

John Eaton (1574/75–1630/31) was born in Kent. In 1604, he became the vicar of Wickham Market, Suffolk, where he preached the fullness of God’s free grace and the uselessness of the law in man’s salvation; that is, by Christ’s redemption, God can see no sin in those who have been justified; true believers are clothed with ‘the wedding garment of Christ’s perfect righteousness’, and God no longer sees their iniquities. And it is this, not the law, that stirs the believer’s sanctification, which sanctification is essential in those who are justified. Being dismissed as an antinomian, Eaton quickly found himself in conflict with fellow ministers and the ecclesiastical authorities, and he was deprived and imprisoned for his views. Undeterred, by 1621 Eaton was in London, where he disseminated his ideas from the pulpit, in conference, and through a series of unpublished manuscripts, which circulated widely during the 1620s and 1630s. Through these efforts, he won a considerable following, and became the leader of an increasingly vocal ‘antinomianism’ in the capital, soon attracting other dissident ministers who shared his dissatisfaction with the ‘legalistic’ doctrine and preaching of the Puritans. Heated conflicts rapidly ensued, these controversies quickly spilling over into the Church courts, resulting in the prosecution of several well-known antinomians before the High Commission. Eaton was spared this fate only by his death, some time between August 1630 and July 1631. Eaton’s death did not, however, signal the end of his influence. His admirers in London wanted to publish his manuscripts, though they had been adjudged heretical by the Church authorities. In 1632, Eaton’s widow was called before the High Commission for trying to publish his *magnum opus*; nevertheless, she refused to hand over her manuscript copies, and for this she was gaoled for several months. Meanwhile, Eaton’s Puritan enemies published several books in the attempt to counteract his influence and doctrine. With the collapse of censorship in the early 1640s, in 1642, Eaton’s followers swiftly moved to publish his *The Honeycombe of Free Justification* and his *Discovery of the Most Dangerous Dead Faith*. Although he was accused of being ‘an incorrigible divulger of errors and false opinions’, the ‘father of English antinomianism’, even his opponents had to admit that Eaton’s life was beyond reproach. In what follows, reader, you may judge for yourself whether or not Eaton was an antinomian or a biblical preacher of the new covenant. I, myself, have no doubt.

John Eaton

Christ... loved the church and gave himself for her, that he might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that he might present her to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish

Ephesians 5:25-27

Sadly, John Eaton died before he could put the final touches to his *Honeycombe*. Nevertheless, his printer, Robert Lancaster, went ahead with publication, adding an explanatory note: Eaton, by reason of his death, had been unable to fulfil his self-appointed task in that he had not been able to provide as many quotations from ‘the faithful interpreters’ as he had wished, nor had he been able to provide full references for those he had quoted. Even so, as Lancaster explained:

The testimonies of the learned are not... urged that our faith should be built upon them, which were idolatry in a high degree... and not to believe God upon his own word, without the attestation of false and sinful man. But they are alleged that they may be helps to evidence, and apply unto us the word of God, in the evidence whereof alone... we are to rest, and to stop the mouths of those who cast an imputation of singularity upon the truth of God, whereby many are deterred even from an examination of it.

Turning from the general to the particular, Lancaster went on:

But unto you (Christian reader) concerning this following discourse, I have two, as it seems to me, very reasonable requests. *First*, that you would pass no censure upon the book or the author until you have fully and carefully examined it by that unerring rule of God’s word... *Secondly*, that after you have done so, you would not let yourself to be swayed from judging according to that rule, by any respect whatsoever.

I endorse those sentiments wholeheartedly.

‘As for the author himself’, continued Lancaster:

His faith, and zeal, and diligence in doing his calling, and his faith, patience and cheerfulness in suffering for the same, were so exemplary, that they are worthy to be set forth as a pattern, not only to

God's people and ministers now, but even to all succeeding generations. And the Lord grant that by his example, not only all his people may have their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace (Eph. 6:15), [but] even with a readiness, both to embrace it for themselves, and to declare it unto others. But especially that the feet of [God's] ministers may become beautiful by preaching the gospel of peace, and bringing glad tidings of good things (Rom. 10:15).¹

Lest this should be dismissed as a biased report, given by one so obviously a supporter of Eaton, let me add that as far as I have discovered, nobody has ever tried to say anything different about Eaton's character and manner of life. If he was an antinomian – which, on the evidence I have seen, I stoutly deny – he was certainly no antinomian in life.

Coming to the *Honeycombe*, right from the start, in his 'Preface', Eaton himself sounded a note which is too much muted these days, if not altogether absent from much current preaching; namely, he distinguished between true and dead faith: 'Christian reader', he opened, 'dead faith goes very far in the profession of the gospel, and is very like the true, lively, justifying and saving faith'. But he was soon warning his readers:

We ought not... to content ourselves (as too many do) with the bare name of free justification, and know it (as they that are in the dead faith do) with a carnal knowledge only... We, but especially God's ministers, must labour (they by preaching, and you by hearing, reading and meditating upon it) to get a true, lively and rejoicing knowledge of it; for when it works joy, peace and content [contentment] with God in the heart, then has a man the true and right knowledge of it... What other salve [medicine] is there then to cure the cold disease of this dead faith, and self-loving zeal, than to lay forth the excellency of free justification, that may enflame the heart so with the fiery coals of God's love towards us, that it may flame forth with the right zeal of keeping within our lists of obedience... to do them thankfully and zealously to the glorifying of God, and benefiting of our brethren and neighbours, of so excellent, and glorious, and full sufficient a benefit?

How needful, I say again, are these words today!²

¹ Eaton ii-iv, emphasis mine.

² See my earlier remarks on Sandemanianism.

Turning to his chosen subject, justification:

Let us know for a certainty that free justification is the very head, heart and soul of all Christian religion and true worship of God; without the true and joyful knowledge whereof, our religion is headless, our profession and worship is heartless, and our very zealous conversation is a mere corruption of the gospel, and rottenness, like a body without a soul that stinks before God. Briefly, in a word, as the perfect righteousness of Christ, alone, is worthy to be acknowledged for the wedding garment – because all the righteousness of our imperfect sanctification³ is... as filthy, menstruous, stained rags (Isa. 64:6) – so true faith of [that is, true believing and true experience of] free justification, being the having-on of this wedding garment, because it alone truly abolishes all the filthy nakedness of our sins out of God's sight, and it alone makes us perfectly holy and sufficiently righteous in the sight of God freely, without works.

He concluded: 'God respecting no worthiness in you to deserve it, nor any unworthiness in you to hinder your free-taking of it, but, only pitying your misery, gives it [to] you freely to this end – to declare the glory of his free grace, and to heal freely all your unworthiness, and to make you freely worthy of all other benefits and blessings of God, both temporal and eternal'.⁴

Thus, in his opening remarks, even in his 'Preface', Eaton could not have been clearer. He intended to set out what he saw as the biblical fullness of free justification by grace, his view of which could not have been higher. More, he was convinced that there was nothing in any sinner that could prevent him receiving this free justification in Christ – if only he believed. The question is, granted Eaton had a high view of justification and the freeness of it, was that view too high and too free?

If I may answer that right at the beginning, by giving my own experience of Eaton's work, I can only say that in reading it, and then preparing it for this publication, I have discovered that for over fifty years I have had too low a view of justification by faith, altogether too dry a view of it. Of course, I knew the doctrine. Yes, I could argue the texts. But the depth, the fullness, the sheer wonder

³ Throughout this chapter, by 'sanctification' Eaton means 'progressive sanctification'. I will not always note this vital point.

⁴ Eaton v-xviii.

of free justification simply had not penetrated my heart as it ought to have done. I had not realised how God sees me in Christ. Oh! I had sung about it, I had preached it, and I had written about it. But until I read John Eaton's work – a true honeycomb indeed – I had far too academic a view of this most wonderful truth of free justification; namely, that the weakest believer, trusting Christ, is absolutely sinless in the sight of God, and sinless for ever. Far too often, I had taken marvellous New Testament statements about justification, and the effects and benefits of it, and shuffled them off to eternity to come. But those statements are true of me, NOW! *That* is what I have come to feel, and to feel in a way I have never felt before.

The nearest experience I have had of this kind of discovery came about in this way: after the death of my first wife, I found myself saying, in the pulpit, that she now enjoys joy unspeakable and full of glory. As I was saying it, it hit me! We do not have to wait to reach the eternal state for *that!* Peter says it is true of us NOW (1 Pet. 1:8-9). Yes, it will be fully so in eternity, but – and this is the apostolic point – it is true now!

So much for my testimony. Reader, read on, and see what you think. I will let Eaton speak for himself as much as I can, although I have modernised his grammar where necessary. Some might wish I had gone further in modernising his English, but I think his meaning is clear enough. If you like what you see, perhaps you might care to get the original, and peruse it for yourself. I admit it is old-style print ('f' for 's'), and his style is rather tortuous at times and repetitive,⁵ but at least you will then have the unfiltered Eaton. After all, I have distilled his work (the best part of 500 pages) into a mere forty pages, omitting many arguments, illustrations and extracts.

I say again, whatever others may think about Eaton, I owe a huge debt to the man, and I hope I never lose the heart-warming view he has given me of my salvation in Christ.

Before I set out my distillation of Eaton's work, let me say where I disagree with him. He had too high a view of baptism, and he brought this up on several occasions, using Christ's ordinance in a

⁵ Who am I to speak?

way that the New Testament never warrants. Besides which, of course, he held to infant baptism. Since I have dealt fully with this in other works,⁶ I will say no more about it now. I also disagree with Eaton's view of preparationism by the law.⁷

But, I am pleased to be able to record, Eaton was out of step with many other so-called antinomians in that he did not hold to eternal justification. As he stated:

Before we are justified, and while we are in the state of nature, we are the children of the devil and of wrath (Eph. 2:3), but when we are justified with this internal and secret justification, and made thereby the children of God, then...⁸

None are made... perfectly holy and righteous, but such of the elect as are actually called, because although all the elect shall be justified in their time, and none but the elect shall be justified (for whom he justifies, these he glorifies – but he glorifies none but the elect), yet the very elect are not actually and really justified, but are darkness, and live in sin and darkness, until they are effectually called... (Rom. 8:30).⁹

Excellent. Many other 'antinomians' got this wrong. Eaton did not.

Now for the main work. Let Eaton set out his stall, defining what he understood by 'free justification':

Justification is when... clothed with the wedding garment of Christ's own and pure righteousness that of unjust we are made just before God:¹⁰ that is, all our sins are utterly abolished out of God's sight, and we are made from all spot of sin perfectly holy and righteous in the sight of God freely [Eph. 5:25-27]. And this is God's pardon or forgiveness (which few understand) great above man's, and glorious

⁶ See my *Infant, Baptist Sacramentalism*.

⁷ See, for instance, Eaton pp105,122-123,135-136,158-163,463-464. Eaton asserted that the law should be preached to sinners and the gospel to saints (Eaton pp122-126,135-136), but this sort of division of a congregation is impossible. Compare the hyper-Calvinistic differing ways of addressing sensible and non-sensible sinners (see my *Offer; Septimus; Eternal*).

⁸ Eaton pp156-157.

⁹ Eaton p270.

¹⁰ This terminology comes up time and again. Read it as: 'We who were unjust (ungodly) are made just (righteous) before God'.

and wonderful, like God himself (Acts 13:38-40), the joyful faith whereof sanctifies us, and makes us to do the duties of our vocations faithfully, and to walk to the glory of God in the spiritual meaning of all God's ten commandments zealously (Tit. 2:14).¹¹

It is all here, in embryo. As I will show, Eaton worked it out in detail: the glorious nature of justification; the two parts to justification – before God and before men; justification is received by faith, contrary to reason, sense and feeling; justification and sanctification are inseparably linked; justification always leads to sanctification, being its spur and motive; the law is not the motive of sanctification – in fact, preaching the law actually hinders sanctification; the nature of saving faith; the joy of the justified; and the way of assurance. For ease of understanding, I will distil the mass of material under various headings, but it surely goes without saying that it is impossible to take such a large work and tie it into neat little, self-contained packages. Nevertheless, I will try.

The glory of justification by faith through Christ

One of the great issues with Rome is the unbiblical way in which she conflates justification and sanctification, taking justification to mean that God not only imputes Christ's righteousness to believers, but he actually makes them righteous *in their own persons*. It follows, therefore, since no man on earth is perfect, no man on earth can know he is justified! Indeed, it means that no man can be justified in this life! This is wrong, diabolically wrong, and has very serious consequences. One, perhaps unforeseen, consequence is that too often the Reformed, overreacting to Rome, have not always grasped the fullness of the grace in justification. The Reformed view of justification, while rightly stressing the biblical position that it is a legal declaration by God, too often leaves us with a rather dry view of the subject. I have already spoken of this in my own personal experience. Much hinges on the word 'made' in Romans 5:19, and such like places. This definitely means 'constituted'. Having said that, however, the believer really is perfectly and absolutely constituted righteous in the sight of God,

¹¹ Eaton p7.

utterly sinless, washed in the Redeemer's blood and clothed with his righteousness. Eaton certainly – rightly – stressed this, arguing cogently for it from Scripture, as I will now show.

The believer is truly made righteous in Christ

Eaton:

The word, that we are justified, is not to be taken only in the judicial signification; namely, that God only reposes, accounts and pronounces us just and righteous, and so quitting us from all guilt and punishment only – in which judicial signification some do barely rest – but it also must be taken in the natural and proper signification... that is, truly and in very realness, [the Lord's imputation of righteousness] makes us just and righteous... And that also [in] two manner of ways.

First, by imputing to us his Son's righteousness, [God] utterly abolishes from before himself all our sins, and freely makes us passively just and righteous; which serves to make us truly and in very deed perfectly just and righteous in God's own eyes: and this is called justification.

And *secondly*, he renews us by his Spirit unto inherent and active holiness and righteousness; which... is imperfect in this life, and serves to approve us righteous to the eyes of men, and is called sanctification.

Thus when God has both these ways... truly and in very deed made us righteous, then he reposes, accounts, and pronounces, and calls us righteous, absolving us thereby from all guilt and punishment... Therefore, God justifies no wicked man, but first makes him just and righteous in and by Christ, and then accounts him so.¹²

Eaton knew men would quarrel with him over the word 'made'. He was ready:

By another man's [Adam's] sin we are made sinners, lost and damned, so by another man's [Christ's] righteousness we are made righteous and saved, and therefore I call this righteousness an essential righteousness and eternal... Only Christ is everlasting, and therefore his righteousness is everlasting, and yet [it is] ours, and [it] makes us everlasting [in righteousness]. This is the mercy of God the Father; this

¹² Eaton pp22-23, emphasis mine.

is the grace of the new covenant,¹³ wherein the Lord is sweet to them that taste him. In this we must be saved, and in no other.

