past, whilst simultaneously rehabilitating the very authorities the rationalists were sidelining.

As has already been demonstrated, Toplady's decision to publish this translation of Zanchius' writings was prompted primarily by a perceived theological challenge within the Established Church, also taking root within nascent evangelicalism. It was therefore a theological work, addressing a theological issue, so it should not be expected that it would take the form of an apologetic critique of the new epistemology. Indeed, he stated that 'Never was a publication of this kind more *seasonable* than at present. Arminianism is the grand religious evil of this age and country.'[123] In regard to the relationship between Arminianism and atheism, Toplady was adhering to the logic crafted some seventy-four years earlier by John Edwards of Cambridge.[124] If he did not primarily have Humean empiricism in his sights, it was either because he viewed the decline of Calvinism as the priority, or because he drew a correlation between the two phenomena. The evidence supports the latter view. In defending his own stress on predestination, Toplady argued 'But does not this doctrine tend to the establishment of fatality? Supposing it even did, were it not better to be a christian fatalist, than to avow a set of loose, Arminian principles, which, if pushed to their full extent, will inevitably terminate in the rankest atheism? For, without predestination, there can be no providence; and, without providence, no God.'[125] Toplady saw that the Arminian train

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[123] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. vi.
[124] Griesel, *Retaining the Old Episcopal Divinity*, pp. 22-23, 31, 58.
[125] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. xiii.

might take a different, metaphysically distinct route, but it still ended at the same terminus as Hume.

But that was not the limit of his focus. Toplady supplied a theological diagnostic of the human condition, dependent upon the divine decrees, rather than on determinism,[126] which was the direct antithesis of Rousseau's 'noble savage' dictum.[127] He included an extended rumination on the evidential attributes of the Christian faith,[128] which becomes more significant in the light of Gregory's comment that 'the most striking thing about the Enlightenment discourse of God is its aversion to revelation and its allergy to testimony as a source of knowledge.'[129] Such an emphasis would, it seems, tend to constrain the scope and power of epistemology, so Toplady took steps to recalibrate the discourse, and actually repeated his emphasis on experimental religion in order to make his point.

Of course, throughout this work it is almost impossible to discern where Zanchius left off and Toplady, the polemicist, took over, but there were certain phrases which were more redolent of the translator's style, than of the original scholastic author. One such may be located later in the treatment, when he cited Augustine, arguing against the Pelagians of his day, who taught that God's grace was not free, but something to be deserved by human merit. To this, Toplady responded, 'Now, the doctrine of predestination batters down this delusive Babel of free-will and merit.'[130] This seems such a characteristically incisive kind of comment, that it demands attention because, whilst we might anticipate the use of the word 'babble', Toplady intentionally capitalises the biblical place-name because he was making a particular kind of point.[131] Peter Harrison lists Toplady's antecedents (Bacon, Hobbes, Toland, Bishop Wilkins) whose preoccupation with the

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[126] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. 52.
[127] Pagden, *The Enlightenment and why it still matters*, p. 157.
[128] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, pp. 65-66 & 105-106.
[129] Gregory, 'The Reformation Origins of the Enlightenment's God', p. 204.
[130] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. 97.
[131] Genesis 11:1-9.

theoretical linguistic origins of religion was certainly not disconnected from what they perceived to be the essential metaphysical content of belief itself.[132]

The question of the origin of languages was something that exercised a number of Enlightenment thinkers, including Rousseau, in his *Essai sur d'origine des langues*.[133] He proposed that the origin of language must have been solely a product of natural phenomena, stating that, 'speech, being the first social institution, must owe its form only to natural causes'.[134] But then, almost immediately, Rousseau adjusted his own stance, stating that 'speech distinguishes man among the animals', which potentially raised internal inconsistencies in this new discipline of philology. Other Enlightenment thinkers with a keen interest in philology included Leibnitz, Herder, Goethe, Schleiermacher and Friedrich August Wolf. Reimarus shared the same interest, except his orientation lay more in the direction of developing a new, naturalised kind of theology, carefully filleted of its supernatural components, preparing the way for David Strauss's *Life of Jesus* (1835-6). Wolf is considered the 'founder of modern philology', but all these thinkers were driven by a commitment to both textual analysis and skepticism when it came to the supernatural.

Toplady's response to this Enlightenment trend (which he associated with the heterodox mix of 'free-will and merit') was to invoke the paradigm of Babel, in lampooning the rootless, self-contradictory doctrinal novelties (Semi-Pelagianism and Arminianism) which he viewed as the byproducts of the theological assimilation of particular Enlightenment methodologies and presuppositions.[135] His verdict was clear: the outcome of these particular rationalistic approaches is theological confusion, which was the core message of the Babel narrative.[136] The *philosophes* may have been preoccupied with naturalistic speculation about the origin of languages, but Toplady's

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[132] Peter Harrison, *'Religion' and the religions in the English Enlightenment*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 156.
[133] Published posthumously in 1781.
[134] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essai sur d'origine des langues* (1781) (Paris: Galimard, 1990), p. 57.
[135] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, pp. 19, 23, 48, 72.
[136] Genesis 11: 1-9.

explanation appears intentionally *enlightened*: '*Words* are only so far valuable, as they are the vehicles of *meaning*. And meaning, or *ideas*, derive *their* whole value from their having some foundation in *reason, reality* and *fact*.'[137] The 'Republic of Letters' may have become a kind of self-identification for the intellectual community of Enlightenment scholars, thinkers and writers, but Toplady clearly saw the need to emphasise the Christian equivalent, which facilitated meaningful dialogue across confessional and philosophical lines.[138] In his view, the 'Babel' of the new rationalism failed to deliver the goods.

This may have been a work of theology, but Toplady did not allow his reader to conclude that he was giving any ground to this new way of thinking. Indeed, in the same preface he made his theological contention crystal clear, in explicitly Enlightenment terms: 'Reason and revelation are perfect unisons, in assuring us, That God is the Supreme, Independent *First Cause*; of Whom, all *secondary* and *inferior causes* are no more than the *effects*. Else, proper originality and absolute wisdom, unlimited supremacy, and almighty power, cease to be attributes of Deity.'[139] These brief extracts, drawn primarily from one single volume, indicate some subtlety in deploying theology as a practical and effective tool to answer the contemporary challenges raised by aspects of Enlightened thinking. This, after all, was precisely the approach advocated by that towering influence, Turretin: 'Is theology theoretical or practical?… II. The question is necessary not only for the understanding of the true nature of theology, but also on account of the controversies of this time; especially with the Socinians and Remonstrants…V. The arguments which prove that theology is either theoretical or practical (if they are understood exclusively of one or the other) fail and restrict it too much… Theology is not of a simple kind…as physics and ethics in philosophy, but of a mixed kind including both relations…'[140]

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[137] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. ix.

[138] Kors, *Naturalism and Unbelief in France, 1650-1729*, pp. 102-3.

[139] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. x.

[140] Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (1688-90 edition), (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1992), pp. 20-21.

The question is: did this reflect a broader and more settled strategy?

Theology, Deployed

A range of models exist for responding to the more specifically sceptical threads within the broader spectrum of Enlightenment thought. The least critical, that of straightforward assimilation, was embodied in Richard Simon's *Histoire critique due Vieux Testament* (1678), which became a foundational text for later attempts to rationalise the supernatural content of Scripture.[141] A more nuanced version of this approach was adopted by William Warburton, known for his stance of 'heroic moderation', both politically and doctrinally. Sorkin concludes that 'Warburton's Moderation was representative of the first fully realised version of the religious Enlightenment. … The religious Enlightenment represented the migration of Collegialism and Arminianism, toleration and reason, science and natural law from the heterodox periphery to the orthodox centre.'[142] Such an approach would surely not have received support from Toplady, although his stance does have some affinity for that of Jonathan Edwards, who also did not recoil from a dialogue with the writings of key Enlightenment thinkers such as Locke, especially in his *A Careful and Strict Enquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions of that Freedom of Will Which is Supposed to be Essential to Moral Agency, Virtue and Vice, Reward and Punishment, Praise and Blame* (1754). Toplady's notions of 'necessity' seem to broadly correlate with Edwards' own thinking on the Determination of the Will (Section II), his definitions of Necessity (Section III) and in the way he distinguishes between natural and moral Necessity (Section IV), albeit with a pronounced nod in the direction of his scholastic roots.[143]

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[141] Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, pp. 65, 100, 409.

[142] Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, p. 65.

[143] Jonathan Edwards, *A Careful and Strict Enquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions of that Freedom of Will Which is Supposed to be Essential to Moral Agency, Virtue and Vice, Reward and Punishment, Praise and Blame* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1979), pp. 5-11. Originally published in 1754, the BoT edition is a facsimile of the first 1834 collected Works of Jonathan Edwards.

At the other end of the spectrum of responses to inconvenient ideas is the admittedly efficient tactic of avoidance. It seems that Toplady did not endorse this approach either, although the evidence available to us is minimal. In his journal entry for 14 December 1767 he wrote in some detail regarding Jean LeClerc's *Ars Critica* (1696), one of a number of publications which were appropriated by Ephraim Chambers for his *Cyclopedia* (1728), and then later found their way into Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*.[144] It is clear from Toplady's comments that he was far from impressed: 'but such as even I, with my little knowledge, can see through the fallacy of, and, to my own satisfaction, at least, refute. Page 125, he does, in fact, deny that Hebrew can be understood at all with certainty.' Towards the end of this piece of analysis, Toplady pertinently concluded 'If so, farewell to all knowledge, not only of the Hebrew, but of every dead language whatever. Even Lexicons and Grammars are not to be trusted. But is not this the very quintessence of scepticism?'[145] There was a clarity of insight here: Toplady perceived that LeClerc's scepticism was ultimately self-defeating, given the *philosophes* appetite for classifying every component of specified human knowledge into their encyclopaedias, 'lexicons and grammars'. A system of enquiry and thought which avoids applying the vaunted tools of skepticism to its own output, is intellectually inconsistent and liable to collapse, according to Toplady. This led him to assert that '…a set of loose, Arminian principles, which, if pushed to their full extent, will inevitably terminate in the rankest atheism.'[146] However, although LeClerc stood within the pantheon of authorities approved by the *philosophes*, that may not have been the sole reason for Toplady's engagement with him. In 1709, LeClerc had published his own, enlarged edition of *The Truth of the Christian Religion* by the Remonstrant, Hugo Grotius (1583-1645). In fact, he ran to three editions of this explicitly Arminian framing of the Christian religion, which was translated into English by John

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[144] Pagden, *The Enlightenment and why it still matters*, p. 346.
[145] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A.B.', in *Works*, p. 5.
[146] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. xiii

Clarke (1682-1757), brother of Samuel, in 1743.[147] The author (LeClerc) represented that critical crossover between Enlightenment scepticism and Arminianism which Toplady had identified as his polemical target.

A similar line of thinking was evident in the 1770 response to Wesley's unsubtle plagiarism of Toplady's translation of Zanchius, entitled *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. JOHN WESLEY: Relative to his pretended ABRIDGEMENT of ZANCHIUS on PREDESTINATION.* Overall, this thirty-page pamphlet had the air of an exercise in poor anger-management, given the ostensibly scurrilous nature of the provocation. Two thirds of the way through the text, Toplady addressed Wesley's 'pretended fear of *Antinomianism*' (according to Wesley an inevitable by-product of Calvinist theology)[148] by drawing a direct analogy with his 'real fear of the *Comet*, which was expected to have appear'd a few Years back', describing this as 'perfectly idle and chimerical'.[149] In fact, the appearance of Halley's Comet in 1759 had given rise to widespread anxiety at the time. Sara Schechner reports that 'John Wesley, the Methodist evangelist, awaited the return with the fear that the comet would "set the earth on fire, and burn it to a coal, if it do not likewise strike it out of its course; in which case, (so far as we can judge,) it must drop down directly into the sun."'[150] Toplady displayed little tolerance for this kind of catastrophism and was swift to dismiss Wesley's expression of a fear of annihilation,[151] simultaneously annulling his fears of Antinomianism as a natural outworking of the Calvinistic theological system.[152] This kind of approach demonstrated a

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[147] Hugo Grotius, *The Truth of the Christian Religion, With Jean Le Clerc's Notes and Additions* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Liberty Fund, 2012), pp xix-xx.

[148] McGonigle, *Sufficient Saving Grace,* p. 167. See also, John Wesley, *Free Grace. A Sermon on Romans VIII: 32* (London: C. Whitfield, 1796), pp. 6, 7, 9.

[149] Toplady, *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley*, p. 21.

[150] Sara Schechner, *Comets, Popular Culture, and the Birth of Modern Cosmology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 195.

[151] John Wesley, *Serious thoughts occasioned by the late earthquake at Lisbon* (London, 1755).

[152] Elsewhere, Toplady had deployed his satire on this topic: 'The Arminians have, of late, made a huge Cry about "*Antinomians! Antinomians!*" From the Abundance of EXPERIENCE, the Mouth is apt to speak. The Modern *Arminians* see so much real *Antinomianism* among THEMSELVES in THEIR OWN Tents; that Antinomianism is become the prædominant Idea, and the favourite Watch-word, of the Party. Because *they* have got the Plague, they think every Body else has.' A. M. Toplady, *Free-Will and Merit Fairly Examined: or, Men not their own Saviors* (London: J. Mathews, 1775), pp. 27-28.

nuanced understanding of the times, as well as a thorough acquaintance with Wesley's own stance on incidental matters that were, nevertheless, indicative of his worldview. Indeed, Schechner goes on to list the participants in what was a thoroughly 'Enlightenment' contretemps, triggered by the coming of Halley's Comet: the French natural philosopher, d'Alembert had helped to inflame public anxieties over the event, by emphasising its destructive power.[153] So also did other thinkers such as Buffon, Maupertuis and De Maillet. It took an intervention by the Cambridge astronomer Roger Long to calm the panic by reminding his audience of the place of Divine Omnipotence, something that Wesley appeared to have forgotten.[154] Long was that quintessential British combination of orthodox churchmanship and a fervent follower of the new science. His stance is encapsulated in a 1728 sermon entitled *The Blessedness of Believing*, and his later astronomical work, notably his *Astronomy in Five Books* (1742).[155]

In fact, this was not the first time Wesley leveraged astronomical phenomena as a persuasive tool. Schechner refers to earlier sermons of 1755 and 1756 where he had mistakenly directed his audience to the imminent return of Halley's Comet in 1758, predicting the end of the world in conflagration, and urging repentance.[156] Toplady's core argument here was clear: the anti-Calvinist polemic in respect of Antinomianism was as alarmist, baseless and fundamentally insincere as the deployment of comet-related catastrophism. There seemed to have been a correlation here between both skeptical and certain religious uses of 'science', and Toplady exemplified a quite different approach. In fact, his coupling of Wesley's twin fears (comet and Antinomianism) was masterful. As one had already proven false, so the other was sure to be. Moreover, the comet-fever was largely a product of naturalistic Enlightenment speculation, and thus (Toplady implied) Wesley's

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[153] Denis Diderot & Jean le Rond d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 28 vols (Paris and Neufchâtel, 1751-72), vol 3 (1753), p. 677.

[154] Schechner, *Comets, Popular Culture, and the Birth of Modern Cosmology*, p. 198.

[155] Lisa Taub, 'Long, Roger' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: ODNB, 2004).

[156] Schechner, *Comets, Popular Culture, and the Birth of Modern Cosmology*, p. 168.

stance did not place him on the side of the angels.[157] It is worth observing that Toplady must have had a thorough grasp of Wesley's anti-Calvinistic polemic, his past comet-related sermons, and existing speculation within a wider spectrum of Enlightenment reflection on this phenomenon, as epitomised by d'Alembert and others, in order to render this line of argument effective. There was also a correlation between such catastrophism and the now discredited Cartesian Cosmology,[158] so Toplady was undoubtedly playing the trump-card of the more modern Newtonian system against Wesley's cosmological fancies.[159]

The very next section in Toplady's (anti-Wesley) polemic supports the view that he was very effectively dissecting Wesley's position, having identified its dependence upon another preoccupation of Enlightenment thinkers.[160] This time, the subject was utopianism, celebrated in Diderot's 1772 exercise in sexual libertinism, the *Supplement to Bougainville's Voyage*, and satirised in Louis-Sébastien Mercier's *L'An 2440*, published in 1771.[161] Mercier's target was the self-defeating stratagems of the utopians, an emphasis adopted by Toplady's highlighting of Wesley's 'hair-brained *Perfectionists*'. Somewhat ungently, Toplady reminded Wesley that 'You formed a Scheme, of collecting as many *perfect* ones as you could, to live together under one Roof. A Number of these Flowers were accordingly transplanted, from some of your Nursery-beds, to the *Hot-house*. And an hot House it soon proved. For, would we believe it? the *sinless* People quarrelled, in a short Time, at so violent a Rate, that you found yourself forced to disband the Select Regiment.'[162]

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[157] Henry D. Rack, 'A Man of Reason and Religion? John Wesley and the Enlightenment', *Wesley and Methodist Studies*, vol. 1 (2009), 3.
[158] Cartesian cosmology was geocentric, mechanistic, lacked an explanation of gravitational force and depended upon the concept of 'vortices' to explain the movement of matter in the universe. For a while it was popular amongst French academics because it was 'anti-Newtonian'. See also Schechner, *Comets, Popular Culture, and the Birth of Modern Cosmology*, pp. 111-2, 148.
[159] Peter Harrison, *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 123.
[160] Toplady, *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley*, p. 23.
[161] Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 304-05, 597-98.
[162] Toplady, *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley*, p. 23.

There is little doubt that Toplady was attacking Wesley's doctrine of sinless perfection, which seemed to attract some unstable personalities, due to which he had been forced to refine his ideas from *Thoughts on Christian Perfection* (1759) to his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (1767). After years of foment over this issue, there had been a climax of sorts in 1762, resulting in a modest schism within the Methodist movement. Two of the main ringleaders opposing Wesley's attempts at moderation were Thomas Maxfield and George Bell, who made ostentatious claims for their state of sanctification, spiritual powers, and believed that, having become infallible and immune to temptation, they were actually exempt from death itself.[163] Maxfield achieved a special status as Wesley's first 'son in the gospel' (itinerant lay preacher) and therefore his excesses were particularly hurtful to Wesley.[164] Bell prophesied the end of the world in 1763 (another connection to comet catastrophism), found himself outside of the fold, and the relationship between Maxfield and Wesley dissolved into an unseemly spat.[165] This led to some confusion within Wesleyan Methodism, and raised broader concerns amongst other evangelicals, including John Newton, that persisted for many years.[166]

Toplady was rather gleefully observing the distinct absence of perfection within this unfolding narrative, although his wording could be interpreted to suggest that Wesleyan Perfectionism had progressed to the form of physical communities. The idea was not entirely without basis: Thomas Spence, brought up a Sandemanian, argued for land nationalisation. A little later, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey were to espouse communitarian schemes.[167] However, whilst such things were a peripheral byproduct of utopian thinking, it seems unlikely that Toplady was seeking to argue that Wesleyan Perfectionism resulted in gathered, physical communities, not least because Methodism was outward-looking, and socially-engaged, especially in relation to abolitionism.[168] In

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[163] McGonigle, *Sufficient Saving Grace*, p. 254.
[164] Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, pp. 82-84.
[165] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, pp. 337-40.
[166] Danker, *Wesley and the Anglicans*, p. 214.
[167] Porter, *Enlightenment*, pp. 459-461.
[168] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, pp. 362, 448-9.

fact, it is therefore almost certain that he had employed this language satirically, in order to portray the self-defeating nature of this version of a key Enlightenment theme. The logic appears to be that whilst Perfectionism and Utopianism were not the same thing, they originated in a similar kind of enlightened idealism, one that Toplady was seeking to debunk much as Mercier had also done.