So much for justification. Eaton went on:

But... there is a righteousness called actual righteousness, flowing from faith and from the aforesaid essential righteousness. And this is our righteousness, and our own proper righteousness, not because we alone work it, but because we work together with the aforesaid first righteousness...¹⁴

That God, by the power of his imputation, conveying his Son's righteousness to be in us and upon us, does, in his own sight, so clothe us, body and soul, both within and without, with the wedding garment of his Son's perfect righteousness, that we have our sins hereby not only utterly abolished out of God's sight, but also are evangelically and freely formed; that is, are in truth and... very deed made, although not inherently and actively (as... the Papists would have it), yet objectively and passively perfectly holy and righteous in the sight of God freely.¹⁵

Let me pause. It is all here. Eaton has rightly set out the glory of free justification, showing clearly, and beyond contradiction, that God views his believing people as absolutely sinless in Christ. But this glorious justification never – never – comes alone. It is always – always – accompanied by the believer's actual sanctification. God the Father, through Christ's redeeming work, applied by the Spirit's power, ensures that it is so.

¹³ Eaton had 'Testament'. As I argued in my *Christ*, it is better to read this as 'covenant'. The same applies from time to time in what follows, but without this note. I have left 'Testament' where this is obviously right.

¹⁴ Eaton pp265-266. Eaton quoted Zanchius: 'The righteousness wherewith we are justified or made righteous is twofold – the one by which we are reputed and also are truly and perfectly righteous to God-ward... (Rom. 5:[19])... But there is another righteousness, which, being communicated unto us by the Spirit of Christ, and indeed inherent in us, and showing itself outwardly by works, consists of the mortification of the old man, and quickening of the new man, of a hatred of sin and love of righteousness, by which we are just... before men, and acknowledged and counted to be righteous before them'. Eaton added: 'And this righteousness we affirm to be an effect of the former'.

¹⁵ Eaton p271.

Eaton, yet again, asserted that justification is more than a declaration (the commonly-held Reformed view – in effect, if not in theory), arguing this from the ‘made’ of Romans 5:19:

The apostle, not speaking of sanctification until he comes to the sixth chapter, but only of justification, says thus: ‘By the obedience of one shall many be’ what? ‘be *counted* righteous’? No, but ‘*made* righteous’... It is mystically above sense and feeling that [we] may be by faith of God’s power made so truly and really righteous to Godward, that [we] cannot but in time, by discerning Christ’s love inherently and actively, declare the same afterwards to man-ward by sanctification.¹⁶

That is to say, in Romans 5, the apostle is dealing with justification. It is only as he moves into Romans 6 that he begins to expand upon sanctification. But, just as the two chapters are joined as one continuous passage in one book, so in personal experience. Every justified sinner must go on to be, and will go on to be, a sanctified sinner. This is what God accomplishes in and through the new covenant.

Eaton continued in the same vein with Ephesians 5:25-27:

Mark how [the apostle] says not that he might *count* it a glorious church, but ‘*make* it to himself a glorious church’. And where as some have objected that the word (‘might’) imports that this place is to be understood of our making righteous by our sanctification,¹⁷ by which we shall be made so righteous, that we shall have no spot or wrinkle in the life to come,¹⁸ I answer that although our sanctification is now inseparable from our justification, and yet will not be perfect until the life to come, and then it shall be so perfect that we shall not have one spot or wrinkle of sin to ourselves, and [to our] own sight, sense and feeling, yet, notwithstanding, all interpreters that I have read do understand the place to be meant [speaking] of justification also, by which it is verified upon us, that we have, not even in this life, one spot or wrinkle of sin in the sight of God freely. And I think that this place is properly and chiefly to be understood of free justification.

¹⁶ Eaton pp293-295, emphasis mine – although Eaton had some (confusing) emphasis.

¹⁷ In other words, ‘our progressive sanctification’.

¹⁸ Until I had read Eaton, my position to a ‘T’.

This is a statement of immense importance. Immense, I say! Eaton was arguing that Ephesians 5:26-27 must not be confined to eternity. It is the truth about every believer *now*. Eaton gave his reasons, including:

Our sanctification is wrought by us and by the Spirit of God enabling us thereunto. But this example [Eph. 5:25-27] is appropriated to Christ alone, in giving himself to shed his blood to effect it [that?], which properly belongs to the work of our free justification... [Further,] the apostle speaks in the aorist,¹⁹ betokening... that [Christ] *has* [emphasis, Eaton's] made us clean; importing a thing already perfectly done... [Further,] because the apostle says that [Christ] might make us to *himself* a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, he says not to *ourselves*, which will be verified indeed by sanctification in the life to come, for *then*, even to ourselves, and to our sense and feeling, we shall not have one spot or wrinkle of sin or any such thing. But he says to 'make us to himself' – that is, above our own reason... and contrary to ourselves, and to our own sense and feeling, has Christ *already* made us fit brides for so glorious a bridegroom, which is only in this life by free justification... [Lastly,]... the participle of the present time immediately following... the church is now in such a case as that it shall not have one spot or wrinkle of sin hereafter... not having *now* at this present time one spot or wrinkle of sin or any such thing, which is only true truly in this life, not man-ward by sanctification, but... God-ward by free justification.²⁰

Let me unpack this. From the point of view of sanctification, the believer will be perfect only in eternity. But from the point of view of justification, the believer is perfect the moment he trusts Christ, without spot, without wrinkle, without anything of the sort, in the sight of God.

Eaton knew that some would object, and object strongly, to his exegesis. He had his defence ready:

But if any object... saying that in some translations the original word is not translated 'that he might *make* us to himself', but [rather] 'that he might *present* us to himself'; to which I answer that it is all one, or rather confirms more fully what I say, because God does not present to

¹⁹ A Greek tense which indicates an action, completed with permanent effect. It can be more complicated, but that is how Eaton is rightly using the word here.

²⁰ Eaton pp295-298, emphasis mine, except where indicated.

himself a false thing like a thing represented on a stage, but in deed and truth does the thing, and then presents it to himself... that is promise of free justification and sanctification in Christ... showing that the church is without spot or wrinkle, but inchoatively [beginning of an action; that is, imperfectly] to men-ward by sanctification, but made so perfectly to God-ward by justification... We see that beside other equivalent phrases... Christ does not barely *count* her, but has *made* her, clean and righteous.²¹

In other words, believers truly are sinless in the sight of God. This is what justification means. Eaton continued, taking to task those preachers who fail to expatiate on the fullness of God's grace in the justification of his people by faith:

All of which declares what a powerful, operative and wonderful and glorious work God's forgiveness is, and how short we ministers come in laying forth, as the apostle does, the excellency of God's remission and forgiveness of sins, being both perfect and glorious in its own nature, and also making believers perfectly holy and righteous from all spot of sin in the sight of God freely.²²

Moving on, Eaton further argued his case from 2 Corinthians 5:21:

Christ so truly took our sins upon him, and was so really in the sight of God clothed in the same, that although not inherently and actively... but yet really, he was made a true sinner, and so God, having made him, by his imputation, really a sinner in his sight, did count him a sinner...²³ Thus mighty is God's imputation of our sin upon his Son, Christ. And as Christ, by the power of God's imputation, though not inherently and actively, yet objectively and passively, was made in the sight of God, really a sinner and cursed, so on the other side, are we, by the power of God's imputation of his Son's righteousness, made, though not inherently and actively, yet objectively and passively, really

²¹ Eaton pp298-299, emphasis mine. He cited Col. 1:22, later (Eaton pp318-330) arguing it out in full. See also Eaton pp330-334 for Col. 1:28.

²² Eaton pp313-317.

²³ Eaton quoted the well-known passage from Luther on 2 Cor. 5:21 and Isa. 53: 'We must not make these words less than they are... We must know [Christ] to be wrapped in our sins, in our malediction [curse], in our death, and in all our evils, as he is wrapped in our flesh and in our blood. For unless he had taken upon himself my sins... the law had no right over him, which condemns none but sinners, and holds them under the curse'.

righteous and blessed... that is, perfectly righteous in the sight of God freely.²⁴

Eaton continued to argue his case from Hebrews 10:14:

Christ 'with one offering has made perfect for ever them that are sanctified'; that is, such as are put apart unto salvation, and declare the same by sanctification. Although their sanctification be very imperfect, yet by justification God does not imaginarily count them righteous, but has made them in the sight of God perfectly righteous, and for ever...²⁵ Now that God's imputation and spiritual clothing with his Son's righteousness does so really make us righteous...²⁶

In short:

What can be more required to make a true Christian? I grant that where this is, there will follow infallibly a renewed sanctified life with zeal of God's glory, but this makes not a Christian, but consequently declares and outwardly shows that he is already, before, thus freely made a Christian... They are [to God-ward] righteous, just, and saints to man-ward by sanctification. The first way to God-ward is perfect, otherwise it is no righteousness to God-ward, who cannot love anything but that which is perfect; but the second way to man-ward is imperfect, which yet, being done in sincerity... is... exceeding imperfect.²⁷

²⁴ Eaton pp300-303.

²⁵ In saying this, Eaton was careful, once again, to separate himself from the Papists.

²⁶ Eaton pp303-304. See above, p231 for Crisp on the same theme; namely, that imputation is real not imaginary.

²⁷ Eaton quoted (or paraphrased) Calvin: 'Saints are called righteous declaratively of their inherent holiness of life, yet for as much, by all their endeavour, they do not fulfil righteousness itself, it is meet that this inherent righteousness, such as it is, gives place to the being made righteous by faith'. He also quoted Downham: 'Neither are we imaginarily righteous, but God makes us perfectly righteous indeed, by washing away our sins with the precious blood of Christ, and by appropriating and applying unto us his Son's righteousness, by virtue of his Spirit principally, and a lively faith instrumentally, and so being made really and in truth partakers of Christ's righteousness, God reposes us not imaginarily, but as we are and that in truth, perfectly just and righteous' (Eaton pp307-309). Eaton had more to say on Heb. 10:14 (Eaton pp334-343).

Thus, Eaton argued, there is a fullness to justification which must not be diminished by emphasising the legal aspect of it – even though the legal aspect is a truth. It is equally true that the believer is, even now, perfectly sinless in the sight of God, and he must never forget this amazing truth about himself.²⁸ On the other hand,

²⁸ Let me quote two recent commentators on Rom. 5:19. ‘Debate surrounds the exact meaning of the verb Paul uses here. Some argue that it means nothing more than “make”. But this translation misses the forensic flavour of the word. It often means “appoint”, and probably refers here to the fact that people are “inaugurated into” the state of sin/righteousness. Paul is insisting that people were really “made” sinners through Adam’s act of disobedience, just as they are really “made righteous” through Christ’s obedience. This “making righteous”, however, must be interpreted in the light of Paul’s typical forensic categories. To be “righteous” does not mean to be morally upright, but to be judged acquitted, cleared of all charges, in the heavenly judgment. Through Christ’s obedient act, people become *really* righteous; but “righteous” itself is a legal, not a moral, term in this context’ (Moo, Douglas J.: *The Epistle to the Romans*, William B.Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1996, p345).

‘Justification means our involvement in the obedience of Christ in terms of the same principle by which we are involved in Adam’s sin. Nothing less is demanded by the analogy instituted in this verse. Again, the involvement in the obedience of Christ is not that of our personal voluntary obedience nor that of subjective holiness. This would violate the forensic character of justification with which the apostle is dealing. But we must not tone down the formula “constituted righteous” to any lower terms than the gracious judgment on God’s part whereby the obedience of Christ is reckoned to our account, and therefore reckoned as ours, with all the entail of consequence which righteousness carries with it’ (Murray, John: *The Epistle to the Romans...*, Two Volumes in One, Marshall Morgan and Scott, London, 1974, Vol.1 p206).

And take these words from C.H.Spurgeon: ‘The [justified] man stands a guiltless man in the sight of God, accepted in the beloved. “What!” say you, “do you mean that literally?” Yes, I do. That is the doctrine of justification by faith. Man ceases to be regarded by divine justice as a guilty being; the moment he believes on Christ his guilt is all taken away. But I am going a step further. The moment the man believes on Christ, he ceases to be guilty in God’s esteem; but what is more, he becomes righteous, he becomes meritorious... It is the doctrine of holy writ, that none can condemn whom God justifies, and that none can accuse those for whom Christ has died; for they are totally free from sin. So that, as one of the prophets has it, God sees no sin in Jacob nor iniquity in Israel. In the

his justification before men – that is, his sanctification – is always imperfect in this life. Even so, granting that his sanctification is always imperfect in this life, it is equally true that his justification in this life is perfect. And the weight of the New Testament falls, beyond all question, on the perfection of the believer's justification. The believer must never forget this truth about himself.

But the believer has a battle on his hand, for, as Eaton did not fail to stress, the biblical doctrine of justification exceeds all human reason. If we judge by feelings and sense, we will fail to grasp what we really are in being justified. Let me show how Eaton dealt with this. He made the point that the doctrine of justification by faith, being so amazing, defeats human reason. Moreover, if we look at ourselves, the New Testament claims for justification run directly contrary to what we can see and feel about ourselves. What is the answer? It is the same old remedy. How are we saved? By believing, of course: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved' (Acts 16:31). How do we receive any biblical doctrine? By reason? By feeling? No! By faith! (See John 11:26; 2 Cor. 4:13; 1 Thess. 4:14; Heb. 11:6, for instance). Well, then, this is how we are to receive and come into the full benefits of all the grace of God in his free justification of us. We have to take God at his word, we have to trust him in our hearts! We are believers!

Justification is contrary to our reason, sense and feeling

Eaton:

If we could believe that God is able, above reason, sense and feeling, by his Son's blood and righteousness utterly to abolish out of his own sight all our sins, being the work and image of the devil, which Christ came purposely to destroy, and that he makes us whiter than snow, from them all, so that we have not now one spot or wrinkle of sin that defiles us, nor any such thing in the sight of God, and that he is faithful to do this, as he has spoken it (Eph. 5:26-27) contrary to our reason, sense and feeling, then have we true faith. Then should we truly glorify

moment they believe, their sins being imputed to Christ, they cease to be theirs, and Christ's righteousness is imputed to them and accounted theirs, so that they are accepted' (Spurgeon, C.H.: *New Park Street Pulpit...*, Vol.3, The Banner of Truth Trust, London, 1964, pp156-158).

God and Christ and find sanctification, and all other blessings, both spiritual and temporal, with a fuller hand than we do. Which people do much fail of because they mark not that there is a twofold making of us clean and abolishing of our sins made mention of in God's word.

Eaton spelled out this twofold aspect:

First, a mystical and secret abolishing of our sins, wrought by Christ and his righteousness, in the sight of God only (John 1:29; 1 John 1:7)... which is called mystical because it is wrought, seen and apprehended above reason, sense and feeling; that is, by faith only, and is the mere and sole glory of Christ's Godhead (Heb. 1:3).