Toplady's Venture into 'Enlightened' Metaphysics

That Toplady was alive to the challenge of engaging directly with the new metaphysical outcomes emerging from 'enlightened' thinking becomes clear in Walter Row's brief 'Memoire': 'It was his intention, had his health permitted, to employ his pen in endeavouring to refute opinions advanced by Dr. Priestley, in his book, entitled, "Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit". Though the doctor's theological principles and his were as opposite as it were possible to conceive, we cannot help anticipating, that if such an intellectual feast had taken place, from the specimen of correspondence, we should have seen the truest respect given, by Mr. Toplady, to a great genius.'[169] Joseph Priestley had published his new metaphysics in 1777, which advanced his materialist philosophy and, in the process, strongly opposed mind-body dualism and free-will. At this point in time, it is likely that Toplady's physical decline drove him to make some hard choices.

However, in February 1775, in a letter to Catherine Macaulay, he refers to 'a tract (begun and finished within a fortnight) in explication and defence of Christian and philosophic necessity.'[170] This was his 205-page treatise, entitled *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted in Opposition to Mr. John Wesley's Tract on that Subject,* published later that year. James A. Harris confirms that words such as 'determinism' were a product of nineteenth-century coinage, whereas the eighteenth-century thinkers relied on the language of 'necessity': this suggests that

[169] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs of the Rev. Augustus Toplady' in *The Works of Augustus Toplady, B.A.*, p. 29.
[170] Toplady, 'Letter LIV' in *Works*, p. 867.

Toplady was quite intentional when crafting the title of this excursus into what Harris asserts was a definitively Enlightenment preoccupation.[171]

Within his preface, he made clear that this was a direct response to Wesley's own 'three-penny free-will Powder', a pamphlet entitled *Thoughts Upon Necessity*, published in 1774.[172] Unfortunately, through his habitual use of incisive prose, Toplady also made clear the extent of his disregard for the author, whom he portrayed as a dubious purveyor of quack remedies.[173] This work sits uncomfortably with what has gone before: the reprinted sermons and addresses are usually contextually-applied exegeses of Scripture; the translation of Zanchius was a reprise of scholastic theology; the responses to Nowell as well as the two-volume *Historic Proof* were extended exercises in historical theology. And the contrast is even starker when it comes to referencing: the solid meat within the *Historic Proof* is to be discovered in the minutiae of the numerous extended citations. By comparison, *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted* adopts a bare, minimalist approach when it comes to citing the work of others, a close stylistic echo of key Enlightenment works, such as Locke's *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, and *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, or, for that matter, Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Through both terminology and genre-matching, it seems that Toplady was signalling the Enlightenment pretensions of this volume: again, this framing sits uncomfortably with the suggestion that we should view him as somehow an exponent of a Counter-Enlightenment perspective. This work operates quite differently, as a highly critical analysis of Wesley's own venture into the philosophical underpinnings of human liberty, one that was initially over-dependent upon the rhetoric of ridicule, but which, in effect, is arguing for a better, Christian Enlightenment.[174]

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[171] James A. Harris, *Of Liberty and Necessity, The Free Will Debate in Eighteenth-Century British Philosophy,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 7.
[172] Toplady, *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted*, p. iii.
[173] Toplady, *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted*, p. iii.
[174] Toplady, *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted*, pp. iii, iv, v, vi, 9, 10, 11.

It is worth asking an initial, obvious, question: why did Toplady pen this reasonably substantial book? One simple answer may be, because he could, and this was a period during which the acrimonious exchanges with Wesley were certainly heating up: *An Old Fox, Tarr'd and Feathered* (1775); *Free Will & Merit* (1775); a reprint of *A Caveat Against Unsound Doctrine* (1778) and *Mr Toplady's Dying Avowal* (1778) are representative examples. A second explanation is suggested by his punning on the theme of 'necessity' at the beginning of chapter 1, as he set his sights on Wesley's own credentials: 'The poor Gentleman is, *necessarily*, an universal Meddler: and, as *necessarily*, an universal Miscarrier. Can he *avoid* being either the One or the Other? No. "Why, then do you animadvert upon him?"' Toplady's satirical take on Wesley's compulsions was used as the springboard to explain his own: he gave three reasons for this unusual literary venture, the first of which is, essentially, 'I cannot help myself', and because he enjoyed the sport.[175] This was hardly the most laudable of justifications, and he probably regarded it as no more than a humorous entrée into the subject, but it does make the point, if somewhat offensively: for all of Wesley's polemical arguments in favour of libertarian free will, in practice, he (like Toplady) operated according to influences over which he apparently had little control. Given the internal and external constraints which so evidently govern us, why (asked Toplady) this overweening focus on libertarian free will? Furthermore, whilst the evolution of heresies may be 'necessary', Toplady regarded the exposure and critique of them to be equally 'necessary'.

Toplady's critical comments about the shortcomings in Wesley's grasp of his subject matter are no doubt pertinent: 'One Result of his thus exercising himself in *Matters which are too high for him*, is, that, in many Cases, he decides peremptorily, without having discern'd so much as the true state of the Question; and then sets himself to *speak evil* of Things which, it is very plain, he *does not understand*.'[176] However, as Toplady's treatment of the subject unfolds, the desire grows in the

[175] Toplady, *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted*, p. 10.
[176] Toplady, *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted*, pp. 10-11.

reader's mind that he may have heeded his own advice. Nevertheless, initially at least, the signs are promising: the very next sentence cites John Locke who argued in his *Essay concerning Human Understanding* that all human knowledge arose from experience, and then ruminated on whether or not matter might be able to think - or whether an immaterial mind or soul was necessary.[177] This was a matter upon which Toplady dwelt at some length in chapter 2, after seeking to define what he meant by 'necessity' in the first chapter. Before proceeding to that content, it is worth noting the subtleties attached to another derogatory aside, attacking the mode by which Wesley might receive his ideas: 'I appeal, at present, to his "*Thoughts upon "NECESSITY."*" Thoughts, which, though crude and dark as Chaos, are announced, according to Custom, with more than Oracular Positiveness: as though his own *Glandula Pinealis* was the single Focus, wherein all the Rays of Divine and Human wisdom are concentrated.'[178] This was ridicule, plain and simple, and far from subtle. What, however, elevated the quality of the ridicule was the reference to the Pineal Gland, for Descartes believed it to be 'the principal seat of the soul'.[179] In that single allusion, Toplady managed to link the naïve over-ambition of Wesley's venture into enlightened metaphysics with a discredited component of Cartesian thought: any contemporary theologian or philosopher could not fail to get the message. This commentary forms part of a bigger pattern, namely the light, allusive way in which Toplady touched on Enlightenment themes: they did not form his primary focus, and he often did not explore them in depth. He referenced them, as a means to some other end. Here, he achieved a fair job of parsing a Lockean or Humean model of proceeding, by supplying his own working definition of 'necessity' and observed in passing that this is consistent with Aristotle's own definition ('though, by the way, he was a Freewiller himself').[180]

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[177] John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding Vol. II (Fifteenth Edition)*, Bk IV, ch. 3, para 6 (London: 1753), pp. 161-92.
[178] Toplady, *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted*, p. 11.
[179] René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of DESCARTES Vol. 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 340-48.
[180] Toplady, *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted*, p. 12: 'I would define Necessity to be *That, by which, whatever comes to pass* CANNOT BUT *come to pass* (all Circumstances taken into the Account); *and can come to pass in* NO OTHER WAY *or Manner, than it does*.'

Chapter 2 of this treatise consisted of a somewhat opaque, extended and unattributed line of argument, the design of which was to establish the linear and *necessary* dependency of the 'soul' (or intellect), on 'ideas' which are the product of (external) 'sensation'. The senses are corporeal, and so is the brain which, in Toplady's mind at least, meant that all sensory impressions were derived from interactions with exterior beings, all of which are dependent, as one moves up the hierarchy, until one reaches God Himself.[181] To be sure, there are a few footnotes which reference Lord Chesterfield, Mr. Baxter (not the Puritan) and Luther, but nothing substantive that might support the more dogmatic assertions made here, such as: 'There is no *Medium* between MATTER and SPIRIT';[182] 'An *Idea* is that *Image, Form or Conception of any Thing, which the Soul is impressed with from without.'*; 'I cannot consider *Reflection* as, properly, the Source of any new Ideas: but rather as a sort of mental Chemistry'; 'The Senses themselves, which are thus the only Doors, by which Ideas, i.e. the Rudiments of all Knowledge, find their Way to the Soul'. It may be safely said that these sentiments, coupled with that early pointed allusion to Descartes' fanciful description of the Pineal Gland, indicate that Toplady was anti-Cartesian. But where else might he have sourced these ideas, given the absence of evidence of attribution? Toplady's reluctance to show his own working, in conspicuous contrast to the *Historic Proof*, forces the reader down the road of conjecture. There was certainly the influence of Locke, as already noted, but the tone of this passage, as well as its subject, is reminiscent of David Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), given the focus on establishing the grounds by which we may have confidence in our professed knowledge about the external world.[183] Hume rejected the Cartesian doctrine of innate ideas, which would be a prerequisite for Wesley's insistence on human independence and self determination -

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[181] Toplady, *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted*, pp. 30-31
[182] In his footnote, Toplady stated, 'I am obliged, here, to take these two Particulars for granted: As the Adhibition of the abundant Proofs, by which they are supported and evinced, would lead me too far from the Object immediately in view.' See A. M. Toplady, *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted*, p. 18.
[183] David Hume, 'Treatise of Human Nature', part 1.1.1, (London: John Noon, 1739), pp. 11-21.

and Toplady cites the prophet Jeremiah[184] in support of that very position.[185] Indeed, what feels like a rather crude and naïvely mechanical view of the functioning of the human brain[186] hints very strongly at Hume's work on causality.[187] Nonetheless, this work more explicitly cites the philosophical legacy of Locke, as becomes apparent in the attaching essay, *A Dissertation Concerning the Sensible Qualities of Matter: More Especially, Concerning Colors*, where Toplady returned again to the subject of the senses: 'By the *Senses*, I mean those Conduits or Avenues to the Brain, through which, the Soul receives it's Ideas of Objects extraneous to it's Self.' This statement is then underpinned by the following appeal: 'The *Sensible Qualitys* of extraneous Objects are, properly, no more than "*Powers*" as Mr Locke justly terms them; viz. Powers *of producing* such particular Motions in our animal Organs, as have a native Tendency to occasion correspondent Perceptions in the Soul, through the Mediation of the Nerves and Brain.'[188] In Part 1 of his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779), Hume caused Cleanthes to describe Locke as the 'first Christian … to assert, that *Faith* was nothing but a Species of *Reason*, that Religion was only a branch of Philosophy'.[189] On these points, Locke's views might have been largely indistinguishable from those of Hume, but the former was regarded as a 'Christian', whereas Hume had earned the label of 'infidel' from none other than Samuel Johnson.[190] Locke was therefore a safer referent in the battle with Wesley.

Toplady concluded chapter 2 with a series of questions which challenged Wesley's view on human autonomy and freedom. It might be argued that this was a job adequately done, if the aim was to grant philosophical rigour to Reformed orthodoxy, but the cost was the apparently heavy

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[184] Jeremiah 10: 23 - 'I know, O Lord, that a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps.'
[185] Toplady, *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted*, p. 32.
[186] Toplady used phrases such as 'the Fibres of the Brain do no more than *simply* vibrate. … The Senses are *necessarily* impress'd by every Object from without; and as *necessarily* commove the Fibres of the Brain'. Toplady, *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted*, p. 22.
[187] Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, part 1.3.14, p. 272ff.
[188] Toplady, *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted*, p. 164.
[189] David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (Dublin: John Exshaw, 1779), p. 18.
[190] John Valdimir Price, 'HUME, David', in John W. Yolton, John Vladimir Price & John Stephens (eds.), *The Dictionary of Eighteenth century British Philosophers* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1999), pp. 440-46.

dependence upon a mechanistic view of human nature where both soul and matter are passive agents, dancing to the string-pulls of exterior forces.[191] However, even if he were guilty of a somewhat partial or pragmatic reliance on recent philosophical ideas, at the very least Toplady was demonstrating his grasp of contemporary enlightened insights, and had some capacity to repurpose those insights for polemical use.

In chapter 3, Toplady set out to anticipate some of the most likely objections to his doctrine of necessity, and this led him to explore the relationship of the brain of John Wesley (and Thomas Nowell) to the brain of a cat. He seems to have accepted that some might find this an odd correlation, but made his suppositions clear: 'For, what is Brain, but Matter peculiarly modify'd? And who is the Modifyer? Not Man, but God.'[192] Whilst Toplady was handling philosophical content, his mental working was not openly transcribed, but rather, hinted at. Referring to the intellectual capacities of animals, he stated 'I mean not, here, to discuss the Argument. But let me hint, that one principal Hinge, on which the Enquiry turns, is: Do *those inferior Beings* REASON, *or do they* NOT? If they *do* (be it in ever so small a Degree), they must consist of something more than Body: i.e. they must be compounded of *Matter* AND Spirit.'[193] It is to be regretted that Toplady elected not to discuss the 'Argument', but it seems as if he was implicitly reprising Hume on the subject, who thought it obvious 'that beasts are endow'd with thought and reason as well as men.',[194] although he had also established that reason is subject to the emotions, a matter that Toplady did not discuss. Furthermore, as Robertson confirms, Hume's own model demotes the function of reason to that of instinct, 'instead of granting animals reason, Hume is suggesting that humans rely on instinct. … So, almost casually, Hume seems to have deprived man of his lofty place in the great chain of being'[195] Given that Toplady's consistent theological focus had been

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[191] Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason*, pp. 309-310.
[192] Toplady, *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted*, p. 34.
[193] Toplady, *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted*, p. 35.
[194] Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature Vol II of the Passions*, pp. 88, 92 and *Vol. I*, pp. 311-13.
[195] Robertson, *The Enlightenment*, p. 281.

upon that very 'great chain of being',[196] it seems that his dependence upon Hume's thought, as an antidote to Wesley, might actually have been his undoing. Is there corroborating evidence that this might have been the case? Indeed there is, because a few pages into the third chapter, it appears that Toplady may have succumbed to a reductionist, linear relationship between virtue and happiness, vice and misery, which he argued represented a natural connection established by the will of God.[197] A few paragraphs later, he expressed this principle as follows: 'The *Fact, then*, plainly *is*, that Rectitude of Manners saves People from much Uneasiness of Mind; and, that the Perpetration of moral Evil involves in it a Trojan horse, whose hidden force puts their Comforts to the Sword.'[198] That is to say, he argued that men and women who thought bad thoughts and did bad things would, through a kind of natural feedback loop, fail to enjoy the benefits of a good conscience and constitution. What support is offered for such a contention? At this point, Toplady pivoted towards the Old Testament, quoting from the book of Job to provide the proof of his assertion - but the problem here was that this perspective (and these quotations) were attributed (in the biblical text) to one of 'Job's Comforters', Eliphaz the Temanite, a well-meaning source of advice who misapplied biblical truths in a manner that was too simplistic to provide effective comfort to the suffering Job.[199] Calvin's own sermons on these passages in Job highlight this problem with Eliphaz's counsel: it was not that he was in error, but rather that he took intellectual shortcuts in working through the implications of what was true. [200] This seems to be an accurate reflection of what may be happening here, as Toplady ventured into the complex issues raised by the new philosophy: it appears that he was unwise to rely on this particular scriptural warrant, probably because he was by now too dependent upon Hume's mechanistic emphasis.[201] This is

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[196] Toplady, *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted*, pp. 26 & 47.
[197] Toplady, *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted*, p. 45.
[198] Toplady, *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted*, p. 46.
[199] Job 4: 8 & 15: 20-1.
[200] John Calvin, *Sermons on Job Vols. 1 & 2* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2022), p. 175 (vol. 1) and p. 28 (vol. 2). [The sermons were originally delivered during 1554-55, and translated from the French in 2022].
[201] Job 38: 1.

problematic enough on its own, when one considers Toplady's relentlessly scriptural approach to his previous polemics, but actually the shortcomings attain an even starker profile when it is reflected that he had chosen to ignore Psalm 73, the classic passage which deals precisely with the practical or experimental implications of the perplexing contrasts observable in human experience, contrasts for which no simplistic rule appears sufficient.

In fact, Psalm 73 presents exactly the inverse diagnosis to the one suggested by Toplady.[202] It seems likely, given the nature of the outcomes in the text, that he had taken a wrong turn, seduced by the winsomeness of Hume's line of thinking, and its appropriateness to combatting Wesley. Is it possible to detect where that may have occurred? Shortly after the misapplication of the citations from the book of Job, we encounter another reference to the 'Chain' that assumes a prominent part in his thinking: 'God Himself has joined the Chain together: no Wonder, therefore, that its Links cannot be put asunder. Hence, I conclude, that, let what seeming Consequences soever flow from the Position of Necessity; God would not have ty'd moral and natural Evil together, into one Knot, if moral Evil were not justly punishable. And while FACTS, indisputable FACTS, say, Aye; Facts I will still believe.'[203] The problem appears to be the way in which he had linked an *a priori* theological position to a particular view of the (or of some) 'facts', which seems to be unduly framed by Hume's empiricism, and indeed to the necessitarianism of Hobbes and Priestley.[204] For Hume, the very idea of causation was problematic: George Berkeley, another prominent empiricist, was able to ascribe causality ultimately to God, but that option was not available to Hume as he was relentlessly skeptical about necessary connections, about the existence of the mind or soul, about the teleological argument, about miracles, and about ethics.[205] A few pages later, Toplady stated,

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[202] Psalm 73:4-12.
[203] Toplady, *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted*, p. 47.
[204] Harris, *Of Liberty and Necessity*, p. 11.
[205] John Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015), pp. 199-205.

boldly, 'the Bible will stand on no Ground but its own',[206] which position sits more comfortably with his earlier writings, but here it seems as if he has allowed this particular train of 'enlightened' thought to frame and drive the direction of his own argument in the direction of a mechanical view of matters. At this moment, at this intersection of methodologies and systems of thought, Toplady's writing was exemplifying one of the pitfalls for orthodoxy, one that had, in fact, already been identified by one of his own heroes.

Francis Turretin had published his *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae* in three volumes between 1679 and 1685. This was a classic work of Protestant scholasticism, and Toplady was indebted to it.[207] Turretin had, in fact, devoted his Thirteenth Question ('Is there any use of philosophy in theology? We affirm') in the Institutes to this topic, and asserted that there was considerable value in philosophy. He did not view its disciplines and fruits as antagonistic to theology's truth-claims, but sought to establish an order or priority in the discipline: 'The orthodox occupy a middle ground. They do not confound theology with sound philosophy as parts of a whole; nor do they set them against each other as contraries … but mutually assist each other. … Theology rules over philosophy … it has many and various uses in theology which must be accurately distinguished from its many abuses.'[208] There was more in this vein. Turretin avoided devaluing philosophy, but neither did he give it a free pass, arguing that it could be used both beneficially (as an abstract tool) or improperly as a (particular) syncretism of diverse opinions.[209]

Whether or not Turretin's advice was sage, it appears that Toplady did not follow it at this point: the inversion of unambiguous scriptural testimony is evidence that empiricist dogma had been allowed to dominate his response to Wesley. It appears that the often emotive and reactionary field of polemics may not have been the best context for a rigorous exploration of the interplay between

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[206] Toplady, *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted*, p. 54.
[207] Toplady, 'Collection of Letters' in *Works*, pp. 845-6.
[208] Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, vol. 1, pp. 44-7.
[209] Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, vol. 1, pp. 44-5.

the new ideas and the fruits of scholastic reflection. He had, after all, confessed in a letter to Catherine Macaulay that the book had taken only a fortnight to write.[210] In that sense, Toplady had ceded too much ground to the likes of Hume and had replicated the pattern of Berkeley, whose 'philosophy does not *begin* with God. It begins, as with Descartes and Locke, with the human being shut up within himself to consider his ideas autonomously.'[211] However, pragmatically, Toplady's focus was on repudiating Wesley's emphasis on human autonomy and independent self-determination, rather than on reconciling the spirit-matter dualism of Descartes and Locke, or keeping a careful watch on the creeping tendencies of Hume's empiricism. That being the case, chapter 4 returns to the more familiar (and safer) territory of scripture citations, with chapter 5 supplying a listing of biblical support for the idea that Christ himself was 'necessitarian'. Chapter 6 ('*An Argument for* NECESSITY, *deduced from the Balance of Human* LIFE *and* DEATH') presents a kind of potpourri of enlightened themes: atomic forces and gravity pivoting into 'moral necessity', the matter of Descartes' commitment to free-will, a reaffirmation of Toplady's idea of an inflexible causal Chain, forged by a sovereign Creator, the identification of human birth and death with the idea of 'divine necessitation'.[212] Hindmarsh comments on this defining tendency to connect 'physical mechanics with the spiritual', suggesting that Toplady demonstrated an appetite for issues which Wesley, perhaps wisely, declined to discuss.[213] Whilst these ideas are not explored in an analytical manner, they do follow each other in swift succession before space is given to relevant scriptural citations.