And:

Secondly, a gross and palpable abolishing of our sins, wrought by us, by the help of God's Spirit, to our sense and feeling by sanctification... (2 Cor. 7:1; 1 John 1:3)... which latter we shall never *feel* to be perfected in us until the life to come, that there may be place for the first way, and for faith. For, as I said before, what place would there be left for faith, to believe that Christ has made us perfectly holy and righteous in the sight of God freely, if we could *see* and *feel* ourselves to be so in God's sight?²⁹

And, while I do not want, at this time, to enter the debate about 'the man of Romans 7', Eaton's view of the passage showed what he thought about a believer's feelings about his justification:

Paul's intent [in Romans 7:14-24 is not]... to describe in what state he and the justified children of God do stand in the sight of God, but what he and all the true children of God, by the imperfection of their sanctification, do feel in themselves... while they look into themselves and compare the imperfection of their sanctification with the perfection of the law of God... Whereby all those sins and imperfections of their sanctification, that they feel in themselves [to be] as a menstruous cloth, are above their sense and feeling utterly abolished out of God's sight by justification, and they are made from all spot of sin perfectly holy and righteous in the sight of God freely... (2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 7:25; 8:4; Rom. 5:2; Col. 2:10).³⁰

In other words, while the believer, looking at himself, sees an imperfect sanctification, in looking to Christ, he sees the perfection

²⁹ Eaton pp50-51, emphasis mine.

³⁰ Eaton pp87-88, emphasis mine.

of his justification. Where should the stress fall? Where does the New Testament lay the weight? Eaton had no doubt. Keep looking to Christ! Glory in your justification!

How did Eaton set out the glories of free justification, notwithstanding our own imperfect sanctification? By stressing the God-ward aspect of our justification – our standing before God in Christ.

The God-ward aspect of justification

Eaton:

The first part of free justification is that whereby we, being by the power of God's imputation, so clothed with the wedding garment of Christ's perfect righteousness, that of unjust we are made just before God [and] have thereby all our sins, that we feel daily dwelling in us, so (above reason, sense and feeling, that it may be of God's power) quite taken away from before God, and so utterly abolished out of his sight, that we have not one spot or wrinkle of sin, or any such thing in the sight of God, because the blood of Christ makes us clean from all sin, as the Scriptures so abundantly testify... (Jer. 50:20; John 1:29; Isa. 43:25; 44:22)... For Christ taking upon him our sins, they could not remain and abide upon him. What then became of them? They must needs vanish away, and be utterly abolished and brought to nothing. Whereby, faith works so mightily, that he that believes that Christ has taken away his sins,³¹ is as clean without sin as Christ himself... And therefore although the feeling of sin is left in us, only to the end to drive us to faith, and to make faith more abound, yet has Christ taken away our sins from before God and abolished them... (Heb. 10:14).³²

The fact is:

God casts all the sins of the faithful [believing] into the bottom of the sea, like a talent of lead, from our eyes, that from thenceforth they may never appear before God any more. For God does so remove away the sins of the faithful [believing] out of his sight, that they may never return into his sight any more... Christ gave himself for us to make us holy; and he has made us clean, that he might make us to himself a

³¹ This, as it stands, is Sandemanianism. I am sure Eaton did not mean to convey that doctrine. True faith is trust in Christ, not the mere acceptance of facts.

³² Eaton pp24-26; see also Eaton p73 plus many others.

glorious church... The church³³ has not one spot or wrinkle of sin, but is perfectly righteous by free justification and faith only in Christ.

But:

How can we be made in the sight of God purer and whiter than snow, when, yet, notwithstanding, the relics of sin do always cleave unto us?... Say not therefore: 'I have sinned very much; how can I be healed of this load of sin which I feel in me?' You cannot [do it], but your God can. Indeed, and [he] can so do it, that he can clean put out and abolish your sin. Mark diligently this saying, for God does [indeed] put out and abolish sin so clean, that there remains no print of them... God, when he puts out sins, he abolishes them so clean, that there remains no scar or any print thereof, but with the healing, he gives the fresh colour, because he not only puts out and extinguishes the sin, and makes it not to be – indeed, and as if it had never been – but also supplies, in place thereof, and puts in righteousness, and so takes [sin] altogether, and so clean away from before himself, that there appears no scar, nor print, nor sign of scar.

How necessary it is to stress this vital point! Very often today believers are taught that justification is 'as if you had never sinned'. Not at all! It is as though you had never sinned, but had always been perfectly righteous!

As Eaton declared:

This then is the glory of God in me, that I being a sinner in myself (for what should he remit and abolish, if I were not a sinner?) do yet notwithstanding believe that heaven and earth shall sooner fall, than that I am not by the blood of Christ, from all my sins in the sight of God, more pure and white than snow. If you believe not this, you make God, with your highest and most horrible reproach and blasphemy, a liar... Truly all our sins are utterly abolished out of God's sight... Perfectly clean the blood of Christ makes us from all sin... God himself... sees no sin in his justified children... The blood of Christ has made us so perfectly clean that we are in the sight of God from all sin whiter than snow. And all this, because we are by the wedding garment of Christ's righteousness made from all spot of sin perfectly holy and righteous in the sight of God freely... For God sees no spot in her [the church], because he sees nothing in her but his Son's righteousness,

³³ That is the elect in God's decree and Christ's work, but every believer in actual experience. I will not repeat this note every time. See my opening remarks on Eaton not holding to eternal justification.

wherewith his church is clothed, and whereby she has salvation, life and glory; for seeing she has put on Christ himself, to God-ward by justification, and to man-ward by sanctification, although she has some sin in the imperfections of her sanctification, that the devil sees, and every one of us in our consciences feels it. But God sees none, for by reason of Christ, with whom she is clothed, she is all fair, without spot or wrinkle.

High doctrine this, but not too high. In my view, Eaton is hitting the biblical note; namely – whatever cavillers may say – that ‘God himself... sees no sin in his justified children’ because ‘Christ’s righteousness [has] made [them] from all spot of sin perfectly holy and righteous in the sight of God freely’. See Romans 8:33-34.

But as he went on, Eaton was very strong, I think too strong:

Whosoever, therefore, has not confidence in this one point, that our sins are so taken away by the blood of Christ, that God does not see our sins in us, without doubt they are damned, as long as they continue to rob Christ of this honour, and his wedding garment of this glory... (Isa. 43:25).

Let me say why I think this is too strong, and oversteps the mark. I am certain, myself, that weak believers do exist, weak because they, looking too much within themselves and, seeing the poverty of their sanctification, cannot see their glorious perfection in Christ. I would encourage any such who might be reading this: look to Christ. Do not look within, look to your Redeemer. Imperfection you will find in yourself; nothing but perfection – and all is laid to your account – is in the Lord Jesus.³⁴

Nevertheless, Eaton was right to press on:

We being hereby of unjust made just – that is, perfectly holy and righteous from all spot of sin in the sight of God freely in his righteousness only, now as God looks upon us in this justified estate, he remembers no sin in us... (Jer. 50:20; Heb. 9:26) And therefore that there is no more sin, *etc.*, in the church, since Christ now reigns... for

³⁴ In mitigation, see my earlier remarks on William Dell and the difficulty for every preacher or writer when faced with the conflict between the scriptural standard and his own attainment. I also referred to Phil. 3:12-14. That being said, Eaton still went too far in the above. Once again, I express my thanks to Andrew Rome who made me think more deeply about this point.

they which do believe in Christ are no sinners (Rom. 5:8-9), but are holy and righteous, lords over sin and death, and living for ever... If I look upon my own person, or the person of my brother, it shall never be in God's sight so absolutely holy. But if I behold Christ, who has sanctified and made clean his church, then it is altogether holy.

Eaton stressed the importance of what he was saying: 'Nothing therefore concerns us more than that we do securely and joyfully assure ourselves that our sins come no more into remembrance before God'.³⁵

Eaton turned again to the undoubted fact that our inevitably imperfect sanctification always contradicts these amazing statements about our standing before God in Christ:

We all have sin in us, and... in many things we sin all. Indeed... we all sin, not only in many things... but even in all things, and... that all our righteousness of sanctification and holy walking is as a menstruous cloth, that is mortal and damnable sin, if God should behold it out of justification.³⁶

Even so:

God has made his children so perfectly holy and righteous in his sight that he sees no sin in them, in and by their justification... Even so, the children of God, terrified more with the horribleness of sin, in the sight of God, than with punishment, although they flying to Christ, he... does not only cover [their sins]... but also, in respect of God, has utterly abolished [their sins] out of his Father's sight, by making them of unjust just...³⁷

Eaton, unwisely, pushed this to its logical conclusion:

³⁵ Eaton pp30-43. Eaton had a remarkable view of 1 John 3:5, but it shows yet again his high view of justification: 'As... John testifies that in Christ (that is in the body of his church) is no sin... for here he speaks not of the person of Christ, but his whole body... There is no sin in the church any more... By Christ's dying upon the cross, he has purged and made us so clean from all sin in the sight of God, that God sees nothing else in the whole world of true believers but a mere cleansing and righteousness... (Jer. 31:31-32,34; Heb. 10:14-17)' (Eaton pp41-42). As I say, exegesis odd; sentiment spot on!

³⁶ Eaton p47.

³⁷ Eaton p56.

For the justified children of God, and all their thoughts, words and deeds, are exceedingly good in the sight of God, not to their sense and feeling by the perfection of their sanctification... but because although that is a good foundation of a godly life, inseparable from justification (1 John 3:6,9)... that is, [they] cannot but choose and wrestle against all sin both in [themselves] and others, and zealously follow holiness (Tit. 2:14), yet this foundation of their sanctification is too weak to make them, and all their thoughts, words and deeds exceeding good in God's sight, because all their righteousness and goodness of sanctification is by reason of the imperfection thereof, if it should be beholden out of our justification, but as a menstruous cloth that is very wicked and mortal sin... How then come all the thoughts, words and deeds of God's justified children to be exceeding good in God's sight? I answer, by the perfection of their justification, whereby not only their persons are justified – that is, of unjust made just; that is, perfectly holy and righteous in the sight of God... – but also... all their words, and all their deeds are justified in the sight of God – that is, all the evil of all their thoughts, words and deeds, and all the imperfections of their sanctification, are mystically – that is, above reason, sense and feeling – utterly abolished out of God's sight, and all their thoughts, words and deeds are made so perfectly holy and righteous from all spot of sin in the sight of God freely... All is pure in the sight of God.³⁸

Yes, Eaton was right, but – and it is a big 'but' – the plain fact is when the believer sins, he really does sin. David's sin with Bathsheba and Uriah, and Peter's denial of Christ, were far from being 'perfectly holy and righteous from all spot of sin in the sight of God'. David and Peter were justified men, but they also sinned in these respects, and both lost their joy as a result. If Eaton had warned that sin is sin, and sin is abhorrent to God, and then gone on to say that, even so, nothing can hinder the believer's justification, he would have been on New Testament ground. Sin does rob the believer, however – not of his justification, but of his sense of joy at the loss of God's approval.

Nevertheless, Eaton was right to keep pressing home the truth of the new covenant: if we look at our sanctification, we are wretched sinners in ourselves, yes, but, as believers, we must keep our eyes upon Christ and our justification in him. Looking to Christ by faith, we must believe what God has said about us in his word:

³⁸ Eaton pp76-78.

True it is that Paul and all the true children of God both have and feel the remnants of corruption dwelling in them. Indeed, the more grace they have, the more, by their true hatred of sin and love of righteousness wrought in them by their sanctification, do they feel sin to be like a thorn or splinter run into their flesh. Whereby they cannot but choose, but pray thrice and thrice and thrice – that is continually groan by the vigour and force of their evangelical, continual, true repentance – and still sigh to be freed from the same, of which, although God does not, for the exercise of their faith, free them from their sense and feeling until the time of their appointed change [their death], yet he calls them by his word and Spirit to be better and better by the eye of faith, that he has perfectly healed them thereof in his own sight, before they pray. As if he said: ‘Indeed I have healed you with a twofold or double advantage, both to you and me’.

Eaton went on as if God were addressing believers directly:

‘For first, my grace (of justification, which is the mother and abundant grace of graces, Rom. 5:15,17) is sufficient for you. That is, although mystically above your sense and feeling, that you may not live by sense and feeling, but by faith in my power, yet truly it makes you sufficiently righteous in my sight...’ (Eph. 5:27)...

Again: ‘You are not only made sufficiently righteous in my sight, but also the second advantage is that hereby my power is made perfect in your weakness. That is, when you feel nothing but weakness and infirmity in yourself, then for me notwithstanding, to make you sufficiently and perfectly holy and righteous from all spot of sin in my sight freely, herein my power is mightily magnified...’.

Eaton drew the conclusion:

Thus it is plain, that although God knows the sin that dwells in his sanctified children, yet he sees them [the sins] abolished out of his own sight, and sees them [his children] sufficiently and perfectly holy and righteous from all spot of sin in his own sight, and sees and defends his power to be therein greatly magnified.³⁹

Eaton turned on his opponents, warning them not to keep hammering believers with their wretchedness and miserable level of sanctification. You must not, he said, keep telling:

Humbled ones, terrified with the horribleness of the least sin, and now by justification made glad, joyful and zealous, that they are not made

³⁹ Eaton pp95-96.

perfectly holy and righteous from all spot of sin in the sight of God freely, but that God sees sins in them, and is ready to correct and punish them for the same.⁴⁰

This is not so, said Eaton, for:

By the power of God's imputation, clothed with the wedding garment of Christ's perfect righteousness... we have, not only all our sins, together with the imperfections of our sanctification, ever (while we are in this life) dwelling in us, incomprehensibly swallowed up and utterly abolished... but also we are, without the help of any good works to make us righteous, made perfectly holy and righteous in the sight of God freely.⁴¹

For 'the possessors' of free justification, Eaton set out 'what an inestimable jewel they have' in 'the utility and majesty of it' in its 'fruits and effects': 'Justification truly enlightens us, and brings us into a wonderful light'; it reveals sin in its true colours; it further shows 'the perfection of God's justice against sin, and his implacable displeasure and anger against the same'. Then again, 'the right knowledge of free justification brings a man to see and understand... the spiritual meaning of the ten commandments'. Further, 'this right knowledge of free justification opens unto us the very closets of heaven'. Moreover:

Justification... not only delivers us from the... punishment belonging to the least sin... but also it is the only cause that brings upon us, and puts us in possession of, all the contrary, great and glorious benefits of the gospel. [One of these] excellent [benefits] is our wonderful union into Christ, whereby we are by the power of the Holy Ghost, though mystically and spiritually, yet truly, really and substantially, so engrafted and united into Christ, that we are made one with him, and he one with us. [Further, another] excellent benefit of free justification is our most glorious adoption, whereby we are made true sons and daughters of the living God. [Again,] this free justification is the only immediate cause and means of our final glorification, and of setting us in the right and assurance of eternal life. [Yet again, just as] the want or ignorance of it is the loss of all true peace and joy in God, so the right knowledge and apprehension thereof is the lively spring of joy, and of a good conscience, and glorifying of God, both in heart and

⁴⁰ Eaton p136.