It would therefore be remiss to conclude that *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted* was Toplady's finest hour, but it does show that he was equipped with an extensive theological toolkit, was capable of grappling with the cutting edge philosophical

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[210] Toplady, 'Letter LIV' in *Works*, p. 867.
[211] Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology*, p. 198.
[212] Toplady, *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted*, pp. 98, 99, 102, 103, 107.
[213] Hindmarsh, *The Spirit of Early Evangelicalism*, p. 146.

questions of the day, and was not averse to so doing. Whilst the polemical context seems to have supplied insufficient bandwidth for a rigorous exploration of the concepts, we do encounter proofs of Toplady's incisive grasp of interlinking themes, as well as a preparedness to explore how they correlated with his theologically constructed view of the universe. This leads naturally on to a consideration of how in practice he handled the interactions between the truth-claims of Christian theology, and the claims of the new science.[214]

Scientifically Enlightened?

The period of the Enlightenment is often characterised as one where the focus of scientific endeavour adopted a trajectory which diverged from the old theistic focus. Newton's consistent emphasis on empiricism abandoned the ideas of mathematical or *a priori* certainty, such as those espoused by Galileo, Kepler and Descartes.[215] David Hume's radical scepticism led him to reject the design argument or the possibility of miracles. Peter Harrison documents how the new Lockean epistemology effectively 'disengaged' the fundamental principles of Lutheran or Calvinistic Christianity, paving the way for a wider disconnect from science.[216] Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* was published the year after Toplady's death and adopted a sceptical stance in relation to the cosmological argument, which underpinned earlier, theistically framed scientific endeavour.[217] Later, Auguste Comte, the French thinker who founded the philosophy of positivism advanced an even more explicit dichotomy between science and religion.[218] The backdrop to any of Toplady's contributions on this subject is framed by these seismic changes in the relationship between science

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[214] See Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism and the rise of natural science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 129-138.
[215] E. A. Burtt, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science*, (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1954), pp. 212-3.
[216] Peter Harrison, *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 231-2.
[217] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, (London: George Bell & Sons, 1890), pp. 368-70, 440-56.
[218] Auguste Comte, *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, (London: J. Chapman, 1853).

and faith. Hindmarsh suggests that evangelicals of Toplady's era were, with some difficulty, navigating these choppy waters via disparate strategies (Romaine's epistemological skepticism, Hervey's poetical reflections, Moses Browne's meditations). A few years later, evangelicals such as Isaac Milner would explore Newtonian topics and display a commitment to empirical and experimental work.[219]

Prior to this, the Royal Society received its Royal Charter in 1662 and published its scientific deliberations at regular intervals as *The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, in a series of volumes.[220] Francis Bacon, whose published works led to the founding of the Society was a professing Christian, as were many of the other founding fathers (Robert Boyle, Isaac Newton, John Wilkins, Robert Hooke etc). Within *The Philosophical Transactions*, Volume VI, covering the period 1713 to 1723, provides some evidence of the scope of the Society's interests. This included: extraordinary meteors (Halley was a prolific contributor), preoccupations with the weather, the kinds of exotic medical phenomena which were more akin to public circus entertainments (Dr. John Hollings speaking on 'a big-bellied woman'[221]), listed alongside enquiries into Kepler's Laws, proposed solutions to Leibnitz's Problem, and a discussion of fossil stratigraphy within coal deposits.[222] Scientific enquiry was broad, far-ranging and often somewhat quaint (by modern standards) in its preoccupations.

Toplady's somewhat limited writings on the natural world correlate with this shifting intellectual backdrop. They took the form of a series of thirteen brief articles, published in *TGM* from the 1775 Supplement onwards. These apparently cater for a popular evangelical interest in the natural sciences, presenting an intriguing picture of the Christian perception and use of the new discoveries

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[219] Hindmarsh, *The Spirit of Early Evangelicalism*, pp. 141-2, 149, 155, 163-5.
[220] Adrian Tinniswood, *The Royal Society & The Invention of Modern Science* (London: Head of Zeus, 2019), p. 39.
[221] Dr. Hollings, 'Of a Big-Bellied Woman' in *The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, From Their Commencement, in 1665, to the Year 1800; Abridged, With Notes and Biographical Illustrations Vol. VI from 1713-1723* (London: C. And R. Baldwin, 1809), p. 242.
[222] *The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, pp. i-iv.

of 'natural theology', as it was then termed. The eclectic mix of topics is consistent with what may be discovered within the *Transactions of the Royal Society,* so Toplady's approach was actually of its time. Whilst it would be another twenty-seven years before William Paley published his *Natural Theology or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity* and Thomas Chalmers would write his *Bridgewater Treatise* in the 1830s, Christian thinkers were beginning to view Newtonian science as an apologetic tool, to assert the rationality of Christianity in an increasingly sceptical climate. The Boyle Lectures had been instituted in the 1690s, specifically for the purpose of 'proving the Christian Religion' against 'notorious Infidels' and 'Atheists'.[223] The Anglican philosopher Samuel Clarke (1675-1729) had, conspicuously, been invited to give the annual lecture twice, in 1704 and 1705, the most attention-grabbing of which was the first: *A Demonstration of the being and attributes of God: more particularly in answer to Mr Hobbes, Spinoza and their followers, wherein the notion of liberty is stated, and the possibility and certainty of it proved, in opposition to necessity and fate.* A great deal was assumed and expected about Clarke's Boyle Lectures: Leslie Stephen comments that the resulting two books 'form a symmetrical edifice of pure theology, resting on the immovable basis of intuitive truths, cemented and dovetailed together by irrefragable demonstration…Like the Tower of Babel, it was intended to reach heaven from earth, in defiance of any future deluge of infidelity.'[224] It appears that Clarke was hardly deficient in ambition, and it is therefore unsurprising that David Hume set his sights on demolishing this imposing edifice.[225] It is also significant that Toplady elected not to follow Clarke's strategy, when he ventured into this area - indeed, there is no reference to Clarke in his surviving writings. There are good reasons for this: firstly, Hume had published his *Treatise of Human Nature* in 1739, which set out (amongst other things) to dismantle Clarke's arguments, and Toplady must have been aware

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[223] Paul Russell, 'Hume's Treatise and the Clarke-Collins Controversy', *Hume Studies*, Volume XXI, Number 1 (April 1995), 95-116.
[224] Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, I, pp. 3 & 27.
[225] Paul Russell, 'Skepticism and Natural Religion', *Hume's Treatise*, Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol. 49, No. 2 (Apr.-Jun. 1988), 257.

of this. Secondly, as I have shown, he seems to have been quite influenced by Hume's thinking, at least on some points. And thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, Clarke had been a bitter opponent of the doctrine of predestination, and also ended up veering into Arianism.[226] As a result, Toplady appears to have studiously avoided Clarke's apologetic approach, and it seems probable that his *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted* was as much a rebuttal of Clarke (and those like him), as it was of Wesley.

Notwithstanding these nuances, the prime movers behind the field of natural theology certainly included the clergy, and those who made the transition from theology to natural theology.[227] Thus, whilst Toplady's first piece does present a fanciful picture of swallows hibernating over winter in burrows, he mentioned that 'The excellent Mr. Derham takes notice of two striking particulars, for which the conduct of migrating birds is remarkable.'[228] This refers to William Derham, another Boyle lecturer,[229] who had written to Hans Sloane at the Royal Society on 1 April 1708 about this very issue, and demonstrates that Toplady was familiar with the *Proceedings*. It is worth commenting briefly on the way Toplady was interacting with the raw material of the natural sciences: some space was devoted to the swallow's propensity to hibernate from October through to April in holes: 'where they very comfortably sleep away the winter. … The unctuous matter which transudes from the vanous pores of their feathers preserves their delicate skins from any hurtful access of water: and a sufficient circulation of the blood is kept within, to maintain life, and counteract the cold, until the breath of April again awakens them to the business and pleasures of perceptive existence.'[230] This sounds like a reasonable explanation of hibernation, and striking in its attention to detail, but it is, of course, mistaken. It would not be until 1864 when Algernon

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[226] Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate: Benjamin Hoadly, 1676-1761*, p. 113.
[227] For an example of this trend, see Charles Raven, *John Ray, Naturalist: His Life and Work* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1942 and 2009).
[228] 'Minimus', 'Natural History No. I', Supplement to *TGM For the Year 1775*, 614.
[229] John T. Dahm, 'Science and Apologetics in the Early Boyle Lectures', *Church History*, vol. 39, No. 2 (June, 1970), 175.
[230] 'Minimus', 'Natural History No. I', Supplement to *TGM For the Year 1775*, 612

Charles Swinburne documented the migratory patterns of swallows: prior to that, natural historians remained dependent upon Aristotle, whose views had been reframed by Albertus Magnus in his 1258 *Quaestiones super De animalibus*. The great classifier, Carl Linnaeus, repeated the error in his *Systema naturae* of 1758, and would have found himself in good company - both Samuel Johnson and Gilbert White (in his 1789 treatise, *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selbourne*) adhered to the party line.[231] Thus Toplady, whilst certainly in error on this point, was equally certainly 'following the science', another testimony to the currency of his studies right across multiple disciplines. John Hedley Brooke comments on the fact that 'natural theology' was such a persistent component within scientific development in Britain, that Charles Darwin experienced a profound struggle when it came to sidestepping its presuppositions.[232] But, if Toplady was not emulating Clarke's apologetic, what was he seeking to achieve, at this level, within the pages of this publication?

One purpose seems to have been to simply excite the reader's admiration of God the Creator: 'Admirable are the works of the CREATOR! *In wisdom has he made them all. The earth is full of his riches.* Thro' Him, *The* STORK *in the heavens knoweth her appointed time*; *and the* TURTLE, *and the* CRANE, *and the* SWALLOW, *observe the time of their coming.* Jer. viii. 7 .'[233] In his second 'Natural History' article, Toplady stated, 'The whole world of Nature, no less than those of Grace and Glory, is under the absolute dominion and the never-ceasing direction of GOD. Every wind that blows, is of *His* breathing; and every drop, whether fluid or condensed, that falls from the sky, is of *His* sending.'[234] This effectively rebuts the twin errors of the reductionist Enlightenment redefining of deity: God is neither so remote as to be undetectable (Deism), neither is he reduced to a component or function of nature (Pantheism). Instead the deity is shown as immanent but

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[231] Gilbert White, *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* (London: Benjamin White and Son, 1788), reprinted by the Folio Society in 1995, p. 60.
[232] John Hedley Brooke, *Science and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 269.
[233] 'Minimus', 'Natural History No. I', *Supplement to TGM For the Year 1775*, 614.
[234] 'Minimus', 'Natural History No. II', *TGM for January 1776*, 42.

separate, knowledgeably supervising His creation, and in sovereign control: Toplady's aim was not merely to encourage worship, but also to foster dependence on God in the daily things of life. His take on science was experimental at a human level, and that makes it theologically analogical. Furthermore, there was something irresistibly British in this focus on the weather, which he reduced to its basics: '*Dew, mist, rain, snow, hail, and clouds*; are no more than co-alitions of watery vapours.'[235] The purpose here, rather than solely encouraging his readers to look up and marvel at the heavens, seems to have been to lead them to focus instead on the smaller, elemental, mundane things, and perceive God's sovereignty playing out there too. Underpinning this was an almost childlike delight in the subject-matter: 'My own reading, I honestly confess, is too scanty, to administer any very significant quota towards such a stock of valuable entertainment. I will, however, present the reader with a few specimens, or scraps, of a subject, which an abler and more intelligent pen might easily enlarge into a plentiful and pleasing feast.'[236] This introduced a sub-set of pieces (running through to the June 1776 edition), entitled 'Instances of Sagacity in Beasts [Brutes]' which begins with the elephant and wanders (via spiders, silk-worms, birds, fishes, hippopotamus and monkey) to the goat, the cock-pigeon, the swallow and then a lengthy digression on Plutarch.

Much that appeared in these articles seems to be for the pure enjoyment of the subject-matter, and it is perhaps not accidental that Toplady finished, as he began, with elephants, betraying a relish for anecdotes regarding their behaviours, designed to fascinate and intrigue the reader. The connection seems to be that the valuing of 'theological science' should feed naturally through to an appreciation of the natural sciences, but then Toplady took that basic sense and developed it a little further. Hence in the seventh essay, he started a mini-series on cosmology, beginning with the sun. There is nothing scientifically unconventional about his treatment, but it only took him one

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[235] 'Minimus', 'Natural History No. II', 42.
[236] 'Minimus', 'Natural History No. III', *TGM for February 1776*, 82.

paragraph before the subject is being discussed analogically: '*The Lord God is a* SUN *and shield: He will give*, to his chosen people, the light and warmth of *grace*, below; *and* crown that grace with perfection of *glory*, in the heaven of heavens above (Psal. lxxxiv. 11).'[237] In the very next point, the focus moved onto the limitations of human rational powers: 'When purblind *reason* takes upon her, to sit in judgement on the mysterious Nature, Decrees, and Dispensations, of God; she resembles the short-sighted optics of an unlettered Indian: who, estimating the size of the Sun, by his own inadequate perceptions, imagines it to be of much less circumference than the floor of his hut.' Toplady may have been alluding here to the *Surya Siddhanta* (AD 505), or the 'Sun Treatise', a Sanskrit astronomical work,[238] but the intention is clear: to use the *idea* of the sun, emblematically, for external spiritual illumination, rather than depend upon strictly human insight, to perceive the truth about Christ: '*Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?* was the decision of unilluminated Reason. The eye of supernatural faith, alone, was able to see through the human veil; discern the latent Deity; *and behold his glory, as the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*.'[239]

This was analogy, but not just that. Towards the end of this essay, and having established the nature of the relationship between the sun (at the centre of the universe) and the earth (orbiting it, dependent upon it), Toplady asserted that, 'God does not, like a dependent lacquey in a livery, adjust his motions by ours; but human conduct is adjusted and regulated (either permissively, or effectively, according to the nature of the case) by the wise determinations of his sovereign and undefeatable Will.'[240] More narrowly, this application was clearly intended as an antidote to an Arminian view of the universe (antithetic to Clarke's Newtonian views), but more generally is

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[237] 'Minimus', 'Natural History No. VII', *TGM for January 1777*, 25.

[238] Characteristic of the kind of 'oriental' work, favoured by the Enlightenment travellers, in preference to biblical authority.

[239] 'Minimus', 'Natural History No. VII', *TGM for January 1777*, 26.

[240] 'Minimus', 'Natural History No. VII', *TGM for January 1777*, 29.

indicative of Toplady's view that scientific 'truth' correlates with biblical 'truth' because they both emanate from the same truthful source. These ruminations continued into the June 1777 edition, and create a synthesis between the successive discoveries of astronomical science and a distinctively Calvinistic theology. Again, this was far from incidental: Dmitry Levitin documents the wholesale rejection of 'modern' Calvinistic and Puritan systems of divinity by Archbishop William Laud, in favour of a more generic Catholic system.[241] Here, subtly, Toplady was re-establishing the correlation between his 'modern' (Calvinistic) theological system, and the assured results of the new science, whilst simultaneously providing a response to the arguments of the Deists, notably John Toland's *Christianity Not Mysterious* (1696). Toland had missed the point: the issue was not that general revelation was sufficient, making special revelation unnecessary. The real principle was that both forms of revelation proceeded from the same author, and should be expected to support and clarify each other. Toplady's insight here was to avoid the rather arid arguments that played out within the philosophical texts, and instead craft a series of homilies which would entrance and inform the ordinary reader, and make exactly the same point.

Toplady's at times whimsical arrangement of his examples from the natural world can easily give the erroneous impression of a lack of order, one which feels strangely at odds with the enlightened focus on classification and encyclopaedias. Chapter 5 explores some examples of thematic ordering, indicative of a higher-level approach towards connecting data and worldview. Here, it is relevant to comment that, in the absence of an overarching structure which might help to make sense of his observations from the natural world, Toplady resorted to extensive scriptural allusions. Under 'Meteors' (by which he meant meteorology), there was a reference to Psalm 147: 16-17, and then a direct inference to God's Omnipotence (Job 38: 22).[242] This pattern was repeated throughout the section, which suggests that Toplady not only regarded nature as a source of insight

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[241] Dmitri Levitin, *Ancient Wisdom in the Age of the New Science: Histories of Philosophy in England, c. 1640-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 13-21.
[242] 'Minimus', 'Natural History No. II', *TGM for January 1776*, 42.

into God's truth, but that he saw scripture as authoritative in helping him to make sense of the natural world. Peter Harrison makes similar observations: the cultivation of botanic or 'physick' gardens being 'living books', representative of an Edenic natural order; the pursuit of natural history itself being regarded as a valuable source of moral lessons, and emblematic of divine truth; plants serving as aids to biblical exegesis.[243] Harrison emphasises that 'The ancients - Aelian, Plutarch, and Pliny in particular - had sought moral lessons in the characteristics of animals, so it is not surprising that their latter-day imitators followed suit.' If this was an indicator of a particular tradition when interpreting the natural world, then Toplady certainly exemplified it: references to Plutarch abound (eleven in total), and it is clear that he was valued as an eye-witness, for the humanity of his philosophy, for the balance of his reflections and as an 'excellent writer'.[244]

That same currency is evident elsewhere, this time perhaps more to his credit, in the extended section entitled 'Solar System'. This part is devoid of references to Plutarch, but cites both scripture and authorities such as William Derham,[245] Isaac Newton, Galileo, Pierre Gassendi, Edmund Halley, Giovanni Cassini, Guiseppe Campani,[246] and Philippe de la Hire.[247] He correctly described the earth's elliptical rotation around the sun (referencing Kepler), the rotation of the sun itself (referencing Galileo in 1610) and included a great deal of cosmological data (for example, of Mercury), much of which was relatively accurate, compared to current measurements.[248] There was but one reference to the age of the earth, which seemed dependent upon Archbishop Ussher's chronology, but Toplady made no more of this, other than to support his comment about the

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[243] Peter Harrison, 'Natural History' in *Wrestling with Nature, From Omens to Science*, Peter Harrison, Ronald L. Numbers and Michael H. Shank (eds), (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp.127-29.
[244] Toplady, 'Sketch of Natural History' in *Works*, pp. 525-27. This is a compilation of Toplady's 'Natural History' articles starting with no. IV, *TGM for March 1776*, 138-41, published under the pen-name of 'Minimus'.
[245] Author of *Physico-Theology: or, A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of GOD from His Works of Creation* (1713).
[246] 'Minimus', 'Natural History No. XII', *TGM for June 1777*, 268 & 270.
[247] 'Minimus', 'Natural History No. XIII', *TGM for July 1777*, 316.
[248] 'Minimus', 'Natural History No. VIII', *TGM for February 1777*, 81.

perfections of the planetary movements over a period of 'almost 6000 years'.[249] Whilst he was clearly no astronomer, and was heavily dependent upon secondary sources, there was no suggestion here of a tension between science and his Christian convictions about the universe. Indeed, nature was portrayed as meaningful, as part of an ordered picture that the thoughtful reader may trace back to a creating and sustaining deity.