⁴¹ Eaton p257.

tongue. [It also] works a good judgement, and right discerning of all religion, works and worship to the overthrowing of all superstitions, sects and schisms, and reduces people from their contentious and dangerous by-paths, and rectifies their blind legal zeals... (Rom.10:3).⁴²

Reader, at this point, once again we run into a difficulty which must face us all.⁴³ On the one hand, we have the New Testament speaking so clearly of our justification, our freedom from condemnation, and our perfection before God in Christ. On the other hand, we have certain other passages which show that believers can be weak and sinful – and our experience certainly chimes in with this! What is the answer? As I see it, we have suffered too much, and for too long, in stressing our weakness and failure, and we have thought too little about our liberty in Christ. To be specific: I am convinced that far too much weight has been given to Romans 7:14-24. Let me quickly explain myself. Please note the exact reference. Note further that the passage is highly controverted. That being so, we should be far more cautious than many are in pronouncing it to be the norm for the believer – indeed, making it the pinnacle of spirituality. Above all do not miss the way the apostle goes on. Having asked the question: ‘What a wretched man I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?’, Paul thunders out: ‘I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!’ True, he does admit: ‘With the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin’. Even so, he immediately draws this glorious (and extended) conclusion to it all:

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: he condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us

⁴² Eaton pp401-457. As can be seen, if ever my remark about this work being but the briefest of digests was true, it must be so here. I have condensed nearly 60 pages into these few lines. This applies not only to Eaton’s statements, but to his detailed supporting arguments.

⁴³ Here is another place where Andrew Rome made me think more deeply about things. I am grateful to him.

who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you (Rom. 7:24 – 8:11).

And so on – right to the end of the chapter. And is this not the thrust of the New Testament, rather than the wretchedness of our spirituality? I ask, therefore, of John Eaton, does his kind of preaching not warm your heart? It does mine! If this man is an antinomian, God make me one! If this is antinomian preaching, let us have more of it! What better encouragement could a believer want to stir him to live for God's glory – than to let the full glories of God's free grace in justifying him in Christ sink deep into his soul? Calvin might drive men to the law for sanctification. Eaton, in line with the New Testament, drives us to Christ, and our glorious liberty in the Redeemer.

The inseparable connection between justification and sanctification

Here we reach a crucial point. In light of what follows, how this man could ever have been written off as an antinomian beggars belief. Those who do it, especially if they have not actually read – let alone studied – his work, need to examine their heart. The man who could baldly state in print: The 'grace of justification, bringing forth also sanctification, truly converts... to God', as he did⁴⁴ – that man, I say, is no antinomian!

Now for a more detailed explanation. Eaton was nothing if not clear when showing how justification leads inevitably to

⁴⁴ Eaton p122.

sanctification. Moreover, he was rightly dogmatic in asserting that the motive and spur for sanctification is a proper sense of justification. This, do not forget, is a direct contradiction of the Reformed way of sanctification by the whip of the law:

[God] has... given his own Son for us unto death that he might, both from [Adam's] sin, and from all sins flowing from this original sin, free us by his blood, and so make us clean. *Then hereupon do arise in us good and holy desires and affections*, contrary to former depravity and corruption – as namely, humility, purity, gentleness, and all other virtues; and then all good works are practiced, and that also with a willing heart. The author and cause of all which is this grace of justification, by which alone this original sin is done away, and we are made clean and acceptable before God... This first part of justification... calls us out of the dead faith, and *makes us give ourselves wholly to God by faith, and to our neighbour by love, to walk in all God's commandments zealously*; this excellency (I say) of this first part of free justification – namely, how truly and utterly our sins are abolished out of God's sight, and how perfectly clean the blood of Christ makes us from all sin – the Holy Ghost expresses it unto us by six principal and most emphatic phrases and similitudes...⁴⁵ [so that] we may ascend... by certain steps or stairs to the full height of comfort and joy... For thus teach we: that the church has not one spot or wrinkle of sin, but is perfectly righteous by free justification and faith in Christ only, which serves to approve her to the eyes of God. Again, she is holy in life and conversation, but this latter way [progressive sanctification] is imperfect, and [yet] [this (imperfect) holiness of life and conversation] serves to approve her to the eyes of men.⁴⁶

No unclean thing can enter into the kingdom of Christ... for except a man be born again – that is, made a perfect new creature to the eyes of God by justification, and to declare the same by being made a new creature to the eyes of men by sanctification – he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).⁴⁷

Is this man supposed to be an antinomian? In light of the above who dares to assert it?

Again:

⁴⁵ Over several pages, Eaton worked out these 'principal and most emphatic phrases and similitudes'.

⁴⁶ Eaton pp27-30, emphasis mine.

⁴⁷ Eaton pp65-66.

[By justification,] all is pure in the sight of God, which inseparably and infallibly brings forth sanctification also, a manifesting and declaring this justification more and more to their sense and feeling, and also to the eyes of others, to the glorifying of God for the same outwardly also (Matt. 5:16).⁴⁸

Furthermore:

Justification... not only clears your conscience from all sin and condemning terrors for the same, but also makes you and your consciences perfect in holiness and righteousness freely to God-ward, and in the sight of God... (Heb. 9:9,14; 10:2,14)... And as our consciences are thus made good to God-ward by justification, so... they are made good to men-ward by sanctification, because when we see that the least sin is such an infinitely horrible thing in the sight of God that we must needs be made clean from all spot of sin in the sight of God, though it cost the blood of the Son of God to effect it, then we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing to God, zealously in the sight of men also. Therefore to conclude with... [1 John 3:23]: this is the commandment of all commandments, that we believe in the name or power of Jesus Christ, that of unjust he makes us just – that is, perfectly holy and righteous in the sight of God freely – by which we practice all commandments, and so do manifest that we have the Holy Ghost, and are not hypocrites either towards God by justification, or towards men by sanctification.⁴⁹

This, reader, is pure gospel. Antinomianism? Not at all!

Again:

Although, being by their faith once justified, they [believers] are ever justified, having all the imperfections of their sanctification that they daily feel in themselves, ever abolished out of God's sight... (1 John 1:7), and they, ever perfectly holy and righteous from all sin and rebuke before God, and in his sight (Col. 1:22), yet the trials and exercising of that faith, that has made them such before God, makes them full partakers of God's holiness and righteousness, both of justification and sanctification, more and more experimentally in themselves, by the increase of their faith... (Rom. 1:17).⁵⁰

Eaton showed that Ephesians 5:8 contains both elements, justification and sanctification, *and in that order*:

⁴⁸ Eaton p78.

⁴⁹ Eaton pp90-92.

⁵⁰ Eaton p134.

‘You were once darkness but now are light in the Lord’. Mark how [the apostle] says, not light in themselves, but light in the Lord – there is the lantern made light with the candle of justification... ‘Walk as children of light’ – there is sanctification, as the beams showing and declaring that the candle of justification is in us.⁵¹

Again:

If God, by the power of his imputation, so clothes us with his Son’s righteousness that it makes us in his sight perfectly holy and righteous, then all our sins must needs be abolished out of his sight... If it puts away all our iniquities like a mist... (Isa. 44:22), [and] abolishes all our sins like darkness out of God’s sight, then it leaves us of necessity only and perfectly righteous in the sight of God... [Eph. 5:8]... free justification making [us]... perfectly holy and righteous in the sight of God – not by [our] doings and holy walking, but in the Lord... There is sanctification inseparably following, and showing that we, before our justification, were darkness... are now, by justification, changed and removed out of that condition... and nothing else but righteousness in the sight of God...

When we are justified we are both righteous and sinners also in the sight of God... (Eph. 5:8). ‘You were once in times past darkness’ – there is the time of our being sinners... past and gone. ‘But now are light in the Lord’ – there is the time of our justification, and being righteous in the sight of God now present... ‘Walk as children of light’ – there is sanctification showing and declaring to men our new condition and state that we are now only in before God.⁵²

Do not miss the clear contrast with Calvin’s whip. The point is, of course: which is biblical? I have no doubt myself. What about you, reader?

Eaton was uncompromising with the professors of mere outward religion. Catching the spirit of Romans 2:28-29, Galatians 5:6; 6:15 and Philippians 3:3, as he came to the conclusion of his treatise, he left none of his hearers in any doubt:

⁵¹ Eaton p167.

⁵² Eaton pp254,375-376. He moved on immediately to 1 Cor. 6:11: ‘What can be more plain, that the time, state and condition wherein they were foul and sinful was past and gone, but the time, state and condition, wherein they were washed and made righteous to God-ward by justification, and also to men-ward by sanctification was... present, and abiding for ever’. He then moved on to Rom. 5:8-9.

John Eaton

Let every one of us remember that saying of Paul, that circumcision, that is all our outward form of true religion, and of the true worship of God, avails nothing... That is, all outward wisdom, polity [form, system, structure] and excellency whatsoever avails nothing before God, but only 'faith that makes a new creature'. First new, before God by justification. Secondly, new to one's own self, by sanctification. And thirdly, new to our neighbours by love out of a pure heart.

Still moving to his conclusion, Eaton:

Thus a Christian first fulfils and accomplishes the law inwardly by faith (for Christ is the perfection and fulfilling of the law unto righteousness to all that believe – Romans 10:4), and then outwardly by works. Thus is he justified in heaven and earth. The gospel justifies him in heaven, and the law⁵³ on earth, and thus is this new creature created unto the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, which inwardly is perfectly righteous in the sight of God with a heavenly righteousness by justification, and outwardly is holy and clean in the flesh by sanctification. 'And as many as walk according to this rule, peace shall be upon them, and mercy as upon the Israel of God' (Gal. 6:16).⁵⁴

Again:

This true faith of free justification (contrary to the judgement of popish and carnal reason) inseparably brings the Holy Ghost to dwell in [his] people (Gal. 3:2; Acts 10:44; 13:38-39,52), which Holy Ghost infallibly enflames our hearts with true love (Gal. 5:6), and makes true believers in right zeal of God's glory, and in true thankfulness, to break off from sin, and to mortify, by true repentance, their former profane life and ungodly conversation, and brings forth a declarative obedience, righteousness and readiness to every good work, now made good works indeed freely by free justification, and so brings forth a sincere, and, though an imperfect, yet a free and cheerful, walking in, and keeping of, all God's will and commandments, declaratively to man-ward, which is true sanctification. And thus the law is not destroyed by free justification, but established (Rom. 3:21,31), and written in the hearts of true believers, and they are fulfillers and keepers of the law [in] two manner of ways. *First*, perfectly making

⁵³ I take this to mean 'the law of Moses' or even, with the Reformed, 'the ten commandments'. If so, how can the Reformed call him an antinomian? I disagree with Eaton's statement as it stands; it needs nuancing. See my *Christ*.

⁵⁴ Eaton pp483-484.

their hearts perfectly righteous, freely, to the full content and satisfying of God by faith... of free justification... (Rom. 10:4-6,10; Acts 15:8-9; Heb. 8:10). *Secondly*, it is written in their hearts,⁵⁵ and they are fulfillers and keepers of the law inchoatively [beginning of an action; that is, imperfectly], actively and declaratively to man-ward, by love and true sanctification... (Gal. 5:13-14; Rom. 13:8-10). Indeed, this true faith in free justification, deeply, truly and soundly learned, is a thing of perfect virtue and wonderful operation, strength and power to bring forth all good motions [impulses] inwardly, and all good works outwardly, or else it is not the true lively justifying faith, but the blind dead faith, that leaves men in sin, death and double damnation... (Rom. 5 – 6; Tit. 2;11-15; 1 John 3:3-10; Eph. 2:10; 4 – 6; Matt. 5:16; 2 Pet 1:9).⁵⁶

Eaton had a warning for preachers and their hearers:

But if the Sun of Righteousness is so clouded from us that the beams of justification, which exceed in glory, are by want of preaching or receiving it, stopped, that it shines not into our dark hearts, then our souls can return back again no beam of sanctification. Thus we see how this joyful knowledge of justification, the worth and glory of the same being discerned, seen and enjoyed with a true and right faith, makes both elders⁵⁷ and people to shine forth with the bright shining beams of great glorifying of God.⁵⁸

In other words, Eaton was making his application of the New Testament (new-covenant) doctrine: the preacher must preach Christ to saints, and saints must look to Christ. That is the way of sanctification. To do anything else – for example, I would say (and so would Eaton), such as preaching the law – will do the opposite. The only way I can be sanctified is for me to set my heart on Christ.

In light of such unequivocal testimony, how Eaton ever found himself so badly treated as an antinomian defies belief. Justification always leads to sanctification; if it does not, the professor was never justified; believers are moved to sanctification by their sense of the freeness of God's grace in their justification; if they lose

⁵⁵ I disagree with Eaton here. The law which is written on believers' hearts is the law of Christ, not the law of Moses, not even restricted to the ten commandments. See my *Christ*.

⁵⁶ Eaton pp488-489, emphasis mine.

⁵⁷ Eaton had 'pastors'.

⁵⁸ Eaton p481.

sight of their justification, their sanctification consequently suffers. So Eaton maintained, over and over again. And *this* is antinomianism? If it is, God make me an antinomian – both as a believer and as a preacher!

And this takes us on to the next point – and a vital point, at that. Although we have met it in passing, it merits a more detailed look, for we are now reaching the heart of the question in hand.

The motive and spur for sanctification is not the law; it is the gospel, the grace of God in justification

As I say, here we reach the crunch. Without naming him, Eaton now squares up to Calvin's third use of the law; namely, that the law is the whip that lashes believers, like lazy asses, into holiness. This, according to Eaton, is utterly misguided, quite wrong. Let him speak for himself. The question is, of course, which way is right – according to the New Testament? Eaton had no doubt:

The... main point showing the majesty and utility of this benefit of justification is that the true joyful knowledge of the same is the only powerful means to regenerate,⁵⁹ quicken and sanctify us, and to make us truly to love, fear and trust in God, working in us the true evangelical repentance, in sincerity hating sin because it is sin, and truly loving all holiness and righteousness. And thus it is God's holy fire that enflames his people with right thankful zeal for God's glory, in careful and diligent walking in all God's commandments, by willing, cheerful and ready practicing of all duties of love, both towards God and your neighbours, and so making it manifest that justification and sanctification are inseparable companions that go infallibly together, making every true believer a double saint, or rather a true saint two manner of ways.