Care needs to be taken when drawing conclusions. Toplady was neither using the Bible as a scientific text, nor was he leveraging natural history merely as a handmaid to a greater religious polemic. He seemed to value *both* sources of insight, he regarded *both* of them as authoritative and reliable, and he expected them to act together in a corroborative fashion. His was an inclusive model of enlightenment, one where the disciplines operated harmoniously.

Worlds in Collision

From the Restoration through to the French Revolution, the various streams of Enlightenment thought interacted robustly in the fields of science, religion and politics. Inevitably, English writers such as Benjamin Hoadly triggered abhorrence and veneration in equal proportions. Walpole seems to have liked him, as did Wesley, but he was rarely away from the centre of controversy, and Gibson documents that he was the subject of sustained attack.[250] Perhaps this is unsurprising, given that the thrust of intellectual endeavour raised implications for multiple disciplines, and was rarely uncontaminated by political connotations. In Cambridge, largely through the writings of Tillotson, Samuel Clarke, Gilbert Burnet, John Jackson and William Whiston, heterodoxy became normalised, perhaps because the curriculum became dominated by the mathematical sciences and theological definition became steadily sidelined.[251] Nevertheless, there were repeated discoveries of subversive

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[249] 'Minimus', 'Natural History No. IX', *TGM for March 1777*, 136.
[250] Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate: Benjamin Hoadly, 1676-1761*, p. 14.
[251] Gascoyne, *Cambridge in the age of the Enlightenment*, p. 126.

free-thinkers within the Anglican constituency, and the inevitable polemics played out to the full.[252] This was an age of relentless, vigorous and often uncompromising intellectual conflict, within which Toplady took his place, epitomising one particular kind of adversarial stance in relation to Wesley, and another when confronting Nowell. In both contexts, Toplady's approach is entirely consistent with the culture of this period.

It is interesting, therefore, to see how little of his focus was directed towards the contemporary free-thinkers, other than perhaps in the highly specific context of the Feathers Tavern subscription petition.[253] Toplady's priorities were relentlessly theological, but that does not mean that he was disinterested in the intellectual world inhabited by the sceptics. Writing under his pen-name 'Gallicus', he included a brief and clearly satirical reference to Voltaire's eccentric and hypocritical behaviours, finding some irony in the *philosophe's* violent oscillation between unalloyed religious superstition and equally extreme denunciations of Christian belief.[254] Intriguingly, he responded to the anecdote regarding Voltaire's irrational fears of stormy weather by neither affirming his religious practices, nor by attacking his infidelity: he merely placed the two pathologies alongside each other and left the reader to draw their own conclusions. Here, he portrayed the 'enlightened' mind as equally dominated by superstition when it embraced religion as when it repudiated it. Other than his incisive (personal) dismissal of LeClerc's self-defeating scepticism, this brief paragraph on Voltaire's syncretism hints at the extent of Toplady's preparedness to engage with the overt fruits of the Enlightenment, since his focus was on the tangible impact of theological drift. His primary stratagem took the form of theological engagement with the byproducts of theological assimilation, and for that purpose he usually deployed theological tools.

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[252] Gascoyne, *Cambridge in the age of the Enlightenment*, p. 135.
[253] Toplady, *Free Thoughts*.
[254] 'Gallicus', 'Anecdote of Monsieur De Voltaire', *TGM for November 1776*, 501-2.

This, in turn is suggestive of a key difference between Toplady and, say, Erskine, whom it might be imagined operated at a similar nexus of Calvinistic theology and Enlightenment thinking. Yeager, describing Erskine's intellectual formation in Edinburgh University, 'a key institution for transmitting Enlightenment tenets', states that he 'learned that Locke's empirical method had trumped the scholastic pedagogy of Aristotle…This way of thinking informed his outlook as an evangelical Christian.'[255] It is far from evident that Toplady learned the same lesson in university, indeed it seems far more probable that his written output was framed by the disciplines of a recapitulated protestant scholasticism. It should be construed that his adherence to scholastic method must inevitably have lead to a more historically-framed worldview, and place some constraints on the directions of his intellectual creativity - in contrast to thinkers such as Jonathan Edwards, whose capacity for integration and appropriation is well documented.[256] It might also be observed that this same intellectual commitment enabled Toplady to fruitfully engage with, say, the Rational Dissent of Joseph Priestley.[257] Furthermore, it is probable that his scholasticism allowed him to steer a safe course around such popular Anglican heterodoxies of the time, as Henry Fielding's ethical deism and Latitudinarianism.[258]

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[255] Yeager, *Enlightened Evangelicalism,* p. 199.
[256] McClymond and McDermot, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, pp. 164-5.
[257] Alan Saunders, 'The state as highwayman: from candour to rights' in Haakonssen (ed), *Enlightenment and Religion*, pp. 252-3.
[258] Ronald Paulson, 'Henry Fielding and the problem of deism' in Lund (ed), *The Margins of Orthodoxy*, pp. 240-1.

Chapter 5

Toplady and Evangelicalism

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!
Let the Water and the Blood,
From thy riven Side which flow'd,
Be of Sin the double Cure
Cleanse me fro its Guilt and Pow'r.[1]

Introduction

Toplady had his own 'quadrilateral' of defining stances that help qualify him as a Christian thinker in the late eighteenth century. The first two, his Calvinism and his Anglicanism, seem on the face of it to be relatively clearly expressed, as we have seen. The third, his mode of Enlightenment engagement seems to have been quite variegated, not inconsistent with a period which gave rise to such a diversity of viewpoints. Toplady's treatment of Enlightenment themes seems often to have been somewhat tangential or suggestive in nature, and driven by a more explicitly theological focus.

As we turn to the fourth characteristic, his evangelicalism, we find that the nature of the definitions on offer necessarily impact our assessment. Given that the word 'evangelicalism' is functionally a composite term, built up from other pre-existing strains of Christian tradition,[2] and given that it appears to permit some substantive divergence in terms of theological systems,[3] this chapter will focus more on his accessible written works, aimed at a broader readership, arguing that we should locate Toplady's position from the perspectives of the more clearly-defined characteristics. In a very real sense, this chapter is 'Part B' of Chapter 4, given that evangelicalism

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[1] Toplady, 'Occasional Hymn XXIII', verse 1, in *Hymns and Sacred Poems on a Variety of Divine Subjects*, p. 163.

[2] Bruce D. Hindmarsh, 'The Antecedents of Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography and the Christian Tradition' in Michael A. G. Haykin & Kenneth J. Stewart (eds.), *The Emergence of Evangelicalism, Exploring Historical Continuities* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008), p. 328.

[3] Mark A. Knoll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism, The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Nottingham: IVP, 2015), pp. 111-116

is, pragmatically, the shape of an Enlightenment-influenced Reformed Protestantism.[4] I shall argue that Toplady was, in fact, a consistent and thoroughgoing Evangelical, but that his method and outlook were driven by his commitment to Reformed scholasticism.

Toplady's Associations

In the April 1776 edition of *TGM*, Toplady, writing under his pen-name of 'Minimus', wrote a brief, but fulsome appreciation of his friend, George Whitefield, entitled 'An ATTEMPT toward a concise CHARACTER of the late Rev. Mr. WHITEFIELD'. He considered him to be 'the apostle of the English empire', a 'true and faithful son of the Church of England' and enumerated a number of other qualities which led him to place Whitefield at the head of a list of 'the greatest men in almost every walk of knowledge' alongside Archbishop Bradwardine, John Milton and Isaac Newton, as 'the prince of preachers'.[5] This article was published some six years after Whitefield's death, by which time the evangelical revivals that had involved him for around thirty years had concluded.[6] Toplady reported favourably on the affection between Whitefield and Isaac Watts[7], and some time earlier had recorded in his diary for August 20, 1760 that he 'Went in the evening to the tabernacle, where I heard dear Mr. Whitefield preach a glorious sermon on *But be filled with the Spirit*. The wonderful power with which he was enabled to speak, shewed that he was filled with the Spirit indeed.'[8] These extracts are entirely consistent with Toplady's commentary elsewhere in his writings, demonstrative of a close theological alignment between the two men. Indeed, it might have gone further than that: in a letter addressed to the Countess of Huntingdon, dated 9 December,

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[4] Hindmarsh, *The Spirit of Early Evangelicalism,* p. 4.

[5] 'Minimus', 'An Attempt towards a concise Character of the late Rev. Mr. Whitefield', *TGM April 1776,* vol. III, 158-9.

[6] Peter Y. Choi, *George Whitefield, Evangelist for God and Empire* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2018), p. 114.

[7] Toplady, 'Outlines of the Life of Isaac Watts', *TGM January 1776,* vol. III, 34.

[8] Toplady, 'The Journal of Mr. Toplady's at the Age of Twenty', *TGM October 1800,* vol. V, 396-7.

1774, Toplady reminisced that '…in one of my last conversations with dear Mr. Whitefield, antecedently to his last voyage to America, that good and precious man of God said as follows, "My good Sir, why don't you come out? You might be abundantly more useful, were you to widen your field and preach at large, instead of straining your ministry to a few parish churches."'[9] In the end, Toplady's perception of 'Providence'[10] meant that he passed on Whitefield's invitation to accompany him, but these are indications of his close affinity to an evangelicalism which had its focus on evangelism.

The relationship with Whitefield does contain within it another implication. Mark Olson, writing on the great evangelist's own theological development, notes how his understanding of the 'reformed doctrines of grace' not only drove his zeal in evangelism, but led him to repudiate hyper-Calvinism.[11] Indeed, Whitefield had become keenly aware of the attacks on his theology to the extent that he felt the need to defend himself publicly from charges of 'antinomianism', a regular criticism of Calvinistic doctrine.[12] Frank Lambert documents attacks for the same reason from Timothy Cutler of Boston and George Gillespy of Philadelphia[13] and Jessica Parr refers to a defence of Whitefield's ministry against accusations of antinomianism and enthusiasm, by the Rev. Joseph Emerson of Maldon, Boston in 1744. Emerson stated that Whitefield, 'in opposition to Antinomianism, …preaches up all kinds of relative and religious duties, though to be performed in the strength of Christ; and, in short, the doctrines of the Church of England.'[14] Given these difficulties and his personal experience of opposition, it seems extremely unlikely that Whitefield

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[9] Cited by Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady,* p. 282.

[10] It is likely that Toplady's ministry decisions were calculated in the light of his own physical weaknesses.

[11] Mark K. Olson, 'Whitefield's Early Theological Formation' in Geordan Hammond & David Ceri Jones (eds.), *George Whitefield: Life, Context, and Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 34 & 42.

[12] George Whitefield, *Sixth Journal, A Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Journal After his Arrival in Georgia To a Few Days after his second Return thither from Philadelphia* (London: W. Strahan, 1741), p. 37.

[13] Frank Lambert, *Pedlar in Divinity: George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 137 & 147.

[14] Jessica M. Parr, *Inventing George Whitefield: Race, Revivalism, and the Making of a Religious Icon* (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), pp. 96-7.

would, late in his ministry, have encouraged the active collaboration of Toplady, had he not been reasonably assured of the 'moderate Calvinism' underpinning his evangelical faith. This is not an insignificant piece of local colour, given the tendency of later writers to draw a clear distinction between 'stiff Calvinists like Toplady' and 'moderates' like John Newton.[15] That evangelicalism was, of course, not defined solely by Whitefield. Tony Reinke tells us that Newton (1725-1807), the converted slave-trader, 'befriended' both Whitefield and John Wesley, which is suggestive of a broader theological spectrum than the focus of Toplady's life exemplifies.[16] Bruce Hindmarsh, however, documents the effort that Newton put into preserving this fragile unity, which seems to have lasted between 1757, when he first met Wesley, to 1762, when regular correspondence between the two men ceased. In 1765, Newton, a man who downplayed his moderate Calvinism, felt he had to draw a line: 'But in the face of Wesley's accusations, Newton took the occasion to defend his Calvinistic principles and criticise Wesley's teaching at a number of points.'[17] The functional model of evangelicalism proposed by Bebbington did exist in practice, but it was a fragile thing, and did not persist for long in its original form. If Newton's attempt at an ecumenical, 'moderate Calvinism' in the end succumbed to defeat, that certainly suggests that Toplady's stance was within the compass of mainstream of evangelicalism.

Notwithstanding, this early network of relationships seems to have been a contributor to the emergence of evangelicalism as a distinct eighteenth century phenomenon. Whitefield had been closely involved with the developing 'connexional' ministry under Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, and so was Toplady.[18] When, in 1769, he had responded to Thomas Nowell's defence of the expulsion of the six Oxford students, Whitefield had already written in 1768 to the Vice-Chancellor

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[15] Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys*, p.259.
[16] Tony Reinke, *Newton on the Christian Life* (Wheaton, Il: Crossway, 2015), p. 35.
[17] Hindmarsh, *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition*, pp.126-9.
[18] Schlenther, *Queen of the Methodists*, pp. 69, 77, 108, 112.

in defence of the same students.[19] Erasmus Middleton had been one of those six students that Toplady and Whitefield defended, and later on he was the author of *Biographia Evangelica*, which provided an account of Toplady's life.[20] Middleton may have been unaware of the fact, but his portrayal of his subject helped to cement his evangelical credentials: 'The doctrines, preached by this able Divine, were brought into his own experience by the grace of his Redeemer, and were his joy and triumph in the article of death…'Tis this demonstration of experience, or the proof of the Christian doctrine upon fact, that comforts and lifts up GOD's people in their last hours…'[21] Middleton's perception was that Toplady's modelling of orthodox theology in such a demonstrably 'experimental' manner was a sufficiently defining characteristic to include him within the evangelical camp.

Nowell, in his printed response to Richard Hill's *Pietas Oxoniensis*,[22] clearly derived some satisfaction from the fact that,

> The first who undertook to patronise their cause by a formal defence was the Rev. Mr. Whitefield; and certainly it was very proper that He should be their advocate, who may be justly reputed the leader of their sect; that He should be their champion, under whose banner they are enlisted. I confess it gave me a sensible pleasure to see him step forwards in their vindication, as it strongly marks the complexion and characters of these young men, discovers the principles by which they are actuated…[23]

This supports the notion that clerics of Nowell's stripe saw individuals such as Whitefield, Hill, Middleton and Toplady as adherents of a 'sect' identifiable by its evangelical principles, despite their continuing commitment to Anglicanism. Such a perspective had something of a history. Thomas Kidd records that in 1739 Whitefield held a meeting with Anglican critics, where he '… tried to explain the new birth to them theologically and told them about his conversion experience.'

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[19] George Whitefield, *A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Durell, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford; Occasioned By a late Expulsion of Six Students from Edmund-Hall* (London: Thomas and John Fleet, 1768).

[20] Middleton, *Biographia Evangelica*, pp. 474-88.

[21] Middleton, *Biographia Evangelica*, p. 475.

[22] Hill published *Pietas Oxoniensis* in 1768, as his own account of the expulsion of the six students at St. Edmund Hall, Oxford.

[23] Nowell, *An Answer to a Pamphlet*, pp. 1-2.

Apparently, the meeting did not go well, with Whitefield reporting that they viewed him as a 'madman', and concluding that 'There is a fundamental difference between us and them.'[24] That difference was about regeneration, which in turn was directly related to the baptismal rite in the Book of Common Prayer, and clearly Toplady felt it was a sufficiently important issue to devote attention to in his response to Nowell.[25] Indeed, in July 1776, he contributed an exposition of Hebrews 6:4-6 to *TGM*, wherein he took care to distinguish between baptism and eternal salvation.[26] This apparent point of controversy points us next to our definitions, and how Toplady sat within them.

Framing this Evangelical

For many, David Bebbington's 'quadrilateral' of the four qualities or defining characteristics of 'Evangelical religion' remains a workable descriptor of the term in practice. Those four qualities are, (1) conversionism, (2) activism, (3) biblicism and (4) crucicentrism.[27] Taken together, these attributes are sufficiently broad to accommodate both Arminian and Calvinistic arms of the Great Awakening, and the development of evangelicalism as a distinct strand. Furthermore, they are far from being independent of one another: Bebbington comments that 'Conversionism was bound up with major theological convictions',[28] which meant it was inextricably connected to Biblicism, as it was to Activism because conversion resulted in changed lives and priorities which fed through to quite specific and distinct actions.

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[24] Thomas Kidd, *George Whitefield, America's Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), p. 64.
[25] Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated,* pp. 89-92.
[26] 'A.T.', 'Considerations on Hebrews 6:4-6', *TGM July 1776,* vol. III, 326-29.
[27] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain,* pp. 2-3.
[28] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain,* p. 6.

The 'quadrilateral' of defining factors was not prescriptive, though: they took the form of a living, dynamic matrix which shifted emphasis in different contexts. Bebbington comments on the stress, during the early days of the revival, on the first and last of the four, and then goes on to highlight a number of variants (John Wesley, Joseph Milner, Ryle) as well as the historic Puritan emphasis on ruin, redemption and regeneration.[29] Clearly, without 'conversionism' (the belief that lives need supernatural change), there would be no evangelicalism, and so the thorny question of the mechanism for such change was pivotal for Anglicans such as Toplady. 'Evangelicals who were also Anglicans had a tangled knot to untie' states Bebbington, pithily, and then goes on to explain: 'The problem was perennial because the idea that infants are regenerate through baptism does appear in the Book of Common Prayer, whereas Evangelicals have believed that only through conversion does a person become a Christian.'[30]

Moreover, this was very far from being some kind of theoretical, moot point, as the experimental issue of 'assurance' was closely connected with conversion. As Bebbington states, 'The novelty of Evangelical religion…lay precisely in claiming that assurance normally accompanies conversion.'[31] In fact, the four attributes quickly led to identifiable Enlightenment preoccupations: activism, initiated by conversionism, fed through to lived experience. Biblicism gave rise to theological convictions (which included Crucicentrism) which naturally pointed to empiricism. Both Conversionism and Crucicentrism had implications for the absolutely central evangelical preoccupation with assurance. Toplady would no doubt have concurred with such a sentiment: writing under his own initials, in the April 1776 edition of *TGM*, he included the text of 'A Letter Concerning the Assurance of faith'. This is no theological treatise, being clearly pastoral in intent, but it includes a sequence of concepts which are distinctively evangelical: 'personal

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[29] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain,* p. 3.
[30] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain,* pp. 9-10.
[31] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain,* p. 7.

experience of the Holy Spirit's dealing with the soul', faith itself, Christ's righteousness as the basis for justification, the goal of 'full assurance'.[32] Intriguingly, he stated 'After all, I apprehend that the very essence of assurance lies in *Communion with God*' (Toplady's emphasis and capitalisation)[33], and what follows is a deeply experiential description of what that means in practice. This was *both* reflective of Enlightenment empiricism, translated into the language of experimental religion, but *also* looked back to historic treatments, such as John Owen's *Communion with God,* published in 1657.[34] In the final paragraph, Toplady deals with the case of believers who lack assurance: 'Are there any weak in faith who come under the denomination of bruised reeds and smoking flax? Let them know that God will take care of them.'[35] This is language redolent of the Puritan, Richard Sibbes. One of his most popular works, *The Bruised Reed and Smoking Flax* was published in 1630[36] and Ella tells us that Sibbes was one of Toplady's favourite authors.[37] Both books are wholly pertinent to Toplady's purposes in this article. Thus the linkage between conversion and assurance may be a 'novelty' of evangelicalism, but it seems that Toplady was looking back further than the Revival, in his exploration of this theme. This emphasis upon historical continuity is consistent with his adoption of Calvinistic scholasticism, and yet it would be difficult to assert that his ministry was somehow inconsistent with the Bebbington quadrilateral, which attempts to enshrine eighteenth century religious sensibilities within a broader consensus. Paul Helm argues that, whilst Toplady's vocational associations were definitively evangelical, his own self-

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[32] 'A.T.', 'A Letter Concerning the Assurance of Faith', *TGM April 1776,* vol. III, 175-8.

[33] This emphasis is continued in his sermon 'Good News from Heaven', delivered at the Lock Chapel on 19 June 1774, and reprinted in *Works*, p. 369.

[34] This is an extended treatise based upon 1 John 1: 3, which frames the believer's conception of 'communion with God' in Trinitarian terms, emphasising the second Person of the Trinity and correlating with biblicism, crucicentrism and activism. Owen's work is highly structured and textual, but moves swiftly to the experiential.

[35] 'A.T.', 'A Letter Concerning the Assurance of Faith', *TGM April 1776,* vol. III, 178.

[36] This was a sermon on Matthew 12: 20 in twenty-eight 'chapters', focusing on the frailty of the believer, compared with the benevolent rule of Christ. It embodies 'practical theology', is warm in tone and is conducive to fostering assurance.

[37] Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady,* p. 109.

understanding was far more expansive than the more chronologically-constrained phenomenon we have come to identify as 'evangelicalism', based upon Bebbington's functional descriptors.[38]

Such a perspective is consistent with what we have already discerned, in that Toplady seemed happy to self-identify (in print) as either an Anglican or a Calvinist, whilst he seemed resistant to other labels. We have seen, for instance, that whilst he clearly drew on the writings of Charnock, Sibbes, Manton and even (by inference) Owen, he was certainly not fond of the label 'puritan', for reasons that had a historical explanation.[39] It could well be that this retrospective theological frame was a natural justification for caution when it came to the new terminology of evangelicalism, assuming the validity of Bebbington's thesis that it was a distinct eighteenth century development. Bruce Hindmarsh correctly identifies the lens for understanding this phenomenon called 'evangelicalism': '…this new expression of Christianity arose in the midst of those consequential changes in society that we now routinely acknowledge with capital letters: Modernity, the Enlightenment, and the Scientific Revolution.'[40] It is, of course, entirely conceivable that, notwithstanding those external cultural influences, Toplady was internalising his own sense of identity quite differently, framed more by his perception of historical continuity, despite his close association with those who may have identified as evangelicals. As we have noted from Rack, 'Wesley, who seems simply to have inherited an instinctive revulsion against Calvinism, probably had no profound knowledge of its scholastic literature as well as little sympathy with it.'[41] It seems highly improbable that he was the only one to have lacked Toplady's ability to locate his own sense of Christian identity within the historic continuities of scholasticism.

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[38] Helm, 'Calvin, A. M. Toplady and the Bebbington Thesis' in Haykin and Stewart (eds), *The Emergence of Evangelicalism, Exploring Historical Continuities*, p. 208.

[39] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 531, 711, 727.

[40] Hindmarsh, *The Spirit of Early Evangelicalism*, p. 4.

[41] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 451.

Assessing Toplady's own sense of identity may further be complicated if we draw our benchmarks for comparison from the *activities* of his contemporaries. For example, between his first trip to America in 1738, and his final journey there in 1770, Whitefield traveled to Georgia and various East Coast States seven times.[42] If such a focus on 'conversionism' is an appropriate benchmark, then Toplady failed the test, as he declined to accompany Whitefield on his adventures. Wesley's own experience in America (1735-8) did not incline him to repeat the exercise, but over his lifetime he traveled over 250,000 miles, preaching 40,000 sermons in 30,000 locations. Furthermore, he was active in social concerns such as temperance, healthcare, education, prison reform and the abolition of slavery.[43] If our emphasis is therefore on the 'activism' characteristic within the Bebbington quadrilateral, then, again, Toplady would appear to miss the mark, given his restricted movements between Harpford, Fen Ottery and Broad Hembury (Devon), Blagdon (Somerset), London and Ireland, as well as the relentlessly theological focus of his ministry.[44]

Hindmarsh discusses the somewhat fluid nature of identity within the arena of 'Evangelical spiritual autobiography', suggesting that when early modern people attempted to answer the question 'Who am I?', one solution lay in the construction of narrative.[45] In Toplady's case, the narrative that is clearly-defined is one which combined his Calvinism with his Anglicanism. This does raise a challenge for the Bebbington thesis because, as Paul Helm points out, Toplady's own controversialist stance regarding Wesleyan Methodism places him somewhat outside the accepted pan-evangelical model.[46] It seems that the pragmatic functional matrix supplied by the 'quadrilateral' may be less helpful when it comes to defining Toplady's position, but this may not be

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[42] Bret E. Carroll (ed), *The Routledge Historical Atlas of Religion in America* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 56-9.

[43] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, pp. 89, 94, 138, 186, 191, 204, 212, 214ff.

[44] Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady,* pp. 76, 81, 99, 121, 286, 297.

[45] D. Bruce Hindmarsh*, The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p10.

[46] Helm, 'Calvin, A. M. Toplady and the Bebbington Thesis' in Haykin & Stewart (eds), *The Emergence of Evangelicalism*, p. 219.

an entirely novel discovery: when Hindmarsh embarks upon the task of 'The Defining of Newton's Evangelical Theology', it is significant that his immediate focus is on the man's Calvinism, and on it's categorisation as either 'high', 'moderate' or 'strict'. Based upon Andrew Fuller's (1754-1815) method of categorisation, Newton falls into the 'strict' category, which is associated with the 'evangelical' camp.[47] Within Fuller's schema, 'high' means antinomianism or hyper-calvinism, and 'moderate' means Baxterianism or Ameraldianism. From this perspective, 'evangelicalism' could therefore so easily be a proxy for 'strict Calvinism', which (assuming the approach is valid) would actually make Wesleyan Arminianism the outlier, rather than Toplady's conviction Calvinism. This could have unhelpful implications for historical analysis, and points towards the need for a more nuanced set of criteria for assessing Toplady's evangelical credentials. Where else might we look for help on this point? Again, Paul Helm suggests one approach, in what seems at first glance to be a potential criticism of Toplady's stance:

> However, the Calvinism he defended in his writings on the Church of England was not his 'experimental' Calvinism but rather the doctrinal framework in which such religious experience, the 'tasting' of God's grace in its various workings, could occur and be understood. Rather surprisingly, in his works on the doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England, Toplady does not typically defend it in doctrinal terms, by expounding the Articles and Liturgy in Calvinistic vein, as one might expect.[48]

Because this is a somewhat contentious statement, it was worth including at length: much hangs on how one might define 'his works on the doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England', a term which might reasonably apply to the wider scope of Toplady's written works, given that he conceived his Calvinism and his Anglicanism to be inextricably conjoined. And what might 'experimental' Calvinism look like, in practice? Bebbington joins the dots between Enlightenment empiricism, inductive scientific methods and 'experimental religion' which must be 'tried by experience'.[49] Hindmarsh recounts Toplady's familiarity with 'Newton, Locke, Boyle, Halley,

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[47] Hindmarsh, *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition*, pp. 122-3.
[48] Helm, 'Calvin, A. M. Toplady and the Bebbington Thesis', p. 218.
[49] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 57.

Keill, and the physico-theologians'.[50] As we have already seen, Toplady evidenced his high regard for the Newtonian empiricism, but more importantly, in his 1769 translation of Zanchius he had most explicitly affirmed that central evangelical theme of 'experimental religion', when he wrote of the pressing need for the public preaching of predestination:

> When a converted person is assured, on the one hand, that ALL, whom God hath predestinated to eternal life, shall infallibly enjoy that eternal life, to which they were chosen; and, on the other hand, when he discerns the signs of election, not only in himself, but also in the rest of his fellow-believers; and concludes, from thence (as in a judgement of charity, he ought) that they are as really elected, as himself: how must his heart glow with love to his Christian brethren! How feelingly will he sympathise with them, in their distresses! How tenderly will he bear with their infirmities![51]

In fact, there is quite a bit more of relevance here to our understanding of Toplady's evangelicalism, for instance on the subject of assurance:

> Predestination should be publicly taught and insisted upon, in order to confirm and strengthen true believers in the certainty and confidence of their salvation. For, when regenerate persons are told, and are enabled to believe, that the glorification of the elect is assuredly fixed in God's eternal purpose, that it is impossible for any of them to perish; and when the regenerate are led to consider themselves, as actually belonging to this elect body of Christ; what can establish, strengthen, and settle their faith like this?[52]

These are not isolated examples of this kind of experimental application. In his arguably more academic *Historic Proof*, Toplady took great care to assess the experiential implications of doctrinal truth. He explored this emphasis through his account of Nicholas Ridley's doctrine of perseverance,[53] and Hugh Latimer's writings on the 'Certainty of Election',[54] as well as in multiple other examples of the output of historic teachers within the Anglican Church. Thus, Toplady's doctrinal and experimental Calvinism was intentionally focused on engendering Christian assurance, which does correlate with Bebbington's insight into the evangelical turn: 'Whereas the Puritans had held that assurance is rare, late and the fruit of struggle in the experience of believers, the Evangelicals believed it to be general, normally given at conversion and the result of simple

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[50] Hindmarsh, *The Spirit of Early Evangelicalism*, p. 145.
[51] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, p. 105.
[52] Toplady, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination*, pp. 99-100.
[53] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 281-2.
[54] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 290.

acceptance of the gift of God.'[55] Catherine A. Brekus picks up on this very specific transition in emphasis, when discussing the teaching of Solomon Stoddard and Cotton Mather in America: 'This emphasis on assurance was built on a new epistemology - a new way of thinking about human knowledge - that marked a break with the Puritan tradition. Although Puritans had always scrutinised their lives for signs of divine grace, they had also been skeptical about what they could genuinely know about themselves or God.'[56] The argument that evangelicalism was peculiarly characterised by a new sense of assurance, is not without its contentions. Joel Beeke argues that 'This deep, intimate relationship with God, associated with full assurance though not emphasised in later eighteenth century evangelicalism as it was in seventeenth century Puritanism and Dutch Further Reformation, was nevertheless fully advocated by men such as Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield.'[57]

It is, in fact, worth asking the question: *What had changed?* Pierre Bayle, in his 1697 *Historical and Critical Dictionary* may have provided a framework for scepticism which was taken up by Diderot, d'Alembert and others, but Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, coupled with the Newtonian empiricism seems to have given a new voice to the articulation of belief. Hindmarsh links this to the distinctive Enlightenment rediscovery of the self: 'The evangelical conversion owed much to the rise of the new individualism in modern society, but at the same time the self-identity of evangelicals contrasted sharply with the pathological autonomy of the secular individualist self that has often been taken as the normative development of the Enlightenment.'[58] Indeed, it could be argued that the Enlightenment reinvention of the individual was being taken to its logical, atomised extreme by philosophers such as Hume. Ritchie Robertson, referring to Book I

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[55] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain,* p. 43.

[56] Catherine A. Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World: The Rise of Evangelical Christianity in Early America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 97.

[57] Joel R. Beeke, 'Evangelicalism and The Dutch Further Reformation' in Haykin and Stewart (eds.), *The Emergence of Evangelicalism, Exploring Historical Continuities*, p. 166.

[58] Hindmarsh*, The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, pp. 347-8.

of Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40) concludes, 'Hume ends by defining the self as "nothing but a bundle or collection of different impressions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement". My conviction that I am the same person that I was twenty years ago is based only on memory, which makes us aware of 'that chain of causes and effects, which constitute our self or person'.'[59]

Given the dangers that such a view held for any objective view of reality, including our capacity to rely on the very memory of a moment of spiritual conversion, it is perhaps unsurprising that Christian thinkers sought to find a better way. One such was the New England theologian, Jonathan Edwards (whose grandfather was Solomon Stoddard) who dealt extensively with the matter of assurance in his treatise *Religious Affections* (1746), but also via an epistemology which sought coherence by anchoring perception inherently into a working framework of reality.[60] Josh Moody affirms that Edwards was undoubtedly working with a Lockean epistemology, but helpfully explores the rigorous way in which the new ideas were welcomed but carefully analysed before assimilation took place. There was to be no 'wholesale transplantation' of concepts that had not been critically evaluated.[61] This bears some resemblance to Toplady's agenda and focus: the rediscovery of the basis for confidence in both Christian experience and assurance, which he did not locate in metaphysics or philosophy, but in the historic scholastic formulations of the doctrine of predestination.

Toplady's Sense of Evangelical Identity

Paul Helm's surprise (above) regarding the way in which Toplady chose to articulate and defend the historic Calvinism of the Church of England may betray a misunderstanding regarding his

[59] Robertson, *The Enlightenment,* pp. 277-8.
[60] Moody, *Jonathan Edwards and the Enlightenment*, p. 101.
[61] Moody, *Jonathan Edwards and the Enlightenment*, p. 107.

approach. Certainly, the translation of Zanchius supplied a scholastic underpinning, and the *Historic Proof* comprehensively surveyed the dogmatic antecedents of Anglicanism, but why did he dwell at such length on the Protestant Martyrs? This is certainly no slight or incidental component in his treatment, commencing with a commentary on the Albigenses and Waldenses, their statements of faith and the extensive persecution they suffered from around AD 1100 through to 1544.[62] Toplady followed this with numerous other early examples, predating the Reformation: Gotteschalcus, a Benedictine Monk (AD 840); John Huss (burned at the stake in AD 1415); Jerome of Prague (burned at the stake AD 1416); William Sawtree (executed AD 1400); Thomas Bilney (burned at the stake in AD 1531); William Tyndale (burned at the stake in 1536).[63] His treatment of 'our English Reformers' (Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer etc) followed a similar pattern, linking the substance of their Calvinistic teaching to their conduct and manner when facing persecution and undergoing execution. Not every Protestant theologian he cited faced violent death or persecution, but Toplady utilised a kind of formula, of which Hugh Latimer, the Bishop of Worcester is a good example.[64]

Latimer's theology was unquenchably Calvinistic in content and tone, and the extent of Toplady's treatment of it is due to the extensive citations, as he sought to demonstrate how the doctrines of election, providence, original sin, conversion, sanctification and justification were very far from being fanciful constructs that had little to do with the gritty reality of living, even in an Enlightened world. How may the believer have reasonable assurance that the substance of his religious convictions correlates with his own 'lived experience'? Said Toplady:

> …we rise to the Fountain, by following the Stream; or arrive at the Knowledge of our own particular Election, by the solid Marks of Sanctification. We judge of God's objective purposes concerning us, by that subjective Work of Grace which he hath wrought within us. As Election is the radical cause

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[62] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 150-8.

[63] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 159, 171, 177, 237-44.

[64] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 286-325.

> of Regeneration; so Regeneration, and its fruits, are the Clue, by which we are guided to the Sight and Sense of Election.[65]

Thus the kind of knowledge which is assumed by the term 'assurance' is theologically-framed, and the path by which such knowledge may be obtained, is also theologically mapped-out for the Christian believer. Toplady did not regard a state of spiritual awareness as accidental, but suggests that the believer should be looking for a correlation between (a) the biblical pattern, (b) inward disposition, and (c) external circumstances, behaviours, actions. Then he quoted Latimer directly: 'When you find these three Things in your Hearts [viz. Repentance, Faith and a Desire to leave Sin], then you may be SURE your Names are written in the Book: and you may be sure also, that you are ELECTED and PREDESTINATED to everlasting Life.'[66] Thus, if assurance is an inextricable component of evangelical Christianity, Toplady chose to ground his understanding of that firmly within the context of historic Calvinism, rather than in any metaphysical novelty thrown up by new modes of eighteenth century thinking. In the second volume of his *Historic Proof*, he then returned to the theme of martyrdom, supplying an extended list of Calvinistic Christians who had paid the ultimate price.[67] Of significant interest here are extracts that Toplady included from the selected martyrs' own correspondence, articulating in their own words how the doctrine of election fed through to their experience of persecution, their capacity to process what they were going through in a meaningful way, and to being sustained through the rigours of torture and death.[68] There would have been little tangible benefit from simply reproducing existing accounts, because an abundance of martyrology content was already available within the writings of Foxe and Strype, which were widely available at the time.[69] Furthermore, it is doubtful that Toplady's keen

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[65] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 290.

[66] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 290-1.

[67] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 386-466.

[68] eg. The example of John Careless of Coventry: Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 413-421.

[69] The *Actes and Monuments of these Latter and Perilous Days, Touching Matters of the Church* was originally published by John Day in 1563, the author being John Foxe. Due to its popularity, it went through many reprints (four in Foxe's lifetime) and was continually extended and updated.

mind would have been satisfied by some simplistic connection between martyr-status and the veracity of each individual's faith, especially given that Foxe tended to downplay the heterodoxy of his subjects.[70] The common theme linking every example is the centrality of the doctrine of predestination, which means that Toplady was exploring how this (and related doctrines, such as perseverance) made a difference within the actual experience of living and dying under difficult and distressing circumstances. This seems to be critically important to understanding how Toplady was working out his evangelical credentials: if Bebbington's argument that evangelicals had a particular part to play in reappropriating the historic doctrine of assurance is valid, then Toplady was clearly intent on showing how that could only hold together within a Calvinistic theological framework.

The fact that he devoted so much of his *Historic Proof* to a kind of predestination-related martyrology deserves further comment. Clearly, it has an immediate, and probably primary, relevance to the evangelical emphasis on experience and assurance, but there is an intriguing secondary application to the vexing matter of suffering, given the broader historical context. Peter Gay documents a focus on the writings of the pagan Stoics by such key Enlightenment *philosophes* as Montesquieu, Diderot and Voltaire,[71] going on to comment that, 'In the great campaign against Christianity, all - Stoicism and Epicureanism as much as Skepticism, especially Stoicism - had their place.' He laments that the Church Fathers had assimilated Stoic ideas to such an extent that now the *philosophes* were having to exert themselves to disentangle the ancient Greek ideas from the Christianised amalgam that had prevailed for some time.[72] Such a charge was hardly baseless: Richard Hooker had enlisted a range of pagan philosophers (including Homer, Plato, the Stoics and

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[70] Elizabeth Evenden and Thomas S. Freeman, *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England: The Making of John Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[71] Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995), pp. 50-51.

[72] Gay, *The Enlightenment: The Rise of Modern Paganism*, p. 296.

Hermes) in a formulation of proto-Trinitarian doctrine, and in this matter he was heavily dependent upon Aquinas.[73]

But Enlightenment sensitivities were not unalloyed: Jonathan Israel suggests that Enlightenment thinkers such as du Marsais and d'Holbach, as with Spinoza, had little fondness for the asceticism of the Stoics, because it reminded them a bit of Catholicism. Instead, they rated the Epicureans rather higher, for perhaps obvious reasons. Margaret Jacob comments that 'the art of fictional pornography was born in the century of light', and confirms that the Enlightenment period saw the flourishing of clubs which celebrated bawdry, drink, drugs, libertinism.[74] If they preferred to think that their late seventeenth and eighteenth century ideas were less directly dependent upon their pagan antecedents, certainly Bacchus had triumphed over Socrates.[75] Thus the secular Enlightenment thinkers were coming up with their own answers to the perennial challenge of human suffering, and their answer was, in effect, to sever the fruitful partnership that had previously existed between Athens and Jerusalem.[76]

Jonathan Yeager records the pervasive influence of the teachings of ancient pagan thinkers in Enlightenment Scotland, commenting that '[John] Erskine and other evangelicals were not against the teachings of Stoicism per se. Rather, as Moncrieff later reflected, the problem with many of the polite teachers of the day was their "absurd affectation of bringing their public instructions" from Socrates, Plato or Seneca alone instead of first drawing their morality from the gospel.'[77] It seems that there was a growing recognition amongst evangelicals that a 'better story' was required, and Yeager differentiates between Erskine's approach and that of the moderates: 'The difference was

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[73] Torrance Kirby, 'Richard Hooker and Thomas Aquinas on Defining Law' in Manfred Swenson and David VanDrunen (eds.) *Aquinas Among the Protestants* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), p. 105.