Further, in a complicated passage:

We cleanse and mortify and purify ourselves only declaratively in the sight of men; that is, we only declare both to ourselves and to others, in the way of thankfulness, that the Holy Ghost has, by clothing us with the wedding garment of Christ's righteousness, purified, mortified,

⁵⁹ That is, preaching free justification is the way to bring sinners to regeneration. See below, where Eaton shows that this is precisely what Christ did in John 3:1-17.

cleansed and utterly abolished all our sins out of God's sight freely. Whereby, the Holy Ghost sees us not properly mortifying, cleansing and purifying our sins out of the sight of God, ourselves, for then he should see us robbing Christ of that glory which his blood has freely done... but the Spirit (we first being clean in his sight) enters into us to dwell in us, which otherwise he would not do, but being entered and dwelling in us, he enables us by walking holily and righteously to avoid and purify out of our own sight, sense and feeling, and out of the sight of other men, that sin which the wedding garment has purified and abolished before, out of God's sight... (Rom. 6).⁶⁰

Let me translate. Eaton was arguing that willing sanctification demonstrates our justification – both to ourselves and others. But, and this is Eaton's point, only the Holy Spirit can enable us to be sanctified. Our willingness – desire – to be sanctified, and any attainment in it, is entirely due to the Spirit's work in us. Left to ourselves, we would not seek to be sanctified, let alone grow in Christ-likeness. So Eaton stoutly maintained. Perhaps he was a little too categorical in this – after all, from a plethora of scriptures we know that we are responsible for our obedience: 'As you have always obeyed... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling', for instance. Even so, as the apostle immediately adds in that place: 'For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose' (Phil. 2:12-13; see also 1 Cor. 12:6; 15:10; Heb. 13:20-21). Why was Eaton so adamant? He would allow nothing – nothing – to detract from the glory of Christ. What a motive! And undeniably scriptural. Let me prove it by quoting that last reference:

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen (Heb. 13:20-21).

Now for a statement of huge import: 'A faithful minister... [must] not mix and mingle the law and the gospel, as one would mingle black and white together, and mar both'.⁶¹ This, it goes without saying, is precisely what happens when men adopt Calvin's third

⁶⁰ Eaton pp164-165.

⁶¹ Eaton p124.

use of the law. Without mentioning the name of the Reformer, Eaton warned against those preachers who do it. He wasn't mealy-mouthed about it, either. While I do not endorse every last expression that he used, Eaton, I am glad to say, certainly did not fail to make his point, one which I wholeheartedly approve of:

Not feeling how powerful the treasures of the gospel alone are, both to abolish all sin from before God, and by joy and zeal thereof to mortify all sin in ourselves, they go to borrow help by fear from the whippings of the law, as if the gospel... were not able to increase that life begun... except it borrow help of the whippings of the law, and so make a miscellany and mixture of the law and gospel, and thus preach (as Luther truly says) neither true law nor true gospel, but a miscellany and marring of both, and thereby make miscellany Christians; that is, mere hypocrites (Gal. 4:25)... By this mixture and mingling of whipping to the righteousness joined with free justification in the faithful, as Luther truly says... (Gal. 1:7): 'The preachers of the gospel' (says he) 'become the apostles of the devil', because this mingling not only blemishes and darkens the knowledge of grace, but also it takes away Christ, with all his benefits, and it secretly undermines, and utterly overthrows, the gospel. And yet... they glory above others in the name of Christ, and boast themselves to be the most sincere preachers of the gospel. But because they mingle the law with the gospel... they must needs be perverters of the gospel, because... they deny Christ to have by himself alone made us whole; that is, perfectly holy and righteous from all spot of sin in the sight of God freely.

I would soften this. The Reformed are certainly not 'apostles of the devil'. Nevertheless, using Eaton's words, I would say that law-preaching tends very seriously to 'blemish and darken' the believer's sense of grace; and so on. Above all, it does not produce the sanctification God requires.

Reader, although you may well be offended by Eaton's intemperate language, please bear in mind the age in which he lived. Furthermore, do not forget similar language used by the Reformers when dismissing Anabaptists, for example. I do not say this to condone either party, just to put such words in context. Above all – and this, after all, is *the* point – go to the New Testament yourself and see if it was Eaton or the legal preachers who were right. And then replace the word 'was' with 'is', and 'were' with 'are' – for we are not talking merely about a bygone age; these things are relevant today, and of high significance.

Eaton spelled out the reason: What effect does this law-and-gospel preaching have upon men?

This mingling of the law and the gospel, and saying that God sees sin in his justified children to correct and punish them for the same, must needs trouble the conscience of God's children (except they are hypocrites) exceedingly... Seeing sanctification is but the lively stirring about that comes of this healing of justification, can we then stir lively in the duties of sanctification before we feel ourselves healed of the deadly sickness of our sins by justification?... The lessening of the glory of our justification extinguishes the vigour of our sanctification; both hindering our joy, lessening our love, and quenching our zeal, that otherwise, by the exceeding greatness of Christ's benefits, would exceedingly abound (Isa. 61:3; Tit. 2:14).

Eaton was making the vital biblical point that it is only those who have a felt sense of their justification that can be 'lively' in sanctification. In scriptural terms, it is only those who have died to the law who can be married to Christ and bear fruit for God's glory (Rom. 7:4,6; Gal. 2:19-20). It is they who most clearly see and feel that they are truly beyond condemnation who will most cheerfully and willingly seek to be Christ-like. Preaching the law, said Eaton, actually stultifies sanctification; it does not produce it.

What is the fundamental flaw in this law-and-gospel preaching?

This doctrine, that God sees sin in his justified children, to whip, correct and punish them for the same, is the very instrument and engine that confounds the new covenant... with the old that is finished (Heb. 8:9,13)... it brings back the full-grown heir to be whipped under the schoolmaster...⁶² (Gal. 3:25)... to beat them with the whippings and

⁶² Greek *paidagōgos*, 'tutor' (NKJV), 'schoolmaster' (AV), 'in charge' (NIV), 'tutor', literally 'child-conductor' (NASB). Sadly, some of these translations ('schoolmaster' and 'tutor'), even the transliteration 'pedagogue', give the misleading impression that the law was an 'educator', much like *didaskalos* (Rom. 2:20; Heb. 5:2, for example). *This* is not the meaning of *paidagōgos*. The word comes from *paidos*, genitive of *pais* (child), and *agōgos* (leader), derived from *agō*, 'to drive, to lead by laying hold of, to conduct' with the idea of discipline. As Thayer explained: 'The name was applied to trustworthy slaves who were charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals of boys... The boys were not allowed so much as to step out of the house without them, before reaching the age of manhood... The name carries with it an idea of severity

corrections of the law... But they are not taught... as people that are made perfectly holy and righteous from all spot of sin in the sight of God freely, so that all that they do must be done for joy and thankfulness that they are made so perfectly holy and righteous from all spot in the sight of God freely...

The remedy? ‘To preach powerfully the glad tidings of good things (Rom. 10:15)’. Preachers who mingle the law and the gospel ‘not only patch... the wedding garment of Christ’s righteousness... [with] the old patches of the duties of the [so-called – DG] moral law to make them good, and better and better, and more holy, and more righteous every day in the sight of God by the holy walking of sanctification (as they call it), but also by the lashes of the law do whip them thereunto, hereby secretly laying the foundation of meriting works’. They do that which Christ precisely declares is impossible – or at least, ought not to be attempted; namely, patching old and new garments into one, or putting new wine into old wineskins (Luke 5:36-38).

Furthermore:

This doctrine that the justified children of God must be kept from sin, and driven to holy walking, for [that is, by] fear of correction and punishments, quite mars the true nature of sanctification. For... it is true sanctification [only] when it is done with a willing cheerfulness and mere sincere thankfulness for free justification and the other great benefits of the gospel freely bestowed and already possessed, and thereupon brings great joy and zealous obedience. But if we are driven thereunto by corrections and whippings, it is not free and cheerful obedience, but it is made compulsive. But all that thankfulness – whereunto we with whippings are compelled – is no thankfulness, and, indeed, all such obedience is not worth a button, except it be willing and cheerful for joy of free justification, and then it is true sanctification indeed (Ps. 110:3; Isa. 55:5).

Spot on! So, what was Eaton’s conclusion?

The upshot of all this: that when we preachers of the gospel, not feeling in our hearts the vigour and power of the free-given treasures of Christ, do not trust to, nor rely upon, the pressing of them as sufficient

(as of a stern censor and enforcer of morals)’ (Thayer, Joseph Henry: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Ninth Printing 1991).

(where they are felt and enjoyed) operative causes of all holy walking and godly conversation, then we degenerate and decline thereby to the legal teaching of the old covenant... and constraining men to holiness and righteousness with legal arguments of large blessings if they do well, but with terrors of corrections and punishments for all their evil doings, which either does little good at all, or at best makes but self-deceiving legal zealous hypocrites, and so goes not with a right foot to the truth of the gospel (Gal. 2:14), and [the] purity of the first apostolic preaching of constraining men to holiness and righteousness by joy and love, by preaching with joyful enflamed hearts and fiery tongues (Acts 2:4)... (Acts 8:8,38-39,42,44,52; 1 Pet. 1:8; Eph. 3:8)... Not only... the Papists... but also some of us Protestants, by lisp[ing] the language of Ashdod do go about... to undermine the very root of the Lord's vine – that is free justification – by going about to prove... that we are not, by the wedding garment of Christ's righteousness, made perfectly holy and righteous from all spot of sin in the sight of God freely, full-sufficient of itself (the more it is rightly known) to constrain us with all joy to holiness and righteousness, not by fear, but by love, and evangelical zeal... (Song 8:6-7; Tit. 2:14).⁶³

Eaton has set out a vital truth here. Law-preaching will produce slave-works and outward conformity, yes, but it is only the new covenant that can produce real sanctification – sanctification from the heart. It is not only Papists who get this wrong; so do the Reformed. Those who 'lisp the language of Ashdod' badly miss the mark.⁶⁴

Eaton, of course, knew very well that he was stirring up a hornets' nest, and he was fully awake to the reaction he would provoke. He knew that he would be told that he was in a tiny minority for such outlandish and dangerous teaching, that he was flying in the face of the received wisdom of the day. He could already hear his critics telling him that:

Other ministers, being both zealous preachers, and such teachers as are of great knowledge and excellent learning, hold the contrary; namely, that the children of God are not freely, without works, made so

⁶³ Eaton pp136-147.

⁶⁴ As I explained and showed in my *Christ*, the Reformed, though they stoutly argue for the law as the motive and spur for sanctification, when they actually come to preach for it, they go – as the New Testament always does – to the gospel.

perfectly holy and righteous in the sight of God that God sees no sin in them.

Not in the least apologetic, Eaton was ready with his reply to his critics: It is necessary 'to ground [ourselves] in the perfect distinction between the law and the gospel, faith and works... and thereby to keep free justification pure and in her true glory, without any mixture, as the alone soul-saving grace, and the only soul-saving glory of Christ'.⁶⁵ What is more, he repeated his warning to those who keep the people 'with a legal zeal of holy walking for fear of punishment or hope of reward'.⁶⁶

He then turned to the account of the sinful woman who, when Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, kissed and anointed the Saviour's feet (Luke 7:36-50). Eaton drew several vital lessons from the episode:

That justification works in us the true love of God is plainly testified by Christ himself (Luke 7:47), saying: 'To whom little is forgiven, he loves but a little, but to whom much is forgiven he loves much'.

For no man is righteous but that he has a true feeling of his sins; neither, except he feels them with a true touch, can he else embrace this righteousness – but whoever has this knowledge that his sins through Christ are (so richly) forgiven him, it must needs be that he loves God much.

Then of this true love of God arises the true evangelical repentance, grieving at all sin, not in fear of punishment, but through love, becoming zealous against all sin, both in himself and in others... The woman [in question]... was wholly enflamed with the love of [that is, love to] Christ... She endeavoured to perform all duties of godliness carefully. Thus it appears by the whole similitude brought in by Christ, that justification is the cause of love, and love is the effect of justification.

Hence through love and admiration... the prophet cried out, saying: 'Who is a God like you, that takes away iniquity, and casts all our sins into the bottom of the sea?' (Micah 7:18)... For everyone, by how much the more he feels the rich forgiveness of his sins, and apprehends the glory of free justification, so much the more vehemently he loves God. And the more feeling of love we have, by so much we shall know that we have profited in the knowledge of justification.

⁶⁵ Eaton pp208-212.

⁶⁶ Eaton p223.

By faith therefore we attain the making of us righteous, and by love we are thankful, and testify the bountifulness of God towards us...

It is the joyful knowledge of justification that works in us the true fear of God, and in thankful zeal of God's glory cheerfully to obey him... 'For with you there is propitiation, mercy or forgiveness... and plentiful redemption, therefore you shall be feared' (Ps. 130:4)...

Eaton lifted his eyes to take in the big picture.

First, he spelled out the new-covenant position: 'Thus the true fear of God, the true worship of God, true reverence, indeed, the true knowledge of God, rest wholly upon this grace, that we are confident that God by Christ's justifying us is reconciled and made favourable to us'.

Eaton then went for the jugular. What is the consequence of confounding the law and the gospel?

Whereupon... I think and teach that is a pernicious kind of teaching by which men are taught to repent by beholding the punishments of sin and the rewards...⁶⁷ Paul [in Gal. 3:17]... foresaw in spirit that this mischief should creep into the church, that the word of God should be confounded; that is to say, that the promise should be mingled with the law, and so the promise should be utterly lost. For when the promise is mingled with the law, it is made nothing else but the very law, for whosoever does not perfectly understand... justification, must needs confound and mingle the law and grace together.

To mingle the law and the gospel, as Eaton saw, is to preach the law and not the gospel! Then he returned to his point that the gospel – the sense of one's free justification in Christ – is the great, the only, spur to godliness. 'Then... will follow':

Works of love and thankfulness, in a manner of their own accord (with a little help of direction and exhortation),⁶⁸ flowing from a true, right

⁶⁷ Eaton was here paraphrasing Luther on Ps. 130. I realise that Eaton was here speaking of believers, but, incidentally, the same applies to unbelievers – the law does not lead to repentance. The grace of God does that (Rom. 2:4).

⁶⁸ Bayes quoted this from Eaton, making this comment: 'The phrase in parenthesis is noteworthy; it is unclear how direction and exhortation differs from the preaching of the law' (Bayes, Jonathan F.: *The Weakness of the Law: God's Law and the Christian in New Testament Perspective*, Paternoster Press, Cumbria, 2000, pp11-12). Well, if Bayes couldn't see

and thankful zeal of God's glory, making them [believers] willing and ready to grow, and cheerfully to walk, in all the holy duties of all his commandments. Thus is justification, making us perfectly holy and righteous freely, in the sight of God, and works, safely taught and not confounded the one with the other,⁶⁹ but both in their due bounds powerfully established, works thereby joyfully flowing forth... (Tit. 2:14). You cannot in this case be idle, for surely that love of God and pleasure, which you enjoy in him, will not allow you to be idle. You shall be enflamed with a marvellous study and desire to do what things soever you can know will be an honour unto your God, so loving and bountiful unto you, and will turn to praise, glory and thanksgiving unto him. You will *** [pause?]⁷⁰ for no precept, you shall feel no compulsion of the law, having a most ready will and pleasure to do whatsoever things you shall know to be acceptable unto God.