[74] Margaret C. Jacob, 'Polite Worlds of Enlightenment' in Fitzpatrick, Jones, Knellwolf and McCalman (eds.) *The Enlightenment World*, p. 274.

[75] Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind*, p. 203.

[76] John Mark Reynolds, *When Athens Met Jerusalem, An Introduction to Classical and Christian Thought* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), pp. 226, 235, 239ff.

[77] Yeager, *Enlightened Evangelicalism*, p. 61.

that Erskine's rhetoric was more evangelical than the moderates, meaning that he formulated his Stoicism entirely on the orthodoxy of Reformed theology and grounded it on a penal substitutionary view of the atonement…Erskine determined to remain committed to the orthodoxy of the past even if embracing popular rhetoric.'[78] Catherine Brekus encapsulates the challenges accompanying a Protestant response to suffering, in an Enlightenment world:

> Evangelicals resisted the stream of Enlightenment thought that would later be known as humanitarianism, but as Sarah Osborn's memoir reveals they were also influenced by it. Despite denying that God's actions should always be understood in rational terms as promoting human fulfilment, they absorbed some of the ideas and language they found most troubling. Christians throughout history have viewed suffering as religiously meaningful, even redemptive, but under the pressures of humanitarian thought, evangelicals ended up wedding a new vocabulary of benevolence, happiness and "reasonableness" to an older one of divinely-ordained suffering.[79]

This is an intriguing comment, in that it demonstrates that the dynamic between the 'old' Puritan ideas, and the new secular narrative of a kind of enlightened Stoic-Epicurean hybrid was not a straightforward one to navigate. The more declarative model of assurance embodied by the evangelicals could well be a natural response to the problem of suffering, but on what kinds of footing could such an assurance reliably stand? It would seem that Toplady's private thoughts supply answers to that question: in his diary for Sunday, 13 December, 1767, he recorded 'Between morning and afternoon service, read through Dr. Gill's excellent and nervous tract on predestination, against Wesley. How sweet is that blessed and glorious doctrine to the soul, when it is received through the channel of inward experience!'[80] And then, two weeks later in an almost textbook example of eighteenth century evangelical utterance, 'Lord, how is it that I have been so signally favoured of thee! O keep me to the end steadfast in thy truths. Let me but go on experimentally and sensibly to know thee…'.[81] In fact, Toplady's private journal is tinctured

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[78] Yeager, *Enlightened Evangelicalism,* p. 62.
[79] Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World*, p. 60.
[80] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs' in *Works*, p. 4.
[81] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs' in *Works*, p. 7.

throughout with this kind of emotive language: on the 29 December, 1767, he spoke of a spiritual experience which was,

> …too sweet, too clear, too powerful to be the daughter of imagination…attended with joy unspeakable, as much superior to all the sensations excited by earthly comforts, as the heavens are higher than the earth…These acts of faith, love and spiritual aspiration, are subsequent to, and occasioned by, this unutterable reception of divine influence. I bless my God, I know his inward voice; the still, small whisper of his good Spirit: and can distinguish it from every other suggestion whatever.

A day later, we have the intriguing statement, 'Before I went to bed, God gave me such sense of his love as came but little short of full assurance.'[82] That he was acquainted with such a distinctive evangelical concept ('full assurance') and also felt able to distinguish between that and other similar (or lesser) experiences, demonstrates that Toplady's evangelicalism was unfeigned, and a strong, driving force in his Christian spirituality.

But this was no untethered or subjective form of experimentalism: on Thursday, 14 January, 1768, he quoted extensively from 'Mr. Lee's choice Sermon on "Secret Prayer"', number 14 of the Cripplegate Exercises, including this comment: 'The holy motions upon the hearts of saints, in prayer, are the fruits of God's unchangeable decrees of love to them, and the appointed ushers of mercy: he graciously determines to give a praying, arguing, warm, affectionate frame, as the *prodromus*, or forerunner of some decreed mercy.'[83] Toplady did not identify whether the author was Samuel Lee (1625-1691) or Francis Lee (d. 1688), but both men were Puritan ministers who served as lecturers at the Cripplegate during the 1660s and 1670s. This may be distinctive Puritan exposition, but it discovers a new voice in Toplady, with this emphasis upon an evangelical, experimental Christianity, where Calvinistic orthodoxy both initiates and gives meaning to subjective experience. Even the most inward and intimate expressions of prayer are, according to this view, framed by God's decrees, and hint at the depths of a spirituality which was crafted, as I

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[82] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs' in p. 8.
[83] Row (ed.), 'Memoirs' in *Works*, p. 10.

have argued earlier, within the framework of reformed scholasticism.[84] Willem J. Van Asselt and Pieter L. Rouwendal argue that the practice of reformed scholasticism was characterised by three distinct components: (i) the connection between theology and praxis, (ii) its argumentative (or 'elenctic') quality, and (iii) its interrelationships with other disciplines (philology, exegesis, philosophy etc).[85] It is intriguing to see that even Toplady's most intimate 'evangelical' expressions of spiritual experience are expressive of this culture and discipline. That is to say, his approach suggests a settled confidence in an 'ancient' spiritual discipline, as fit for purpose in the 'new' world of Enlightenment concepts, allowing him to marry theology and epistemology in a way that was consistent. The rancour between Wesley and himself could lead to the conclusion that his Calvinism was to blame, but it is perhaps more likely that his underlying reformed scholasticism was the determining factor, given the gulf between his and Wesley's understanding of the subject.

Targeting Establishment Arminianism, a Switch of Emphasis

When Toplady switched from the audiences of himself (in his diary), or the evangelical faithful, he abandoned this kind of experiential terminology. In his 'Humble Address to the Episcopal Bench', the final chapter in the *Historic Proof*, Toplady addressed himself to the Anglican Bishops, alluding to themes that they would have been familiar with, and using their own terminology. He described 'this dreadful Declension from the Scripture and from the Church', lamenting that 'Even the lax Theology of Tillotson is almost grown Obsolete'. He catalogued the toxic impacts of '*Arianism*, *Socinianism*, practical *Antinomianism*, and *Infidelity* itself [which] have ALL made their Way

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[84] It is, for example, unlikely that Toplady would have been unaware of Turretin's work on the relationship between the divine decree and the practice and efficacy of prayer: Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology Vol 1*, pp. 319, 328.

[85] Willem J. Van Asselt and Pieter L. Rouwendal, 'Introduction: What Is Reformed Scholasticism?' In Willem J. Van Asselt (ed.), *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011), p. 3.

through that Breach, at which *Arminianism* entered before them.'[86] He continued, in a similar vein, 'Your Lordships see, with Concern, the extending Progress of *Infidelity* - ARMINIANISM has opened the Hatches to this pernicious Inundation.' A couple of paragraphs later, he comments that his listed sequence of doctrinal dilutions are 'back Lanes, which lead, in a direct Line, from *Arminianism* to *Atheism*.'[87] Now, Toplady was not speaking here to evangelicals, and his language was moderated accordingly, but the overall argument remains the same - the antidote to infidelity, or atheism, or a secular reinvention of the self and human experience lies in a recommitment to Calvinistic orthodoxy.

This closing section in the *Historic Proof* is interesting, in that Toplady had adopted an almost consensual style, addressing shared threats, whilst at the same time advocating for the Calvinistic basis of the Church of England. It is difficult to imagine that, if his readers had not been persuaded by the preceding 719 pages of analysis, these closing comments would make very much difference. The gulf across which such a conversation might occur was a large one, for if heterodoxy was seen as a threat, then Methodism was certainly another great concern. Thomas Secker, Bishop of Oxford, lamenting the 'Indiscretions and Extravagances' of the Methodists in 1739, commented that 'some of them, particularly Mr Whitefield, seem blown up with a vanity which I fear hath and will lead them into mighty wrong behaviour.'[88] Secker later became Archbishop of Canterbury (1758-68), so it is unlikely that this suspicion of all things 'enthusiastical' would have waned by the time Toplady published this volume in 1774.

This background therefore helps to explain the nakedly political nature of the argument presented in these closing pages: a positive quotation from Daniel Waterland would have no doubt met with his intended audience's approval. Then a denouncing of the Feathers Tavern petitioners is

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[86] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 722.

[87] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 728-9.

[88] Ingram, 'The Church of England, 1714-1783' in Gregory (ed.), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism Volume II*, p. 63.

followed by the claim that 'The *Calvinism* and the *Episcopacy* of the Church, give equal umbrage to the Petitioning Clergy: who are therefore labouring to roll away *both* these Stones of Offence; and, by one happy Manœuvre, to rid us of ORTHODOXY and PRELACY together. See, Right Reverend Fathers, to what point *Arianism*, *Socinianism* and *Arminianism*, are driving.'[89] There is more of the same, linking together the progress of Arminianism with the decline in Anglican spirituality, until Toplady got to his punchline:

> Look around the Land, and Your Lordships cannot fail of perceiving, that our fiercest *Free-Willers* are, for the most Part, the *Freest Livers*; and that the practical Belief in Universal Grace is, in too many Instances, the Turn-pike Road to Universal Sin.
>
> Your Lordships mark, with becoming Disgust, the continued Existence of *Methodism*. - ARMINIANISM is the Pandoræn Box, from which *this* Evil also hath issued. And tho' Methodism appears, at present, rather to resemble a standing Pool, than an increasing Stream; we know not how soon it may become a running Water, and enlarge itself into an overflowing Flood; if the corrupt Tenets, vented with such raging Zeal in *Mr Wesley's* Meeting-houses, should, unhappily, be re-echoed from the Pulpits of the Established Church. For, certain it is, that Those of the Clergy, who fly the fastest and farthest from Doctrinal CALVINISM; are plunging, more deeply than they imagine, into the grossest Dregs of METHODISM.[90]

These are literally the closing two paragraphs of the *Historic Proof*, so it is important to understand the significance of them. These are not sentiments which may be easily overlooked, through being buried within a larger block of text: they stand on their own, and are clearly intended to have a particular kind of impact. To the modern mind, such language feels inflammatory, even reprehensible, but it is important to note that Toplady's primary target was doctrinal Arminianism, for which (according to his model) Wesleyan Methodism supplied a convenient proxy. It seems that the Bishops' theological radars were detuned to the dangers of the former, but (at that time) they were well aware of the challenges presented by the latter. The Anglican unease with Methodist practices had developed steadily over the years. Frank Baker documents John Wesley's interactions with Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London from 1723 to 1748, who had previously ordained Wesley in 1735. Anxious about the status of his 'religious societies', Wesley approached Gibson, who 'was

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[89] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 727.

[90] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. 731.

universally acknowledged to be the greatest ecclesiastical jurist of his day'.[91] What followed in the ensuing interactions demonstrates Gibson's reluctance to be pinned down by Wesley's questions, as well as a degree of rancour that was managed only by a commitment to civility by both parties. At this point in time, the problem was not orthodoxy, but rather Methodist practices of itineracy and rebaptism. Baker alludes to Wesley's meetings with John Conybeare, the Dean of Christ Church, Oxford in 1738 and 1739, wherein it became apparent that condemnations of field-preaching and Whitefield were uppermost in the Dean's mind: 'Uneasy tolerance gradually gave way to a furious outburst of charges of 'enthusiasm' - the eighteenth century equivalent of religious mania.'[92] Whilst Whitefield may have been the rod which drew the lightning, the Wesleys were guilty by association and increasingly they found church pulpits closed to them, with Canon Laws 47-54 being invoked as justification. Recognising that the Anglican antipathy towards Methodism was not abating, Wesley published his apologia, *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* in 1743, but this did not sufficiently oil the waters of contention. The archbishop of York, Thomas Herring, went into print against the 'enthusiastic ardour' of the Methodists, and Gibson himself published a folio pamphlet entitled *Observations upon the conduct and behaviour of a certain sect usually distinguished by the name of Methodists*, asserting that Wesley's followers had actually been operating illegally.[93] Further attacks followed, one from the bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, Richard Smalbroke, and from George Lavington, the bishop of Exeter whose *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists compar'd* was published in three parts in 1749, 1751 and 1752.[94]

Given the historical evolution of this settled opposition to Methodism at the highest levels within the Church of England, it becomes clear why Toplady aimed his appeal at the Bishops: 'See, Right Reverend Fathers….Your Lordships lament…Your Lordships see, with Concern…Your

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[91] Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 61.
[92] Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, pp. 65-66.
[93] Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 91.
[94] Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, p. 104.

Lordships cannot be insensible…Your Lordships observe, with Pain'[95] This unsubtle approach rather opportunistically exploited Methodism's state of ignominy to enable Toplady to target his attack on the ingress of Arminianism within the Church of England. After all, that had not been the primary concern of the Bishops, so his affirmation of the Lordships' sensibilities was designed to encourage them to associate an increasingly external irritant (Methodism) with an internal danger (Arminianism). This is an appeal for theological consistency, but if we assume Toplady's evangelical credentials, then it was also simultaneously an attempt at a Calvinistic framing of evangelicalism, in order to align it more closely with Anglicanism.

The Gospel Magazine Window

Towards the end of his life, Toplady took over the editorship of *TGM*, during which period (January 1775-June 1776) he published some of his own contributions, as well as at other times also. He wrote under multiple pen-names (Alotli, Ecclesiastes, Tola, Minimus, Concionator, Abdiel, Historiophilus, Gallicus and Probus(?)), but some material seems to have been published anonymously. For example, the March 1771 edition included an article entitled *A Review of a New Publication*, where the tone and style is highly suggestive of Toplady.[96] Here, the (anonymous) author weighed in on the side of James Hervey (1714-1758), in response to the attacks he suffered from John Wesley regarding his book *Theron & Aspasio*. The writer used the epithet 'Mr John' to describe Wesley, which is exactly what Toplady did elsewhere.[97] Furthermore, this article was then referenced directly from Toplady's own magnum opus, *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England*, in a footnote.[98] A degree of ambiguity over provenance reigns elsewhere:

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[95] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, pp. 727-730.
[96] *TGM for March 1771, Number 63*, 134-42.
[97] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. XVII.
[98] Toplady, *Historic Proof*, p. XX.

the November 1775 edition printed the first part of *A Short ESSAY on ORIGINAL SIN*, with no mention of the author. It is only in the concluding part, that one discovers the author to have been 'Minimus', one of Toplady's most-used pen-names.[99]

Nevertheless, there is sufficient content here from which to assess the way in which he was interacting and contributing within the broader 'evangelical' constituency, at whom *TGM* was aimed, albeit with a distinctive, Reformed bias. Alongside Toplady, other editors included Joseph Gurney (1766-74), William Mason (1774-75, and 1776 - suggesting that he was recalled temporarily when Toplady stepped down), and Erasmus Middleton (1776-1805). Other contributors included James Hervey, Henry Venn, Thomas Haweis, John Berridge and William Huntingdon, although a great deal of the material is either unattributed, or hidden behind pen-names ('Theophilus', 'Eusebes') and initials. Given that Toplady has tended to be typecast as a polemicist with poetical overtones, his contributions to *TGM* fall into a broad range of categories.

A significant proportion of his contributions is unashamedly pastoral in its focus: falling into this category is his three-part 'Of the various FEARS, to which GOD'S PEOPLE are liable', published in the November and December 1774 editions and supplement. This is strongly characteristic of evangelical emphases: 'Evangelical fear is peculiar to God's regenerate people: and consists, in a melting *humiliation* for sin; accompanied at times, especially in secret prayer, with gracious *groanings which cannot be uttered*; with a degree of *self-abhorrence*, and of *self-renunciation*; and with a *longing* for the favour, the resemblance, and the presence of God, in the Soul.'[100] In the second part of this treatment, Toplady observed that 'Such enlightened persons will ever be desirous, not barely to admit those truths, in a mere doctrinal way alone; but to experience the *efficacy* of them, and to be *feelingly interested* in the blessings themselves.' He then moved on

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[99] 'Minimus', 'A Short Essay on Original Sin', *TGM for November 1775, No. IV*, 507-516, and *Supplement to TGM for the Year 1775, No. VI*, 601-11.

[100] 'Minimus', 'Of the various FEARS, to which God's People are liable', *TGM for November 1774, No. IV*, 483.

to propose three subjective, experimental tests for the believer, as an antidote to fear and doubt which are entirely consistent with this focus.[101] In the concluding third part, he then flipped the argument about doubt, asserting that,

> Spiritual distresses and misgivings have a tendency, through grace, to keep us *sensible…watchful…* to make us feel the pulse of our souls, by frequent and severe *self-examination*: to kindle longing *aspirations* after God and communion with Him: to lay us *low* at the footstool of Jehovah's sovereignty: to *endear* Christ's blood, righteousness, and intercession: and put us upon looking up to the *Holy Spirit* in prayer, for the support of his presence, and for the unction of his comforts, which alone are able to enlighten and to chase away the darkness of our minds.[102]

In this extract, all the italicising is Toplady's, so these words form his points of emphasis in an extended description of an intensely experiential religion, which he seems to explicitly describe as the sole form of enlightenment. These writings are imbued with the key themes and the mindset of contemporary evangelicalism, which set such a premium on spiritual experience, and are utterly consistent with the new market for narratives which had blossomed. This included Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789), the extended written testimony of Sarah Osborn's *Diary* (1758), Whitefield's *Journals*, reports and letters in the *Transactions* of the Royal Society and Jonathan Edwards' *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (1746). On one level, little of this was entirely novel. Bruce Hindmarsh documents 'William Perkins's *Cases of Conscience* (1606) [which] was one important early casuistical manual', wherein Perkins (the father of practical divinity) provided 'a map for the spiritual geography of the soul' and supplied 'the detailed religious terms for an individual to describe his or her own sense of spiritual inwardness, and to understand how this interiority changed through time and in the midst of crisis.'[103] David Hall unpacks this whole approach, stating that this '…practical divinity rested on premises that were classically Protestant and, in most respects, aligned with

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[101] 'Minimus', 'Of the various FEARS, to which God's People are liable', 540-1.

[102] 'Minimus', 'Of the various FEARS, to which God's People are liable', *Supplement to TGM for the Year 1774, No. IV*, 565.

[103] Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England*, pp. 36-7.

Reformed practice and doctrine. Several of these premises were affirmed in the Thirty-Nine Articles and the Scots Confession of 1560.'[104] A little later, he discusses the 'experience-textured centre of the practical divinity' before evoking the devotional life of the Puritans, and focusing on a real distinctive: 'The point of departure was self-examination, to the end of gaining a "true sight of [the] sin" that held every Christian bondage or, as Perkins noted, of being "pricked" in the heart with "grief" for being such a sinner.'[105] This closely resembles the kind of emphasis on display within Toplady's *TGM* pastoral treatment of doubt and fear.

Ryan Hoselton confirms that when Jonathan Edwards was writing so forensically on the topic of experience, he achieved a synthesis of 'experiential piety' (derived from Puritan practical divinity) and 'the new intellectual expressions of experimental philosophy in the British empiricist tradition.' This fusion brought together input from Puritan divines such as Sibbes and Flavel, and wedded them to the 'language and advancements of the scientific revolution and new learning.' [106] This is highly suggestive that evangelicalism was less an entirely new or distinct religious phenomenon, but rather a continuing strand of Reformed Christianity that had discovered a new lexicon of terms, with which to articulate its sense of self-identity in the modern era. Toplady, however, was not merely content with repackaging old truths in shiny new Enlightenment clothes as he seems to have been consciously working on the efficacy of synthesis. In the April 1777 edition of *TGM*, after he had relinquished the editorship, is published his 'Reflections on the Conversion of Matthew, recorded in Luke v. 27, 28'. At first sight, this seems to be a relatively orthodox piece of exposition, and quite resistant to the familiar Enlightenment themes: 'Man is as much a fallen creature at present, as he was 4 or 5,000 years ago: nor can less suffice to his renewal *now*, than

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[104] Hall, *The Puritans, A Transatlantic History*, p. 111.

[105] Hall, *The Puritans, A Transatlantic History*, pp. 119, 122.

[106] Ryan P. Hoselton, 'Experientialism' in Harry S. Stout (ed.), *The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopaedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2017), p.213.

was necessary to his renewal *then*.'[107] Not for Toplady, a kind of natural, progressive enlightening, but then a little later he grounds his understanding of human rationality, in the nature of the Creator: '…since all God's dealings with his rational creatures, in a way of grace, are wisely and wonderfully suited to the facultys with which he had thought proper to endue them.'[108] This is in relation to the interaction between the freedom of the human will, and the sovereignty of God's saving activities, but most significantly provides a reliable basis for believing that our own internal perceptions may be reliable.

Thus Toplady was able to speak objectively about assurance: 'In the mean while, let us examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith; whether we have reason to trust, that the power of converting grace hath begun to work effectively upon our hearts. In a word, whether we have ever experienced, in a spiritual sense, any thing similar to what the text relates.' And again, 'Bring yourself therefore, now, to the test of God's Word. Try your state and experience, by the touchstone of the text.'[109] Here we have that old Puritan introspection recapitulated for an Enlightenment audience: Toplady had confidence in the dependability of what are arguably subjective internal emotional faculties as a means of discerning a person's true spiritual state, because those perceptions may be reliably calibrated by an objective external standard, namely Biblical revelation. He was busy re-establishing a viable basis for epistemology, given the evangelical world's then current preoccupation with experimentalism: this is a relatively sophisticated level of synthesis, even when compared against modern standards. It is in fact, reasonable to view this as a considered, theological response to Hume's empiricism, which drew on a tradition established via Locke and Berkeley in order to establish a new philosophy of skepticism, where 'epistemology

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[107] 'Minimus', 'Reflections on the Conversion of Matthew, recorded in Luke v. 28', *TGM for April 1777*, 161.
[108] 'Minimus', 'Reflections on the Conversion of Matthew, recorded in Luke v. 28', *TGM for April 1777*, 163.
[109] 'Minimus', 'Reflections on the Conversion of Matthew, recorded in Luke v. 28', *TGM for April 1777,* 169-70.

must be essentially introspective, an examination of our own ideas and perceptions.'[110] Perhaps Toplady, writing for a broader and specifically evangelical constituency, could see the danger of an unfettered subjectivism, and was seeking to establish not only balance, but actually a reliable working model for integrating experience with belief.

In fact, contained within his various contributions to *TGM*, there is some evidence of this intentionality. The papers already considered commenced their treatment from the more subjective, experiential perspective, but Toplady also came at matters from the other end of the spectrum. In the January 1801 edition of *TGM*, twenty-one years after his death, the editor chose to reproduce a paper of his entitled 'Of Election', which at first sight appears to be a rather densely constructed exercise in systematic theology. It adopts almost a catechetical approach, is careful over the Greek text, and avoids taking any shortcuts when it comes to definitions. It incorporates that kind of encyclopaedic awareness of historical theology (when discussing Socianism) that is redolent of a much bigger work, such as the *Historic Proof*, and it utilises a granular cross-referencing of Scripture passages.[111] Published in two halves, the second part (February 1801) advances significantly beyond a mere restatement of doctrine: there is a careful use of logic, and Toplady had clearly anticipated the contemporary objections to the doctrine of election, and had the answers to them.[112] Having first established the theological principles, he then proceeded swiftly to exploring the epistemological implications:

> 'All that remains is to enquire, whether any man may *know*, that *he*, in particular, is in the number of God's elect. With the utmost deference to the hidden things of God, we may safely assert, that the people of Christ may know this, otherwise in vain did Peter exhort those to whom he wrote, to "give all diligence to make their calling and election sure," 2 Pet. i. 10….If the knowledge of election be not attainable, how came Paul to know that he and the believing Ephesians were chosen from eternity? Eph. i. 4,5….But how could Paul know their election? By an extraordinary revelation? No: but by arguing *à posteriori.*[113]

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[110] Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology*, p.199.

[111] 'From the Manuscript of Mr. Toplady', 'Of Election', *TGM No. LXI - For January 1801*, 4, 6, 8.

[112] 'From the Manuscript of Mr. Toplady', 'Of Election', *TGM No. LXII - For February 1801*, p. 48.

[113] 'From the Manuscript of Mr. Toplady', 'Of Election', 49-50.

This is the 'elenctic' theology of Turretin, beginning the process by carefully establishing a coherent system of theological truth, and then deploying that actively in service of certain practical purposes. Clearly, one of those purposes is to provide explanatory substance and justification for Christian experience, and another is to defend it against attack: in the very next paragraph, Toplady stated, 'Rash enthusiasm and daring presumption have not the least countenance from our scheme.' Knowing the establishment's disenchantment with anything that smacked of 'enthusiasm', he had constructed his theological foundations with exceptional care. All of this is integral to his lifelong mission to cement the doctrine of predestination at the heart of evangelical orthodoxy, and he finished his paper with this plea: 'If a doctrine, whose native tendency is to excite such meditations as these, can be hardly chargeable with leading to licentiousness; let the *experimental* reader judge on the contrary, whenever the blessed truths of the gospel, and this of election, among the rest, are received in the love of them, they are the strongest preservatives against every appearance of evil, and effectually promote the increases of practical and undefiled religion.'[114]

Another example serves to establish this point. In the November 1775 edition of *TGM*, Toplady published the first part of an article entitled 'A short ESSAY on ORIGINAL SIN' which concluded in the Supplement for that year. Clearly, the objective of this paper was to establish the bona fides of a key component of Reformation orthodoxy, but whilst Toplady did reference a number of key biblical texts, the way he went about his treatment was circumspect in the extreme. The very first paragraph opened with the telling phrase, 'Self-Knowledge is a Science, to which most persons pretend; but, like the Philosopher's Stone, it is a Secret, which none are masters of, in its full extent.'[115] This is an intriguing place to start: both Locke and Hume had considered the 'self' to be an elusive concept, either discoverable in the activity of doing, or overwhelmed by sensory input, or even (worst case) disappearing entirely when asleep. Thus, describing self-knowledge as a

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[114] 'From the Manuscript of Mr. Toplady', 'Of Election', 55.
[115] 'Minimus', 'A Short Essay on Original Sin', *TGM No. IV - For November 1775*, 507.

'science' immediately raises all kinds of questions about what such a 'science' could be construed to be, and indeed the extent to which a person can reliably be said to 'know' him or herself. Toplady had staked out the territory of human nature in Enlightenment terms, but then used that as a launchpad into a more distinctively theological consideration:

> The most enlightened believer in the world, knows not the utmost of his natural depravation, nor is able to fathom that inward abyss of iniquity, which is perpetually throwing up mire and dirt; and which, like a spring of poison at the bottom of a well, infects and discolours the whole mass. Let the light of scripture and of grace give us ever such humbling view of ourselves, and lead us ever so far into *the chambers of imagery* within, there still are more and *greater abominations* beyond: and, somewhat like the ages of eternity, the farther we advance, the more there is to come.[116]

Thus, an Enlightenment view of the 'self' can so easily dissolve into nothingness or ambiguity, but in comparison, the 'enlightened' believer, even when possessing only a fractional awareness of their own sinful nature, has the practical benefit of the 'light of scripture' to reveal further insight and detail regarding his or her true nature. 'Self-knowledge' is reliably attainable, but not through sole dependence on the ideas of Locke and Hume. Toplady had identified what he considered key shortcomings in the new empiricism, and was applying biblical light as the antidote. And cleverly, knowing that his audience were likely to be familiar with the more populist ideas of the Enlightenment, rather than with the turgid writings of the philosophers themselves, he took care to call out those buzzwords. Thus, 'Is it possible, that any, who calls himself a Christian, can, after considering the above declaration of Christ [Mark 7:20], dare to term the human mind, *a sheet of white paper*?' The italics are Toplady's, drawing the reader's attention to his reference to Locke's *tabula rasa*,[117] to which the authority of Christ's contrasting diagnosis was directly applied.

Similarly, he observed that,

> Multitudes of conjectures have been advanced, and volumes upon volumes have been written, concerning the original of human ill. That *Moral Evil*, in almost every possible branch of it; and that *Natural Evil*, as the consequence of moral; do actually abound all over the world, are truths too

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[116] 'Minimus', 'A Short Essay on Original Sin', 507-8.

[117] Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, Chapter 1, 2, p. 76.

> evident to be denied. That the matter of fact *is* so, will not admit a moment's dispute. But, concerning the primary cause and inlet of these evils, men are not so unanimously agreed.[118]

That the nature of human corruption or depravity was a universally acknowledged problem could not reasonably be denied, judging from the sheer volume of learned treatises on the issue, so argued Toplady. Hobbes had taken a particularly bleak view of human nature,[119] whilst Hume's more sanguine view needed to be contextualised against his conception of animalistic instincts. Nevertheless, amongst these thinkers, individually affected by the same categories of moral shortcomings, there was no substantive agreement when it came to cause and diagnosis - to illustrate that point, he alluded to 'Some of the more considerable and judicious philosophers of heathen antiquity; particularly, the oriental ones (from whom the opinion was learned and adopted by PLATO)…' Indeed, he seems to have anticipated the dependence of Darwin's evolutionary theory on the ideas of the Atomists: 'That, passing through a successive series of transmigrations from a meaner body to a nobler, they rise, by continual progression, from animalcules to insects, from insects to birds or beasts, and from these to men; till, at last, they recover the full grandeur and felicity of their primitive condition.' It would, however, be wholly incorrect to assume that Toplady was simply dismissive of such views, stating, 'I must own, that This was a train of conjectures extremely ingenious, and not a little plausible, when viewed as formed by persons who had not the light of the BIBLE to see by.' He accepted that he might have embraced such as a system 'as the least improbable' had not 'God assigned my birth and residence to a country, where the scriptures of inspiration kindly hold the lamp to benighted reason.'[120] Toplady was not so much repudiating Enlightenment insights, but was, rather, illuminating them with a superior light-source, and demonstrating that internal subjectivities required the external (objective) benchmark of biblical revelation. Such an approach would help build the confidence of the ordinary believer, who would

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[118] 'Minimus', 'A Short Essay on Original Sin', 510-11.
[119] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, (London: 1651).
[120] 'Minimus', 'A Short Essay on Original Sin', 511-12.

have struggled to engage with the writings of Locke and Hume. He went on to demonstrate that the condition of the visible world was explicable theologically, before moving on (in part II) to deal with scriptural evidence, the Scholastic writers, and to terminate his treatment of original sin with a series of twelve practical consequences.[121] This is an articulation of 'practical theology': it begins by contextualising the argument within the present culture, commenting forensically upon the shortcomings of the culture's approach to the subject, before expounding the key theological principles and then showing how they make a difference in real life. Toplady was exposing his more general evangelical readership to the fruits of a scholastic model for engaging with culture.

Toplady's approach here, when dealing with a serious topic such as original sin, was helpful within an evangelical culture which heavily accentuated the experiential or experimental. Thomas Kidd records the repeated instances of opposition to Whitefield's ministry, on the grounds of 'enthusiasm', cropping up in America, Glasgow, London and Exeter.[122] Whitefield, the figurehead of Calvinistic evangelicalism, had been keen to distance himself from charges of enthusiasm, which were equally levelled at the Wesleys, and the publication of George Lavington's *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compar'd* (1749-51) had a damaging impact upon the reputation of evangelicals. Gibson tells us that the work '…was also scholarly and its method made it one of the most effective and widely circulated attacks on Methodism in the eighteenth century…Lavington's most effective blow was in his detailed anatomising of both the inadequacy of Methodist teachers and the frenzied behaviour that accompanied much Methodist activity. Such hysteria seemed to present Whitefield as a charlatan and Lavington regarded his followers as deluded and "harrowed"'.[123] This background helps to explain frame Toplady's approach when crafting material, suitable for the evangelical market: sober in manner, robustly theological, and providing

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[121] 'Minimus', 'A Short Essay on Original Sin', *TGM No. IV - Supplement for 1775*, 603-610.
[122] Kidd, *George Whitefield, America's Founding Father*, pp. 127, 172, 178, 213.
[123] William Gibson, 'Whitefield and the Church of England' in Hammond and Jones (eds.), *George Whitefield, Life, Context, and Legacy*, p. 55.

an effective counterbalance to any tendency to embrace Enlightenment subjectivity without defining its parameters.

But the answers to the charge of 'enthusiasm' did not merely lie in affecting a mien of theological abstraction, or simply in the avoidance of the cruder expressions of excess. In September and October 1775, Toplady published an intriguing piece called *Life A Journey*, a meditation where, he said, 'The chief business therefore, of the present attempt, shall be, to shew, that, to every real christian, *the present life is only a* JOURNEY *to a better*...' It is a gentle, ambling narrative, clearly designed, amongst other things, to help the reader gain a better sense of assurance, a key evangelical motif. The believer is 'No longer *insensible* of our real condition… *Ignorant*…of our danger…No more *impenitent*…retrieved from absolute *unbelief*…No longer habitually *self-righteous*…And, no longer quite *unholy*…'[124] This was a lowest-common-denominator approach, defining evangelical piety by appealing to the felt perception of modest inward changes, but then Toplady moved on to describe what this spirituality looks like in practice: 'Receive, gratefully. Distribute, cheerfully. Enjoy, innocently. Give thanks, incessantly.' In the next paragraph he builds on these couplets: 'Beware of a supine, lukewarm, libertine spirit. Watch unto prayer, guard against negligence. Advance not to the uttermost bounds of your liberty.' Evangelical Christianity was neither about the unrestrained expressions of emotion (which led to accusations of 'enthusiasm'), nor about the kind of rigorous self-policing that results in a neutral stance which is effectively a self-cancellation: 'It is the duty of a christian, not to be ashamed of being singularly good: especially in an age like this, when so many are not ashamed of being eminently bad.'[125] As he sought to work through the metaphor of life as a journey, Toplady went on to advise, 'In a word, endeavour to hit the just medium; so as neither to make too much haste, nor

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[124] 'Minimus', 'Life a Journey', *TGM No. II - For September 1775*, 406.
[125] 'Minimus', 'Life a Journey', 408.

too little speed: neither to loiter, nor to run yourself out of breath.'[126] That this is not some reined-in, pared-back form of religion is evident on the very next page, when he described the experience of the Christian: 'At times, the affections of a saint are warm, sublime, and strongly drawn up to God and divine things.'[127] In part 2 of the article, he assures his reader that, in the journey of life, God gives the believer '…the full assurance of faith, a taste of Canaan's grapes, on our way to Canaan's land' and, after a discussion of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit, returns again to the theme of testing one's faith in practice: 'But, if you have ground to hope, that this work of grace is *experienced* by you, in some degree; if, on looking at your soul in the gospel glass, you can discern the traces of faith, love, repentance, and sanctification there; you are in the number of them who have set forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan you shall come.'[128]

Toplady's position on the doctrine of predestination has been so interpreted to mean that he leant towards the 'high' end of the Calvinist spectrum, but the same article displays his warm and open evangelical views:

> The readers of this address, and indeed the whole world at large, may be distributed into *two kinds* of people: of those who are travelling to Canaan, and those who are going the direct contrary way. There are but *two roads*, the Broad, which leadeth to destruction; and the Narrow, which opens into Life. *Travellers* all mankind are; and travellers at a very swift rate. The grand point is, *Where art thou travelling TO?*[129]

The same approach is evident in the November 1776 edition, when Toplady responded to a written enquiry from an anonymous author, who was apparently near death, and clearly concerned about his spiritual state. This reply is significant:

> If I am rightly informed, you have, formerly, sat under the sound of the gospel. Let me beseech you, Sir, to cry mightily to Him who is able to save, that the Holy Ghost may realise to your departing Soul, those precious truths of Grace, which have, it seems, been often brought to your ears. Nothing short of *experimental* religion, will stand you in any stead. The Lord JESUS enable you, by the operation of his Spirit, to come to him, as a lost sinner; throwing yourself on the RIGHTEOUSNESS

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[126] 'Minimus', 'Life a Journey', 409.

[127] 'Minimus', 'Life a Journey', 410.

[128] 'Minimus', 'Life a Journey', *TGM No. II - For October 1775*, 469, 472-3.

[129] 'Minimus', 'Life a Journey', 469, 471-2.

> of his Life, and on the ATONEMENT of his Death, for your *free* Pardon and *full* Justification with God.[130]

The tone here is positively *Whitefieldian*, in its urgency and obvious intent on persuasion. Clearly, the expression of Toplady's faith did not err in the direction of the arid and doctrinaire formulations of Tobias Crisp, neither did he make faith itself a kind of work that the penitent was required to perform. He may have been unable to follow in the footsteps of his evangelising friend, or even after Wesley, but there is no denying the 'conversionism' on display in passages such as these.

One key diagnostic of evangelicalism which Bebbington identifies is that of the doctrine and experience of assurance: 'Whereas the Puritans had held that assurance is rare, late and the fruit of struggle in the experience of believers, the Evangelicals believed it to be general, normally given at conversion and the result of simple acceptance of the gift of God.'[131] Hindmarsh also repeatedly alludes to this distinguishing feature.[132] Jonathan Edwards, representing an archetypal nexus between Calvinism and Enlightenment thinking, reflected extensively on the nature of assurance (as distinct from 'enthusiasm') in his account of David Brainerd's short life.[133] This became a popular primer on the nature of evangelical experience. Toplady's article 'Life a Journey' dwells at some length on this topic, but he also published a very specific response to a letter in the April 1776 edition of *TGM*, entitled 'A Letter, concerning the Assurance of Faith'. Whilst he clearly connected the experience of assurance with the internal work of the Holy Spirit, and with the practice of 'Communion with God', it is also clear that he sought to differentiate between (a) Faith, (b) Assurance of faith, and (c) Full Assurance.[134] It seems likely that Toplady's choice of words here is

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[130] 'Minimus', 'Letter II', *TGM - For November 1776*, 520

[131] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 43.

[132] Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, pp. 90, 149, 157, 216, 336.

[133] Jonathan Edwards, *An Account of the Life of the Late Reverend David Brainerd* (Boston: D. Henchman, 1749), pp. 276-79, 281-87.

[134] 'A.T.', 'A Letter, concerning the Assurance of Faith', *TGM for April 1776*, 175-78.

another allusion to John Owen's *Communion with God* (1657) which abounds with detailed guidance on 'assurance', 'full assurance' as well as the 'inward' experience which he describes in his letter.[135] Indeed, though his letter is brief, Toplady seems to be employing a lexicon culled from Owen's devotional treatise, and therefore breathing the same spirit.