In what way will the desire to please God show itself? First of all, said Eaton, we shall want to see other sinners converted. In other words he was answering the question: What is the best motive for evangelism? He got it in one: Our sense of the fullness of grace in our own justification by Christ:

the difference between, on the one hand, gospel directions and exhortations for sanctification – which are ubiquitous in the New Testament – and, on the other, the commands of the law to believers for sanctification – which are completely absent from the New Testament – what hope was there that he could come to a right view of ‘the weakness of the law’ in his book? For myself, I am sorry that Eaton used the word ‘little’; I would replace it with ‘scriptural’. The believer, as I showed in my *Christ*, needs instruction and calibration by the entire word of God, not simply the ten commandments!

⁶⁹ Another vital point. Legal preachers are at risk, to put it no stronger, of driving men to the law – not only for sanctification but for justification. What is more, new-covenant liberty, rejoicing in free justification, is severely endangered by making men cringe under the whip of the law for sanctification. Exulting in liberty and cringing in fear make uneasy bed-fellows, to say the least of it. Incidentally, my spell-checker has just thrown up an interesting alternative to the misspelling of ‘sanctification’: ‘scarification’! Almost a Freudian slip when thinking about the Reformed way of sanctification?

⁷⁰ Eaton had ‘passe’. Was he saying you will not stumble over any precept?

But first of all, it shall be your desire that this blessed knowledge of God, and rich benefits and treasures by Christ, may be common to all others. Whereupon your love will show itself, and will try all means to make this truth of salvation manifest unto all...

How relevant is this to us today. If ever there was a time for the churches to need conversions – let alone for the sinners themselves – it is now. If Rachel felt the need for children (Gen. 30:1), how much more should we? Eaton can help us here. The best means of stirring us to seek conversions, and the best of all subjects in our ‘preaching’ – using the word in its full New Testament sense – is free justification in Christ. The more we feel *that*, the more we shall want to see others converted. And the more we preach free justification, the more likely it is that we shall see conversions (see 1 Cor. 1:17-31; 2:1-5).

Do not run away with the wrong impression: Eaton had no rose-tinted view of evangelism. Oh no! He knew well enough what is involved, what it will cost us, and what opposition we will have to face for such a view as his:

Whereupon your love will show itself, and will try all means to make this truth of salvation manifest unto all, rejecting and condemning whatsoever others either teach or say that agrees not with this truth. Whereby it comes to pass that Satan and the world, which hear nothing so unwillingly as this truth, will rise against you with all might, will by and by trouble you. The great, learned, rich, and mighty of the world will condemn you of heresy and madness. Howbeit, if you are endued with this joyful faith, it cannot be, but that your heart being thereby cheered, should even, as it were, laugh and leap for holy joy in God, being void of all care and trouble, and be made above measure confident.⁷¹

There speaks a man who had experienced how painful it can be when ‘the great, learned, rich, and mighty of the world... condemn you of heresy and madness’!

⁷¹ Eaton pp457-467. On re-reading this in preparation for publication, I was encouraged to see how Eaton has admirably encapsulated what I am trying to say in a book I am writing concerning ‘the glorious new-covenant ministry’, being an exposition and application of 2 Cor. 3:1 – 4:6.

So much for evangelism motivated by our sense of our free and full justification in Christ. And what of other duties? What will move us to serve God in every way we can?

As the joyful knowledge of justification... enlarges the heart to Godward, so it enlarges the heart with true love, and willing and ready practice, doing all the duties of love to man-ward, not drawn thereto with the terrors of the law... but cheerfully and freely. For when I believe this undoubtedly, that Christ's blood and righteousness have freely made me perfectly holy and righteous, so enriching me with all the riches of Christ, bestowing upon me whatsoever he has, whereby I want nothing, I burst forth and say: 'If God shows unto me so great benefits and favour in his beloved Son, that he allows him to bestow all things upon me, I also will do the like again, and bestow all things whereby I may do good to my neighbours, and the members of Christ'.

Eaton went back to the source; namely, justification: justification is the root which produces sanctification, assurance and present felt glory in the soul for the believer:

And thus in these two, faith and love, all, both doctrine and life worthy of Christ, consist... We are children of the Most High by being righteous by faith, whereby, of nothing, we are made the heirs of God, and we are God's by love, which makes us beneficial to others. Thus never any taught more sound and godly doctrine, as touching good works, than we do today.⁷² For if a man feels in his heart a sweetness in this promise of God, 'that the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, makes him clean from all sin', and so is undoubtedly persuaded that he is of the company of them whom Christ has made to himself a glorious church, 'not having spot, or wrinkle of sin, or any such thing', he is assuredly such a one, and Christ's spouse indeed. For as we believe, so comes it unto us.

Eaton spelled out what he meant by 'love for neighbour'. He pulled no punches:

Then will such a man by and by have regard for his neighbour, and help him as his brother, care for him, give unto him, lend unto him, comfort him; briefly, do no otherwise unto him than he desires to be done unto himself. And all this proceeds from hence – for that the bountifulness and goodness of Christ has replenished his [the

⁷² That is, by his teaching that sanctification flows from the sense of justification.

believer's in question] heart with sweetness and love, that it is a pleasure and joy unto him to do good unto his neighbour.

And that is not all: 'And besides all this he is tractable, and lowly towards all men'.

Reader, do not forget Eaton's main theme in all this. Which is? The new covenant! How is godliness produced? By preaching the law? Not at all! By preaching free justification by God's grace in Christ; above all, by feeling and enjoying it:

Thus where the gospel is truly in the heart, it makes a man to be such a one as does not look while the law comes [that is, he does not keep his eye out for the law to sanctify him], but is so full of joy in Christ, that he is with speed carried unto all good works (Tit. 2:14), doing well to all men, as much as he is able, and that of his own accord, before the law comes into his mind... And so he is full of good works which voluntarily flowing, as it were, out of a continual fountain, are derived unto many.

And all this... is effected because it is the joyful knowledge of justification that... sanctifies us. Justification is like the fire, so that he that is not zealous in holiness and righteousness by sanctification, it is to be feared that he never had the fire in his breast of justification, or lets the fire go out forgetting... 'that he was purged from his old sins' (2 Pet. 1:9). And that knowledge of free justification... which regenerates⁷³ and sanctifies us is not only manifest by the doctrine taught in the first six chapters of Romans, but also by the example of Nicodemus who, at first, was neither regenerate, nor knew, nor could learn, what it meant... but after that Christ had taught him free justification...⁷⁴ then he was a new man, enflamed with zeal to defend Christ before the faces of the rulers, even at mid-day (John 7:50-52).

For Christ first makes us righteous by the knowledge of himself in the holy gospel, and... he creates a new heart in us, bringing forth new motions [inward impulses], and gives to us that assurance whereby we are persuaded that we have peace with the Father for his sake. Also, he gives unto us a true judgement whereby we prove and try those things which before we knew not, or else altogether disliked.

⁷³ Here is the place I was speaking of in an earlier note. As Eaton now shows, Christ in the same breath as he speaks of regeneration addresses Nicodemus with free justification (John 3:1-17).

⁷⁴ John 3:1-17.

Yet again, what goes wrong when men preach the law for sanctification?

But if we call unto people for sanctification, zeal, and works, the fruit of the same, only with legal terrors, not putting under [them] the fire of justification, we shall either but little move them, or else, with a constrained sanctity, make them worse hypocrites, ‘twofold more the children of hell than they were before’ (Matt. 23:15). But if we put under [them] the fire of Christ’s love, in freely and gloriously justifying us, this burns up all hindrances, and makes us hot indeed, and zealous to good works (Tit. 2:14).

Once more, back to the main point:

Again, how inseparably justification, as the cause, and sanctification, as the effect, go both together... We being wrapped by the mighty power of God’s imputation in the righteousness of Christ, it does not only take away the stink of sin (Joel 2:20) from the nostrils of God, but also makes us, little by little, to leave this corruption, and sanctifies us more and more to all holiness of conversation [way of life]. So that our works do not purify us, but when, as before, we are pure, justified and saved, we work those things which may bring profit to our neighbour, and honour to God.

This joyful knowledge of justification is that freeing truth whereof Christ spoke, saying: ‘You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free’ (John 8:32).

For by the law is the knowledge of sin; by faith is the obtaining of the grace (of justification) against sin. By the grace (of justification) is the healing of the fault of sin. By the healing of the soul is the freedom of the will. By the freedom of the will is love of righteousness. By the love of righteousness is the doing of the law.⁷⁵ All these things which I have knit thus together, have their testimonies in Scripture... How then can a man, being justified (that is, made just and righteous) by faith, choose but [to] work justly and righteously?

This is the liberty wherein Paul also testifies... ‘Stand fast in the liberty wherein Christ has made us free’ (Gal. 5:1). He speaks... of a spiritual and divine liberty reigning in the conscience... It is a spiritual and divine liberty reigning in the conscience... It is a freedom from the law, sin, the displeasure of God, death, hell and damnation. Indeed, this Christian liberty swallows up at once, and takes quite away, the whole

⁷⁵ Eaton, in common with the Reformed, was too restrictive here. In the new covenant, the believer is enabled to obey *all* God’s word from the heart, not only the law, certainly not only the ten commandments.

heap of evils, the law, sin, death, God's displeasure, and [to put it] briefly, the serpent himself with his head and whole power. And in the stead thereof, it places righteousness, peace, everlasting life, and all goodness. Now since those enemies are overcome, and we are reconciled unto God by the death of his Son, it is certain that we are righteous before God, and whatsoever we do pleases him. By which means, the schoolmaster [pedagogue]-like⁷⁶ bondage and terrors of the law are changed into the liberty of the conscience, and consolation, or joyful news of the gospel, revealing the righteousness of Christ, wherewith we are... justified.⁷⁷

I can see why the Puritans were so appalled at Eaton, and why the Reformed have no time for him today. But, reader, I urge you, as you read your New Testament, keep an eye open for the countless passages which speak in Eaton's vein. I ask you, when calling for sanctification – which it does on every page – does the New Testament speak of the law or does it speak of Christ, free grace and God's overwhelming love for us as sinners?

As for me, I wish I had sat under such preachers as Eaton this past 60 years, and, in all those years, I wish I had preached like him. If this is antinomianism...

Note that Eaton's doctrine – the doctrine of the New Testament – also rightly answers the 'new atheists' when they claim that believers do good works to placate an angry and reluctant God, and so merit his kindness. Not so, says Scripture! The believer seeks to be holy out of gratitude, not fear – Eaton's very point!⁷⁸ Law preachers are, in fact, playing into the hands of the 'new atheists'. It is the gospel which will silence such critics, not law.

As we have seen, Eaton was rightly vehement against mingling the law and the gospel. And he had more to say on this important matter. Of course he did – to distinguish the law and the gospel is of the utmost importance. Luther, for instance, spoke of two sermons in Scripture:

⁷⁶ Here Eaton's understanding was distorted by the mistranslation 'schoolmaster', *paidagōgos*. See my earlier note and my *Christ; Sanctification in Galatians*.

⁷⁷ Eaton pp471-478.

⁷⁸ Once again, I am grateful to Andrew Rome for drawing my attention to this point.

Now the first sermon, and doctrine, is the law of God. The second is the gospel. These two sermons are not the same. Therefore we must have a good grasp of the matter in order to know how to differentiate between them. We must know what the law is, and what the gospel is. The law commands and requires us to do certain things. The law is thus directed solely to our behaviour and consists in making requirements. For God speaks through the law, saying: ‘Do this, avoid that, this is what I expect of you’. The gospel, however, does not preach what we are to do or to avoid. It sets up no requirements but reverses the approach of the law, does the very opposite, and says: ‘This is what God has done for you; he has let his Son be made flesh for you, has let him be put to death for your sake’. So, then, there are two kinds of doctrine and two kinds of works, those of God and those of men. Just as we and God are separated from one another, so also these two doctrines are widely separated from one another. For the gospel teaches exclusively what has been given us by God, and not—as in the case of the law—what we are to do and give to God.⁷⁹

And that leads us nicely to the next point:

We must distinguish the law and the gospel

Here we come face to face with the much-disputed topic of the continuity or discontinuity of the covenants. Eaton was clear on the issue. The weight unmistakably falls on discontinuity. Having cleared that point, it follows, as night follows day, that preachers must be scrupulous to avoid mingling and confounding the law and the gospel. Heavy consequences follow failure in this regard.

Let Eaton work this out. He began well, but because he thought the law should be preached to bring men to Christ, he soon found himself in a tangle. But let me start with where he got it right:

The true cause of stumbling... is for want of discerning, and rightly distinguishing between, the voice of the law and the voice of the gospel; between the voice of God’s children judging themselves in their temptations according to their sense and feeling, and the voice of faith... By the law... the children of God consider themselves in themselves, and do judge themselves, according to sense and feeling,

⁷⁹ See the article: ‘A Brief Introduction to Law & Gospel’ (taken from lutherantheology.wordpress.com/.../a-brief-introduction-to-law-gospel).

which is contrary to faith... And [yet] now, by the blood of Christ... all our secret sins are utterly abolished out of his sight...

If we ministers of the gospel... do not wisely discern and heedfully distinguish between [the voice] of the law and the voice of the gospel, especially in this essential difference: that the law only teaches what we ought to do, but the gospel teaches what we ought to receive; therefore the law and the gospel are two contrary doctrines. For Moses with his law is a severe exactor, requiring of us by fear, and hope of reward: briefly, it requires by precepts, and exacts by threatenings. Contrariwise, the gospel gives freely, and requires of us nothing else but to hold out our hands, and to take that which is offered. Now to exact and to give, to take and to offer, are clean contrary, and cannot stand together, because the voice of the gospel stands only in freely receiving good things of God to the praise of the glory of his grace. Contrariwise, the law and works consist in exacting with threats, in doing by works, and in giving to God; but faith and the voice of the gospel require no works of us, or that we should yield and give anything unto God, but that we believing the promise of God, should receive of him... Whereupon the voice of the law exacts and constrains men to holy walking by fear of punishment, and hope of reward, and makes hypocrites; but the voice of the gospel constrains us to holy walking by love, and makes true Christians. And if this difference is not marked in reading Scripture, and distinctly applied to due persons in preaching, the law and the gospel are mixed and confounded together, and so neither true law [is] preached, nor true gospel, but a hotchpotch of both to the marring of both, just like the mingling and mixing together of water and wine, which makes flash,⁸⁰ and is rejected of God (Isa. 1:22).