He alluded to the experience of another prominent Christian (Hervey) to distinguish between the exercise of faith, the desire for assurance and the actual felt experience. Bebbington connects Jonathan Edwards' analysis of assurance (*The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (1741)) with the new Enlightenment empiricism, and an attention to epistemology.[136] Toplady, in contrast, appears to make the experience of assurance more directly dependent upon the inward work of the Holy Spirit.[137] The nuancing is critical: he was no less 'evangelical' in his emphasis upon assurance as a key attribute of genuine faith, but he did not directly resolve the matter of causation down to an Enlightenment epistemology. And because Toplady was conscious that his own sense of assurance varied over time, this lent him a pastoral sensitivity when dealing with others.[138]

There is some evidence that, during his period of editorship, Toplady experimented with the organisation of material within *TGM*. In the February 1776 issue, an article by 'J. F____r', entitled 'RELIGIOSUS: Or, *The Man of* WEALTH. A LIVING CHARACTER' was published. This deals with the ephemeral and deceptive nature of wealth, as the measure of a man's real substance, and is succeeded in a few pages by by Toplady's 'Natural History No. III' (using the pen-name of 'Minimus'), which reflects upon the elephant which, of all God's creatures, embodies its own substance, and is therefore admirable for its own qualities, not for material acquisitiveness.[139] Next,

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[135] John Owen, 'Of Communion with God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost' in *The Works of John Owen Vol. II* (Edinburgh; Johnstone & Hunter, 1850-53), pp. 36, 53, 106, 122, 127, 191, 242-3, 245-6, 253.
[136] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp. 47-8.
[137] 'A.T.', 'A Letter, concerning the Assurance of Faith', 177.
[138] Toplady, *Mr Toplady's Dying Avowal of his Religious Sentiments*, p. 6.
[139] *TGM for February 1776*, 70-75 & 81-88.

in the March 1776 edition, under the heading of 'REMARKABLE HISTORIC PASSAGES. No. II', the anonymous author related the perplexing and account of the tragically senseless trial and death of Socrates, an admirable genius, whilst a few pages later in 'Natural History No. IV' Toplady supplied examples of practical intelligence demonstrated by a range of lowly animals ('A *Goat* is by no means consider'd as an animal of bright intellects.').[140] In the May 1776 edition, a piece by 'Monitor', entitled 'Boasting excluded, by the example of St. Paul' is followed by 'Natural History No. V' which extolled the virtues of such lowly species as 'The Cock-Pigeon', the Swallow, the Wild Boar and Dogs before quoting from Plutarch to suggest that '*Self-distrust* is an infallible mark of wisdom, and (under the efficacy of Providence and of Grace) the truest ground of security.'[141] A fourth example appears in the June 1776 issue where, an article by 'Marcia', entitled 'The Natural Man a Spiritual Brute' is followed by 'Natural History No. VI' where Toplady returns to his favourite topic of elephants, in order to demonstrate their natural 'sagacity'.[142] Taken as a repeating pattern, this technique of juxtaposing articles conveys a consistent critique of the values of the Enlightenment age, encouraging the reader towards a humbler and more God-dependent view of their own rational powers, whilst affirming that general (natural) revelation and special (biblical) revelation speak with one voice. At the very least, this seemingly deliberate organisation of material is evidence that Toplady's theological reflection was constantly interacting fruitfully with other parallel areas of discipline, intentionally seeking to make connections, and that he saw nothing incongruous in such a practice.

That connectedness becomes more explicitly apparent in his two-part '*Some* OUTLINES *of the* LIFE *of Dr.* ISAAC WATTS', published in the January edition of *TGM*. This account focused as much upon the intrinsic qualities of the man, as it does upon his published works, speaking of '…

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[140] *TGM for March 1776*, 119-124 & 138-41.
[141] *TGM for May 1776*, 212-14 & 220-30.
[142] *TGM for June 1776*, 271-76 & 281-85.

MR. WATTS, as one of the fittest persons in the world to discharge so arduous a trust. WITSIUS, in Holland; ROLLIN, in France; and WATTS, in England; were, perhaps, of all the elegant scholars who then flourished, indued with the happiest powers to form young people to science and virtue, and to insinuate the delicacys of learning, without its thorns, into tender and inexperience'd minds'[143] Referring in the very next paragraph to 'our author's admirable treatise on Logic' he went on to describe Watts' '*meekness of wisdom*, which gives charms to science, and with that *sweetness of the lips* which *increaseth learning*'. Thus the breadth of Watts' learning, his profound work as an educator, his pivotal work on Logic,[144] is also somehow connected to his influential *A Guide to Prayer*, and related to a lifetime of chronic physical suffering, which found expression in an extensive hymnology. Toplady did not turn a blind eye to the dalliance with heterodoxy which led to the 1725 publication, *Dissertations on the Trinity*, and used the episode to point his reader towards simple Gospel faith, rather than a dependence upon 'grandeur, elegance, and poignancy, of genius; - if a strong, extensive, and highly cultivated understanding.' There is a humility to be learned from the lesson of Isaac Watts, argued Toplady: 'Most tenderly and respectfully be these humbling anecdotes recorded! And recorded to this end; viz, that *the wise man may not glory in his wisdom, nor the mighty man glory in his strength*.'[145] Toplady's evangelicalism represents a highly integrative Christian faith, but the very nature of that integration takes account of the weaknesses and errors of its proponents, and thereby keeps itself humble.

Bruce Hindmarsh is credited for the memorable aphorism that evangelical Christianity should be understood as a 'vector of the Enlightenment'.[146] There is a danger with this that Christian

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[143] 'Minimus', 'Some Outlines of the Life of Dr. Isaac Watts', *TGM for January 1776*, 30-31.

[144] Isaac Watts, *LOGIC; or, THE RIGHT USE of REASON, IN THE Enquiry after TRUTH; WITH A Variety of RULES to Guard against Error, in the Affairs of RELIGION and HUMAN LIFE, as well as in the SCIENCES*, (London: John Clark & Richard Hett, 1725).

[145] 'Minimus', 'Some Outlines of the Life of Dr. Isaac Watts', 34-35.

[146] Bruce Hindmarsh, 'Reshaping Individualism: The Private Christian, Eighteenth century Religion, and the Enlightenment' in Deryck Lovegrove (ed.) *The Rise of the Laity in Evangelical Protestantism,* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 77.

thinkers were actually unaware of what it was that they were busy assimilating, a sentiment expressed by Catherine Brekus when discussing Sarah Osborn's *Memoire* (1799) and Samuel Davies' *Miscellaneous Poems* (1751).[147] If we combine the analysis on Toplady's evangelicalism, with specific instances of his Enlightenment engagement, the overall impression is of a highly-nuanced, intentional, if not quite flawless approach, one that is deeply reflective and drawing on the resources of reformed scholasticism as the engine for reliable interaction.

The Man, the Melting Pot

William Hogarth (1697-1764) predeceased Toplady, but his series of 'modern moral subjects' paintings were famous throughout Britain, showing that the man was prepared to go beyond mere observation to a devastating critique of the catastrophic social failures that he observed. Like Toplady, he was far from being a 'one trick pony', extending his skillset beyond painting, into engraving, satire, editorial cartoons and occasional writings on art. In the March 1776 edition of *TGM*, Toplady penned what seems to be an intentionally abrasive piece entitled '*A* SKETCH *of* MODERN FEMALE EDUCATION'. It pulls no punches, the very first line stating, 'From the present mode of female education, one would really imagine, that the people of England were Turks, and did not believe that their daughters have souls.'[148] The essay is undoubtedly satirical, and it achieves, in print, the kind of uncomfortably close social commentary and critique that Hogarth managed in his engravings. Indeed, one could easily imagine that the inspiration for the piece was Hogarth's *A Harlot's Progress* (1732), a series of six engravings, charting the inexorable downfall of 'Moll' in a mercilessly forensic fashion.[149] In microcosm, Toplady explores the impact

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[147] Catherine A. Brekus, 'The Evangelical Encounter with the Enlightenment' in Heath W. Carter & Laura Rominger Porter (eds.), *Turning Points in the History of American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2017), p. 31.

[148] 'Minimus', 'A Sketch of Modern Female Education', *TGM - For March 1776*, 104.

[149] Jenny Uglow, *Hogarth* (London: Faber & Faber, 1997), pp. 191-213.

of a modern, secular and Enlightened culture, when that is given free rein within the context of the education of girls: 'A lady of fashion, if she knows not God, usually brings up a daughter in the following style…' He then documents the inexorable downward trajectory, describing every educational 'dissipation that can exhaust money, stifle reflection, kill time, gratify the lust of the eye, and feed the pride of life.'[150] The focus of this satire is, however, ambiguous. Was his intention to highlight the practical impact when an Enlightened culture elected to treat religion as an optional product for consumption? Or was he lampooning the way in which the same culture denigrated the value of female education? Paul Langford singles out the feminine preoccupations with manners and vanity and the fear that liberty might easily lead to licence.[151] Maura Henry's description of the kind of education available to girls at that time is tellingly brief.[152]

It may be concluded that such a piece might be unlikely to win Toplady friends in high places, as the withering description is of the habits of the moneyed classes, so it seems more likely that he was playing to the broader, evangelical, gallery. Nevertheless, the article suggests some components of his mindset, two years before his death. Firstly, he was clearly drawing on his own experiences as an Anglican churchman: 'And thus, perhaps, Miss never enters the house of God, till, at her interment, she is carry'd in, feet foremost.'[153] Secondly, he betrayed a clear awareness of the way in which an evolving culture impacts upon its human participants: 'When the young lady becomes a mother, she gives *her* children an education similar to what she received from her own mama. And thus the world goes round![154] Thus do unconverted people tread the same circle, one after another! *This is their foolishness, and their posterity praise their saying*,[155] and walk in the

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[150] 'Minimus', 'A Sketch of Modern Female Education', 106.

[151] Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People*, pp. 600-07.

[152] Maura A. Henry, 'The Making of Elite Culture', in H. T. Dickinson (ed.), *A Companion to Eighteenth century Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), pp. 315-16.

[153] 'Minimus', 'A Sketch of Modern Female Education', 107.

[154] An allusion to the 'absurdity' or 'vanity' theme in Ecclesiastes 1:4-7; 12:7-8.

[155] Toplady was quoting from Psalm 49:13, demonstrating that modern culture had already been diagnosed by Scripture.

same steps, 'till they drop into hell, one by one.'[156] Thirdly, so assured was he of his own accrued insights into the matter, he was comfortable in appropriating *Hogarthian* satire for his own purposes. There was nothing tentative about Toplady's evangelicalism, because it was informed not only by its theological or denominational framing, but also through combative engagement, fruitful cross-pollination across the denominations, and also through robust engagement with the prevailing culture. Whilst others might retreat into pietistic ghettos, the intellectual melting pot of Toplady's thirty-eight years demonstrated that evangelicalism could be confident and robust when addressing culture, or the sciences, or theological matters. There are even hints here of *The Proclamation Society* (to be established in November 1787), as well as of the wider initiatives of William Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect.[157]

Hogarth's life ended in 1764 with futility and despair in his final cartoon, entitled 'The Bathos', portraying a desolate landscape with Time himself expiring, uttering the word 'Finis'.[158] His artistic repertoire had been full of biblical subjects, but it seems doubtful that this focus had helped him, perhaps because of the remoteness of his Deist version of divinity.[159] It would be difficult to imagine a starker contrast with Toplady's final publication, in 1778, *Mr. Toplady's Dying Avowal of his Religious Sentiments*. Despite the circumstances which provoked this pamphlet (false rumours circulated by Wesley regarding an alleged recantation of his beliefs), and despite his awareness of his imminent death, Toplady conveyed a very different kind of sentiment: 'I am every Day in View of Dissolution. And, in the fullest Assurance of my eternal Salvation, (an Assurance which has not been clouded by a single Doubt, for near an Year and a half last past) am waiting, looking, and

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[156] 'Minimus', 'A Sketch of Modern Female Education', 107. Toplady seems to be citing, without referencing, Jonathan Edwards' famous sermon, 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God' (1741).

[157] Stephen Tomkins, *The Clapham Sect, How Wilberforce's Circle Transformed Britain* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2010), p. 57.

[158] Uglow, *Hogarth*, pp. 690-93.

[159] 'The Pool at Bethesda' (1736), 'Moses Brought Before Pharoah's Daughter' (1746), 'Paul Before Felix' (1752), 'The Good Samaritan' (1736-7), his series of popular prints inspired by the book of Proverbs etc.

longing for the Coming of our Lord JESUS CHRIST.'[160] This is an uncompromising articulation of evangelical Christian belief, and in his very last sentence, Toplady expressed his enduring gratitude for the two key events in his life; his conversion, and his discovery of the truth of predestination in the writings of Thomas Manton: 'I shall remember the Years 1755, and 1758, with Gratitude and Joy, in the Heaven of Heavens, to all Eternity.'[161]

[160] Toplady, *The Reverend Mr Toplady's Dying Avowal*, p. 6.
[161] Toplady, *The Reverend Mr Toplady's Dying Avowal*, p. 7.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

> Lov'd of God, for Him again
> With Love intense I burn:
> Chosen of Thee e'er Time began,
> I choose Thee in return.
> Whate'er consists not with thy Love,
> O teach me to resign:
> I'm rich to all th' Intents of Bliss,
> If Thou, O God, art mine.[1]

Some forty years ago, Roy Porter argued that a key 'blockage' to understanding the English Enlightenment has been the insistence on the part of certain historians that the phenomenon was a unity, blossoming only with Voltaire in the 1740s. Although his is now a well-established view, there is some value in his succinctness: 'Obviously, if one's yardstick is France in mid-century, the English experience goes by default.'[2] Subsequently, the core idea of a multi-layered Enlightenment has been taken up and developed by many scholars.[3] Inevitably, if one views a diverse and multi-cultural phenomenon solely through the lens of Kant or the *philosophes*, one will end up with a thin, denuded and unrepresentative version of the thing. Conversely, the exercise of viewing a cultural moment through the lens of just one man (Toplady) is sufficient to demonstrate that the observable nuances and diversities of insight are not always malleable to a reductionist analysis. But Toplady is more useful than that, as he forms a valuable nexus of multiple theological and cultural constituencies and the outworking of his particular kind of intersectionality has profound implications for our historical understanding of this period.

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[1] Toplady, 'Occasional Hymn XVIII', verse 3, *Hymns and Sacred Poems on a Variety of Divine Subjects*, p. 158.

[2] Porter, 'The Enlightenment in England', in Porter and Teich (eds), *The Enlightenment in National Context*, p. 4.

[3] Bulman, 'Introduction: Enlightenment for the Culture Wars' in Bulman and Ingram (eds) *God in the Enlightenment*, p. 5.

According to his Wesleyan protagonists, Toplady was a 'zealous and rigid Calvinist', a man who 'dipped his pen in gall'.[4] Stephen accuses him of living within a now discredited intellectual past, a prisoner of ideas rendered obsolete by Hume and others.[5] Fletcher of Madeley saw his own role as exposing 'Toplady's false conclusions'.[6] According to Lawton, he was driven by an inexplicable fascination for an obscure theologian who eclipsed Calvin himself as an influence upon him.[7] Ella's own theological presuppositions meant that he was swift to appropriate Toplady's polemical potential, but he seems altogether too ready to define his subject primarily in terms of the conflict with Wesley.[8]

Each of these reactions or interpretations seem to grasp hold of a single perceived aspect of the man. As Toplady was seeking to work out his theology within a period that has been interpreted through reductionist lenses, so his own role and significance has been treated by those keen to fit him into some preferred category. In fact, as the previous chapters have sought to document, during this long, pivotal period of cultural and intellectual change, he sought to work out for himself *four* very specific cultural and intellectual loci, with his published output representing the intersection of those loci.

Toplady's 'Quadrilateral'

To assert his Calvinism is almost too facile, in that it tells us so little about his significance, or why he was deemed so offensive by some. Even the historical attempts to categorise him as 'strict' or 'high' in terms of his Calvinism lack explanatory power. It is only when we factor in his consistent dependence upon reformed scholasticism, that the implications for Enlightenment thinking, *and*

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[4] McGonigle, *Sufficient Saving Grace*, p. 268.
[5] Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*. vol. 2, p. 427.
[6] Streiff, *Reluctant Saint?*, p. 185.
[7] Lawton, *Within the Rock of Ages*, p. 99.
[8] Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady*, pp. 213, 221, 222ff.

Anglican identity *and* Evangelicalism become clearer. Toplady's scholasticism had a profound impact upon the quality of his engagement in all three areas.

Toplady's Anglican identity was clearly important to him. It was both confessionally-framed, and embedded within that continuity bequeathed by his scholasticism. His ecclesiology reflected neither the hierarchies nor rites of Laud, nor the pragmatisms of Tillotson, but drew heavily on the theological formulations of the Anglican founding fathers, an approach which set him apart from many of his contemporaries.

Mapping Toplady onto a schema defined by Enlightenment thinking is potentially misleading because he saw himself as making a theological contribution, much in the style of Turretin, rather than primarily attempting some kind of cultural critique, or conversely adopting a passive mode relating to the assimilation of Enlightenment ideas. Nevertheless, his positioning *contra* Latitudinarian and Laudian tendencies, as well as his vigorous endorsement of the very scholasticism rejected by (many) Enlightenment thinkers meant that he must have carefully considered his methodology. Indeed, it could be argued that the particular scope and focus of his published output is inexplicable if it is shorn of its scholastic underpinnings. If Locke and other Enlightenment thinkers saw scholasticism as the problem, it is clear that Toplady saw his role as reasserting its authority and value, even repurposing it for his own particular cultural context.

Finally, his participation in the nascent Evangelical movement is interesting and raises challenges. For Bebbington, Evangelicalism comprises a 'quadrilateral' of distinct functional components (conversionism, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism).[9] For Toplady, it may form one component of his own quadrilateral (Calvinism, Anglicanism, Enlightenment and Evangelicalism), or perhaps it might actually be more meaningful to describe it as a 'mode' of operation, as he sought to navigate the rapidly changing times, and the complex web of fluid relationships around him. If

[9] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 3.

Evangelicalism be defined as a product of the Enlightenment, then Toplady's own commitment to scholasticism might appear to disqualify him - and yet his engagement in broad-based, gospel-focused collaborations on multiple fronts (including his harmonious relationship with Whitefield) would simultaneously locate him firmly within that constituency. We have seen that Paul Helm is sceptical about Toplady's evangelical credentials: 'Nevertheless, although he kept the company of 'evangelicals' and may be said to have been in the thick of the Evangelical Revival, *Toplady's self-understanding is not that of an 'evangelical' at all*, if by that is intended one who saw himself as a member of a distinct religious movement or tendency or spirit that had begun about nine years before his own birth' (emphasis added).[10] If there is a problem here, perhaps it has more to do with an overly-formulaic mode of applying definitions: Toplady's formative influences may have been scholastic Calvinism and the Church of England, but his affinities and relationships were not bound solely by those two things.

Helm sees 'Toplady's short life [as] a clear piece of historical counter-evidence to the Bebbington thesis.'[11] In fact, it is nothing of the kind: his common-cause with Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians could not have been other than whole-heartedly evangelical in spirit. Helm posits a fundamental rift between 'evangelicalism' on the one hand, and Toplady's Calvinistic Anglicanism, on the other.[12] It would be more accurate to say that Toplady's valuable work was to show how evangelicalism was rendered both more coherent and robust by its underpinnings of Calvinistic scholasticism. On the topic of assurance, we have seen that he was able to maintain a quintessentially evangelical stance whilst simultaneously calibrating his position theologically, rather than primarily by an explicit referencing of Enlightenment empiricism. For Toplady, evangelicalism was neither a product nor a byproduct of Enlightenment insights, instead it

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[10] Helm, 'Calvin, A. M. Toplady and the Bebbington Thesis', in Haykin & Stewart (eds), *The Emergence of Evangelicalism*, p. 208.
[11] Helm, 'Calvin, A. M. Toplady and the Bebbington Thesis', p. 220.
[12] Helm, 'Calvin, A. M. Toplady and the Bebbington Thesis', p. 208.

represented an intentional, methodological overlay which allowed him to fruitfully navigate the challenges of Anglican identity, historiography, heterodoxy, practical ecumenism and cultural engagement - but always driven and framed by the tried and tested disciplines of Calvinistic scholasticism.

Toplady's life's work is proof for us that the Enlightenment's pronouncement of the death of scholasticism was premature: the tried-and-tested tools of reformed scholasticism equipped him to deal effectively with a rapidly-shifting culture, both within the church and within the broader, secular context.

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