So far, excellent. But it was not long before Eaton was running into trouble. Having previously emphasised the biblical distinction between the law and the gospel, and writing strongly against mingling the two, because of his acceptance of the Reformed doctrine of preparationism, he strayed from his own marked path. He tried to keep law and gospel apart, but found it impossible: he had marked out a path impossible to follow. Nevertheless, let Eaton make a start:

The law and the gospel are joined together in both the Testaments, as well in the new as in the old, so they ought in a mixed congregation to

⁸⁰ A watery drink, tasteless, insipid, neither one thing or the other (see the *Oxford English Dictionary* p1012 col.3).

be joined in preaching, but yet distinguished to various persons, applying the law to whom the law belongs, and applying the gospel to whom the gospel belongs, and so divide the word of God aright... Revealing sin and threatening punishment do... belong to the doctrine of the law. So then to know when the law speaks, and when the gospel speaks, and skilfully to discern the voice of the one from the voice of the other, that neither preachers nor hearers take the law for the gospel, nor the gospel for the law, this rule is to be observed, that when there is any moral work commanded to be done upon pain of punishment, or upon promise of any reward either temporal or eternal, there is to be understood the voice of the law.⁸¹ Contrariwise, where the promise of life, favour, salvation or any blessings and benefits are offered to us freely, without all our deservings, and simply without any condition annexed of any law... all those places, whether they be read in the Old Testament or in the New, are to be referred to the voice and doctrine of the gospel.⁸²

As I say, Eaton, because of his acceptance of preparationism, found himself in a quagmire here. How a preacher is to determine who or who is not to have the law preached to them, I am at a loss to fathom. I suppose he could say: 'If the cap fits, wear it', but, in my experience as a schoolmaster, the wrong person nearly always picks up that kind of instruction. Moreover, it hardly seems to be preaching – the preacher should be in the driving seat, not the hearer; he should be commanding the congregation, not letting them take it or leave it – which, sadly, too often just about sums up too much of today's preaching. It also smacks of the hyper-Calvinistic approach to sinners which, as I have noted, depends on whether or not they are 'sensible'. How anybody is to resolve this sort of conundrum is utterly beyond me. And, of course, those who attempt such things ought to bear Eaton's strictures in mind; mixing the law and the gospel, and applying the law or gospel to the wrong hearer, is fatal. If I believed such a principle, I should never dare to enter a pulpit. I am relieved that the New Testament knows nothing whatsoever of such a rigmarole.

Nevertheless, Eaton ploughed on, drawing attention to what he called 'two excellent uses' of this:

⁸¹ Eaton argued that Matt. 5 and 18, Luke 12 and 16 belong to the law (Eaton pp84-85).

⁸² Eaton pp81-86.

First, it serves to apply the law and the gospel rightly, as not to give the mourning gown to a marrying person, and the wedding garment to the funeral corpse, but [*vice-versa*].

Secondly, it serves to give each their due proper force, strength and power, as to the law her due terrors and severity, being altogether killing, and the gospel her due sweetness and glory, being altogether quickening.

Very well! But what of this:

But if preachers neglect this rule, and so taking the law for the gospel, and the gospel for the law, do confound them by mixing and mingling them together... either directly and professedly, as the Papists do,⁸³ or indirectly by preposterous urging men to a constrained righteousness by legal terrors,⁸⁴ then (as Luther truly says) they pervert the gospel, and become ministers of the devil. And yet (says he) such perverters of the gospel can abide nothing less than to hear that they are perverters of the gospel, and apostles of the devil; no, rather they glory above others in the name of Christ, and boast themselves to be the most sincere preachers of the gospel. But because they mingle the law with the gospel, they must needs be perverters of the gospel, because it does not only blemish and darken knowledge of grace, but also it takes away Christ, with all his benefits and utterly overthrows the gospel.⁸⁵

Phew! I repeat my earlier remark: ‘I am relieved that the New Testament knows nothing whatsoever of such a rigmarole’.

Even so, there is positive good to be salvaged from all this. While I do not endorse Eaton’s every last sentiment, he was right to argue vehemently against mingling and confounding the law and the gospel. The doctrinal passages of the New Testament are clear on the matter. The overwhelming weight is given to the gospel, and when the law is occasionally referred to, it is always interpreted in light of the new covenant.

As I have remarked, underlying this issue is the continuity/discontinuity debate. Eaton was very clear where he stood. Of course, his mistaken view of preparationism by the law

⁸³ And not only Papists!

⁸⁴ Calvin’s third use of the law. Remember, Calvin drew heavily from the Fathers, Aquinas and the medieval Church.

⁸⁵ Eaton pp86-87.

played its part here, but, even so, excepting this, and excepting his over-violent language, overall he set out the biblical divide.⁸⁶

Eaton, asserting that some, when faced with the biblical doctrine of perfect, free justification of believers, ‘do greatly stumble to the overmuch dignifying and extolling of works’, made it clear that he had in mind ‘not only Papists... but also some Protestants [who] do dangerously halt [stumble] herein’. Eaton, arguing the discontinuity of Scripture, said that it is necessary to notice ‘a threefold distinction and difference of time...; that is, [to] distinguish the times, and the places and things, that seem contrary’:

Now these three different times were these: First, the time of the law. Secondly, the time of John Baptist. And thirdly, the time of the gospel. The difference whereof is this that the first time was glorious, the second more glorious, and the third time was most glorious of all.

Eaton argued that in the time of the law:

[First,] God kept the people, of the old covenant under... bondage of fear with such severity... to show that nothing pleased him but that perfect righteousness revealed in his law. And therefore, if their foot did step a little away from the same, they were presently, for their disobedience, severely punished. Secondly, to make them by the burden hereof to groan for the coming of the Messiah, that should freely clothe them with that perfect righteousness... (Rom. 3:21)... (Gal. 3:24)... the law, executed with such severity, was the Jews’ schoolmaster [pedagogue]⁸⁷ to drive them to Christ, that they might be made righteous by faith. Hence it was that, although they were the true children of God, as well as we, and heirs of the same blessings that we be, yet... (Gal. 4:1-3), they were in comparison to us like little children, and like wards in their nonage [immaturity], and thereby under these [following] three infirmities of little children, from which we are now freed.

Eaton set out these three ‘infirmities’: First, the (believing)⁸⁸ Jews did not have ‘a clear sight and a ripe understanding by the death of Christ of the greatness of the riches of the gospel and of the worth of their spiritual treasures... (Heb. 11:13)’. Secondly, they were ‘like heirs in their nonage that have not their whole inheritance,

⁸⁶ When I say ‘excepting’, I mean ‘excepting’; I do not mean ‘accepting’.

⁸⁷ See my earlier note on this.

⁸⁸ I have added this vital word – see immediately below.

but... little pittances thereof administered to them... (Heb. 11:13; 9:9; 10:1-2,4,11; 7:19)'. Thirdly:

As a little child, while he is a child, is under tutors and governors – that is, in fear and terrors of the rod of the schoolmaster [pedagogue], and of sharp corrections... so they were under such severity of the law, that if they did... but step a little away, they had the law as a schoolmaster [pedagogue] that took notice of their sins, and sharply scourged them for the same, thus constraining them to holiness and righteousness by fear, as a schoolmaster does children to virtuous education (Gal. 4:1)...⁸⁹ No, more... Paul is not content to liken them to little children under the schoolmaster's rod, but also to men shut up in prison,⁹⁰ and to servants under a hard apprenticeship, eagerly longing for their freedom by the coming of Christ, that might fully reveal the making of them perfectly holy and righteous from all spot of sin in the sight of God freely (Gal. 3:23-24). Thus was the glory of free justification hid and veiled under the rod of the law... and such were the children of the old covenant.

Eaton seriously over-stated Galatians 3:23-24. The law imprisoned the Jews until the coming of the Messiah, and some Jews, under the old covenant, were looking forward by faith to the coming of the Messiah, yes, but Eaton went too far in ascribing as much as he did to the Jews as Jews. He went too far in asserting that the Jews, as Jews, were 'eagerly longing for their freedom by the coming of Christ, that might fully reveal the making of them perfectly holy and righteous from all spot of sin in the sight of God freely'. Galatians 3:23-24 does not teach *that*. And that is why I added the word 'believing' in brackets just above. Eaton's words applied to men like David – a Jew who was looking to Christ – not to Jews in general.

Moving on to John Baptist, the time 'between the law and the gospel', that 'was more glorious than the time of all the prophets

⁸⁹ Eaton quoted Calvin: 'Although they feeling the oppression and bondage of the law did fly to the succour of the gospel, then twinklingly and glimmeringly shining afar off, yet we deny that they were so endued with the Spirit of freedom and assurance that they did not in some part feel both fear and bondage by the law; indeed, in such measure, that in comparison to us, they were both children and under the testament [covenant] of bondage and fear'.

⁹⁰ This is the meaning of Gal. 3:23-24.

before, by reason of the glory of his ministry. For although he [John Baptist] revealed sin terribly by the law... yet... he pointed with his finger to the Messiah that was come, and preached... and... by baptism [gave]⁹¹ a more full exhibition of free justification... (John 1:29; Gal. 4:4; Matt. 3[:1-11]; Hos. 2:29; Luke 16:16; Matt. 11:13)'.

Eaton, still talking of John's time, actually moved, confusingly, to the full revelation under Christ (Gal. 3:25), somewhat anticipating the 'third time':

[The] people of God under the old covenant were in times past children under the law, as under a schoolmaster...⁹² But Christ, being exhibited and come, now being by faith grown to full age, we are under the schoolmastership of the law no more, as not needing that legal schoolmastership, being emancipated by our full grown age. The law, therefore, has that use of direction no more, and therefore it ought not to be joined and mingled with faith. After this manner does the apostle lay forth not only the use of the law, but also shows why it ought to be but for a time... Now... the rising... of the Sun of Righteousness had dispelled the mist of this pedagogue.

Although he was muddled about the law as a pedagogue, Eaton was right to keep on insisting that law and gospel should not be mixed; now that the new covenant has come, the law has gone.

Finally, Eaton moved fully to the 'third time':

From which Christ groaned out his blood and life upon the cross, crying out: 'It is finished' (John 19:30) – namely, that both... the sin itself, and... the guilt and... punishment, and all, by the full exhibiting of the wedding garment, by this infinite means of his own death on the cross, are so utterly and infinitely abolished, and such an everlasting righteousness is so fully brought in upon God's children, and his glorious resurrection manifesting this righteousness to be fully wrought upon is, that this time is the most glorious of all... (2 Cor. 3:9-11). For now is fulfilled and finished that prophecy of Zechariah saying: 'In that day there shall be a fountain opened to wash away sin and uncleanness' [Zech. 13:1]. Why, were not the sins of God's people washed away before that day that the prophet speaks of? Yes, but whereas before they had vessels like the brass sea, and such like, to

⁹¹ Eaton talked of 'sealed'. This is wrong. See my *Infant*. As I have explained, Eaton had far too high a view of baptism.

⁹² See above.

wash in, signifying [typifying] their spiritual washing, then at that day of Christ's death, the full flowing fountain of Christ's blood should so abundantly wash them clear from all their sins, that they should, from all their uncleanness, be made in the sight of God, whiter than snow...⁹³ Now is fulfilled Daniel [9:24]... They which believe in Christ are no sinners, but are holy and righteous, lords over sin and death, and living for ever... (Jer. 31:34).⁹⁴

Eaton spelled out three ways in which we are richer under the gospel, then they were under the law:

First we are more capable to conceive by the death of Christ, and ripe of understanding thereby, the greatness of the rich treasures of the gospel (if preachers are faithful to lay out the worth and glory of the same)...

The second privilege is that we are emancipated, freed from that schoolmaster-like government and pedagogical whippings that held the old people of God in bondage and fear, like children and servants...⁹⁵ (Gal. 3:24-25)...

The third prerogative of heirs come to their full age [is] that we are now... entered into... a fuller enjoying, and real possession of the fuller revealed riches and treasures of the gospel... (1 Cor. 1:30)... fully exhibiting the righteousness of Christ making the children of God perfectly holy and righteous from all spot of sin in the sight of God freely... (2 Cor. 3:3,7-10).⁹⁶

⁹³ That is to say, if they believed. Eaton's words, as they stand, seem to imply that Jews as Jews were going to be washed in the Redeemer's blood. He should have been more careful at this point.

⁹⁴ Eaton pp97-108. Eaton quoted Calvin: 'Now, therefore, under the new covenant, God does not so much as remember our sins, because there is now made one cleansing for them all, once making us perfect for ever'. And Luther: 'Whosoever has not confidence in this one point, that his sins are so perfectly taken away and utterly abolished out of God's sight, that God sees no sin in us, without doubt they are damned' – Eaton adding, that is 'so long as they continue to rob this third time of her glory, and Christ of this full revealed efficacy of his blood'. The originals had 'testament' for 'covenant', and this applies to the following note.

⁹⁵ Eaton quoted Calvin: 'This being the sum of difference between the old covenant and the new: that the old covenant did strike into men's consciences trembling, and did drive to obedience with fear; but the new carries us to the glorifying of God with fullness of joy'.

⁹⁶ Eaton pp110-112.

Sadly, Eaton knew that many mingle the law and the gospel, thereby failing to preach the fullness of free grace:

We ministers of this glory of the gospel, too many among us do not only limp in our practice, and lisp in our speech, but even halt downright... We slide back to the legal teaching of the old covenant, from which, we, not understanding the... sharp exacting of works and legal righteousness, do fetch our principal vein of preaching, and do make it our common and chiefest manner of teaching, only a little... to glance at free justification, mercy and grace in general terms. But all our main labour is to command things that are right, and to forbid wicked doings, to promise rewards to the followers of righteousness, and to threaten punishments to the transgressors, which seems both in preachers and people a good and plausible course to flesh and blood. Because it is the teaching of reason, and the light of nature (Rom. 2:14-15)... this kind of teaching the people like and applaud as agreeing with that light of nature.

There can be no doubt as to who it was Eaton had in his sights. As he asked: 'But what comes hereof?'

Truly we sew up again... the veil that was rent in two pieces from the top to the bottom. We shut up again the holy of holies. We hide and darken, if not put out, the benefits of Christ, preaching as if the children of God were not made perfectly holy and righteous from all spot of sin in the sight of God freely. We confound the old covenant with the new. We bring back the full grown heir to the school again to be whipped of his schoolmaster, contrary to the express doctrine and direction of the Holy Ghost, saying that after faith is come we are no longer under a schoolmaster (Gal. 3:25). And if we do not pull off the wedding garment over the bride's head, yet we bring forth rods to whip the queen... We do hinder sanctification, and either with legal threats or rewards do cause but a constrained hireling sanctity which is hypocritical legal holiness, or else cause the people to run, though more cautiously, yet the faster into the iniquities and sins so vehemently with legal terrors forbidden, according to that old true saying... namely: 'We rush the faster into things forbidden, and always desire the things denied us'. And all this because we do not first establish and root them in the assurance and joy of free justification without works... and so [make them] to labour after the supposed works of sanctification, more than after faith, that should give to Christ only the sole glory of our assurance.

Eaton's teaching needs to be seriously pondered today. His important statements have come thick and fast: legal preaching does not produce sanctification; sanctification and assurance come from a right view of justification. He went on:

Therefore, they should first have assurance and then do that which they do in thankfulness for the assurance... The having of Christ alone and his righteousness, with his other free benefits, depending thereupon, must assure me. And these are they that are only able to change men's hearts and to amend the natural preposterous perverseness, and to carry them with all joy, and love and zeal as strong as fire and death, to glorify God in all holy and zealous conversation [way of life]. Which nothing, but the seeing of the bounty of God in the riches freely bestowed, with the excellency and unsearchable worth and glory of them powerfully preached with joy and zeal, can effect and bring to pass. Which for preachers now to fail in, is bad enough.⁹⁷

Eaton, himself, certainly did not fail in proclaiming 'the bounty of God in the riches freely bestowed, with the excellency and unsearchable worth and glory of them'! He set out eight particulars in which we, under the gospel, are privileged above any who went before. Arguing from many – and I mean many – scriptures (including, Jer. 50:20; Dan. 9:24; Zech. 13:1; Matt. 11:11; Luke 16:25; Rom. 8:5; 14:17; Gal. 4:1-5; 3:23-25; Heb. 7:19; 8:6; 9:9,13-14; 10:1-2,14,17-18,22; 11:39-40; 12:18,21-24; 1 John 1:7; 4:18), he declared repeatedly that 'God saw sin in them... but he sees none in us'. He concluded:

Oh that our tongues were untied, and our lips touched with the burning coal from the altar Christ! Then should he make our feet beautiful, by bringing these glad tidings of good things, not confounding but truly distinguishing between the glory of the old covenant, and the exceeding glory of the new. Yet I end this point, saying, with Calvin, 'that this distinction Christ himself meant when he said the law and the prophets are [until] John, and that from thence the kingdom of heaven' (that is, the fullness of the treasures of the gospel) 'is preached, and every man presses into it' (Luke 16:16).⁹⁸

Oh, that we today, *were* preaching 'the fullness of the treasures of the gospel', and that 'every man was pressing into it'.

⁹⁷ Eaton pp113-116.

⁹⁸ Eaton pp117-119.

The difference between justification and progressive sanctification

Eaton listed ten differences between justification and progressive sanctification:

1. Justification serves to approve us for true saints to the eyes of God. [Progressive] sanctification serves to approve us true saints to the eyes of men.
2. Therefore our justification is perfect... but [our progressive] sanctification is imperfect...
3. Our justification is perceived by faith only. [Our progressive] sanctification is perceived by sense and feeling.
4. Our justification is heavenly, and more spiritual. Our [progressive] sanctification is fleshly... and as a menstruous cloth... in comparison.
5. Justification dignifies our [progressive] sanctification. [Progressive] sanctification is dignified of [by] justification.
6. Justification is merely passive to us, and freely given of God, and is the... glory of Christ [only]. [Progressive] sanctification is active, and rendered to God in way of [that is, for] thankfulness, and is the glory of man.
7. Justification is the cause of [progressive] sanctification. [Progressive] sanctification is the effect of justification.
8. Justification is meritorious of all the favour and blessings of God. [Progressive] sanctification of itself merits nothing at all.
9. Justification is the cause of enriching us with all other benefits and treasures of the gospel. [Progressive] sanctification shows that we are so enriched.
10. God leaves our [progressive] sanctification so imperfect in this life, that all our rejoicing and joy unspeakable and glorious may be in justification.⁹⁹

Is this supposed to be antinomianism?

What is justifying faith?

We must not take this for granted; we dare not. As I have said time and again (and I hope to publish on it), Sandemanianism is, perhaps, the greatest curse afflicting us today. Do not forget that Eaton opened his *Honeycombe*, even in its 'Preface', by distinguishing between dead and true faith. Remember also the title

⁹⁹ Eaton p459.

of his other major work: *Discovery of the Most Dangerous Dead Faith*. Today, I fear, too many talk about ‘faith’ without defining what they mean by it. ‘Believe in Jesus’! Ah! But what is it to believe? We must be clear at this point. Eaton certainly did not fail in this respect.

Hear him on Philippians 3:9. It must be remembered that he was, at this point, speaking of believers – not sinners coming to Christ. He was saying that believers must believe that Christ has washed them clean. As Paul declared: ‘I count all things but loss, and do judge them to be dung [rubbish], that I may be found in Christ, not having my own righteousness of sanctification by my walking after the law, which is but dung [rubbish], but the righteousness of God by the faith of Jesus Christ’. Eaton, using these words, spoke on behalf of all believers, along with the apostle:

That is, they believe that the blood of Christ has made them in the sight of God from all sin whiter than snow (Ps. 51:7), and so has made them perfectly holy and righteous from all spot of sin in the sight of God freely.¹⁰⁰

Eaton then enlarged upon this when dealing with sinners coming to Christ. He explained what is meant by ‘coming to Christ’ or believing in him:

To receive Christ and his benefits truly necessarily includes in it these four particular points. First, to know the time when we were without Christ, and had him not, therein feeling our misery and our lost state by the least sin, and what need we had to receive him. Secondly, to see the excellency and worth of having Christ and his benefits... Thirdly... having Christ and his benefits to one’s own self in particular... Fourthly... he that has received to himself the enjoying of Christ and his benefits, of such excellent worth, is filled with great joy... and becomes, to the giver of the same [God in Christ], full of thankful zeal.¹⁰¹

In a purple passage, Eaton could not have been clearer:

Sinners must first be shown how they may be delivered from their sins and made righteous, which, when they have obtained, they then begin

¹⁰⁰ Eaton p94.

¹⁰¹ Eaton pp199-200.

to rejoice in the Lord. And being delivered from remorse of conscience, they are full of boldness, trust and confidence... But herein let him not begin at his own works and righteousness, as the deceitful Papists teach, but remember that ‘being made righteous’ by faith, ‘we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ’ (Rom. 5:1). Whereby we commit ourselves wholly to God, casting all our care upon him, and stand with a strong and bold confidence, feeling nothing but a joyful, quiet and omnipotent trust in God and in his favour. Which emboldens the heart of the true believer, that, trusting to have God on his side, he is not afraid to oppose himself along against all creatures... (Rom. 8:38-39). Thus the word of Christ, by which we are now clean (John 15:13) – that is, which justifies us, by the righteousness of Christ – is the only thing which brings us to the Father.¹⁰²

Finally, Eaton loosed a broadside against the ever-present, stifling curse of Sandemanianism:

And thus also we put a difference between a counterfeit faith and a true faith. The counterfeit faith is that which hears of God, of Christ, and all the mysteries of his incarnation, and our redemption, which also apprehends and bears away those things which it hears; indeed, and can talk goodly thereof. And yet there remains nothing else in them but ignorance of the worth and excellency of Christ’s benefits... whereby there remains nothing else in the heart but a naked opinion, and a bare sound of the gospel, for it neither renews or changes the heart. It does not make a new man, but leaves him in the vanity of his former opinion and conversation. And this is a very pernicious faith.¹⁰³

It is not only ‘pernicious’. A dead faith, a mere assent to the gospel, is far more widespread than many recognise or are prepared to admit. Indeed, I am grieved to say, in my view, such a faith is far more widely preached than is recognised today. And in saying this, I am not – not – excluding Reformed pulpits.

Assurance is not to be sought, primarily, by progressive sanctification; indeed, assurance precedes progressive sanctification and leads to it

¹⁰² Eaton p471.

¹⁰³ Eaton pp481-482.

Even though, more than once, we have met Eaton making this point,¹⁰⁴ nevertheless, seeing it is of such importance to the spiritual welfare of believers, it deserves a section all of its own.

Let me start with an objection to Eaton's doctrine: If all that Eaton had claimed for justification is true, why should believers ask for the forgiveness of their sins? For three reasons, said Eaton:

First, because the more faith any child of God has, the more he prays for this glorious forgiveness, because the more grace he has, the more he feels by his daily slips the imperfection of his sanctification...

Secondly, by daily praying for this glorious justifying forgiveness, the more they grow to fuller assurance, and more comfortable feeling that they are by God's glorious forgiveness made perfectly holy and righteous from all spot of sin in the sight of God freely... not subject to any alteration, never increasing nor diminishing. Yet our faith being weak, gives at first but weak assurance... It grows stronger and stronger, to a plerophory [full persuasion, full confidence] and full assurance unto joy unspeakable and glorious...

Thirdly, by daily praying for this benefit, we come to further experience of the fruits and effects depending and belonging to the same, that we may see invisible justification by its visible fruits and effects... (Ps. 32:1-2)... But for the exercise of our faith... we still live in misery and much sorrow, and seem wholly strangers to all claim to a blissful estate; therefore [it] being still [the] case as if our sins were not forgiven... we still pray for the forgiveness that effects the same praying that we might not only... possess it, but also... enjoy it; that is, not only certainly have the benefit itself, but also reap the fruits, effects and blessings...

Eaton continued:

Before we are justified, and while we are in the state of nature, we are the children of the devil and of wrath (Eph. 2:3), but when we are justified with this internal and secret justification, and made thereby the children of God,¹⁰⁵ then... we say rightly 'forgive us our trespasses'; that is, show by granting and giving us the blessings that you have justified us – that is made us freely righteous from all our sin... Good works of prayer, or any such like, do not go before a man is justified, but they follow after that a man is... justified... The promise

¹⁰⁴ For instance: 'Therefore, they should first have assurance and then do that which they do in thankfulness for the assurance' (Eaton p115).

¹⁰⁵ Once again, Eaton showed he was no believer in eternal justification.

of God justifying us is not fulfilled by praying, but only by believing. But when we believe, then we pray and do any other good work.¹⁰⁶

On assurance, one of the ways ‘to overcome doubting, and to grow strong in faith is’:

To set often before our eyes the dignity, glorious nature, and exceeding excellency of believing – namely, that the belief that the blood of Christ makes us clean from all spot of sin in the sight of God freely – is such a good work in the sight of God as passes all other good works whatsoever... [John 6:29]. [Christ] said: ‘This is the work of God’; that is, the work of all works, ‘that you believe on him whom he has sent’, namely to justify and make you freely righteous in the sight of God.

As above, it must be remembered that Eaton was here addressing believers, not unbelievers. For their assurance, believers must believe the word of God, his promise to them, that all their sins are truly abolished in Christ. Unbelievers, of course, cannot believe any such thing. They have to trust Christ, have their sins washed away, and then they must, for their assurance, trust God’s promise to them. All this, Eaton said, gives:

Exceeding honour and glory... to God the Father... If we believe that Christ by washing us in his own blood has made us whiter than snow from all spot or wrinkle of sin in the sight of God freely... then we give to Christ, his Son, his due glory... [Further] we, believing the plain and naked word of God, speaking simply and plainly to the weakest capacities, without wresting and wringing it... do greatly glorify the Spirit of God and Holy Ghost speaking in the Scriptures.¹⁰⁷

On Romans 8:4, that vital verse for establishing the relationship between the believer and the law, Eaton deplored that:

Many, granting that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, yet they do not sufficiently mark the cause why, expressed in [Rom. 8:4]; that is, the ground and full assurance of establishing the conscience why there is ‘no condemnation’ or judgement ‘to them that are in Christ Jesus’ – namely, ‘because the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us (Rom. 8:4) – ...([but not] as the Papists pervert this place)... bringing forth this effect in us ‘not to walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit’... [God], by the power of imputation, so truly clothes

¹⁰⁶ Me!!! Eaton pp154-158.

¹⁰⁷ Eaton pp235-239.

us both within and without with this his Son's doing and fulfilling of the law perfectly, that we also continue in all things to do them in the sight of God, not inherently and actively, by our own doing, but because of his Son's perfect doing all things is objectively and passively so truly in us that we are made perfectly holy and righteous in the sight of God with that doing freely. And so the rigour of his law is satisfied and fulfilled truly in us, and God continues correspondent to [consistent with] his most excellent nature, true, just, constant and unchangeable in his law, because we continue in all things to do them in his sight... in ourselves, and yet doing nothing... actively in ourselves.¹⁰⁸

Eaton, surely having captured the apostle's doctrine in Romans 8:1-4, addressed those preachers and teachers who fail to set it forth as they should:

That all such ministers as do not diligently teach and cause people diligently to observe and keep this established true Protestant doctrine, but do deny, sophisticate and wrangle against the same, must be like the false brethren among the Galatians, in the dead faith, doting about questions and making controversies about the law and works, and cannot but seduce the people from Christ – that is, the simplicity of the faith that is in Christ Jesus – to depend and hang for assurance of their salvation upon the law and works, and cannot but be troublers of the church (Gal. 1:7), and of people's consciences... setting the cart before the horse.

He explained his meaning:

That is, calling for works and a good life before people have the right knowledge, joyful faith, and true assurance of their full and perfect justification, and free salvation by Jesus Christ, whereby good words and good works and good life may follow, as the good fruits of their thankful hearts for the same.¹⁰⁹

Summing up

Granting he made his mistakes, granting that he, at times, used over-strong language, even so, Eaton could not have been more explicit on the unbreakable connection between justification and

¹⁰⁸ Eaton pp286-289.

¹⁰⁹ Eaton pp489-490.

sanctification: ‘Justification is like the fire, so that he that is not zealous in holiness and righteousness by sanctification, it is to be feared that he never had the fire in his breast of justification’. How such a man could be called an antinomian defeats me.

Nevertheless, Jonathan Bayes had no doubt. He made his position clear in what I can only call a ridiculous statement: ‘That Eaton was fairly labelled a doctrinal antinomian is evident. He teaches that the joyful sense of free justification at the cost of the blood of God’s Son is the sufficient motive to holiness’.¹¹⁰ How that can be called antinomianism, I am at an utter loss to comprehend. And if that *is* antinomianism, doctrinal or any other sort, put my name down! By the way, you will have to put Paul’s name down too!

What is more, I go further than Bayes alleged for Eaton. I say that the grace of God in justification, with all its attendant blessings, constitutes more than a *sufficient* motive; the grace of God is the *great* motive for the believer’s sanctification. With Eaton, I am convinced that the law is not the motive for sanctification. In fact, the preaching of the law to believers, in order to whip them to sanctification, actually hinders it! That is what he declared! And I am sure he was right! It is certainly what I hope I have said clearly enough in my *Christ is All*. And, after all, Paul told us as plainly as any man could wish, that unless we have died to the law, we will never produce fruit to Christ, that it is only by dying to the law that we can be sanctified (Rom. 7:4-6).

So, reader, why worry about what Bayes or Gay might think? Read Eaton himself, read him for yourself. Indeed, why worry about Eaton? Read the New Testament! What does the New Testament set out as the believer’s rule and way of sanctification? Whatever you find there, hold on to, and seek to put into practice. For my part, I have no doubt that Eaton got it right: the New Testament sets Christ before me, and sets him before me for all – for justification, for sanctification and for glorification.

¹¹⁰ Bayes p10.