

## *Appendix*

### *My Reservations about Tobias Crisp*

I began the chapter on Tobias Crisp by pointing out that I did not agree with all he said. In this Appendix, I set out my reasons.

I do not agree, for instance, with Crisp's views on eternal justification, eternal union, and the nature of saving faith, and his lack of distinction between God's desire and decree.<sup>1</sup> For example, I disagree absolutely with Crisp when he said: 'There is no person under heaven, reconciled to God, justified by him through the righteousness of Christ, but he is justified and reconciled before he believes. And therefore faith is not the instrument radically to unite Christ and the soul together, but rather is the fruit that follows and flows from Christ'.<sup>2</sup> This is wrong.<sup>3</sup> Saving faith, according to Crisp, is the evidence of justification, not the way to receive it.<sup>4</sup> In saying such things, Crisp was mistaken. But this did not make him an antinomian! Rather, he was a hyper-Calvinist at these points.<sup>5</sup>

Not only was Crisp wrong at certain points; he was also unwise. Although he has been unjustly accused of being ambiguous on sanctification, inconsistent and contradictory, I do not altogether agree. Rather, Crisp gave his critics plenty of ammunition, and primed their guns, by saying harsh and unguarded things, dangerous things, things open to misrepresentation and misunderstanding. Indeed, I think he rather liked sailing close to the wind. Crisp himself virtually admitted as much; he knew he used some 'harsh' words or phrases which might be 'mistaken'.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Crisp Vol.1 pp92-93; Vol.2 pp127,157-165,185; Vol.3 pp42-60, especially p59, for instance.

<sup>2</sup> Crisp Vol.3 p240.

<sup>3</sup> See my *Eternal*.

<sup>4</sup> See his sermon: 'Faith, the Fruit of Union' (Crisp Vol.4 pp4-20).

<sup>5</sup> On the free offer, Crisp was not a hyper-Calvinist; see the main body of this present work, and my *Particular; Septimus Sears*. On other points, he was.

<sup>6</sup> Crisp Vol.2 pp37-38,73, for instance.

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Unfortunately, this helped neither his cause nor his friends. Crisp was too fond of trying to alarm his hearers – and, subsequently, his readers. He was hooked on the use of astonishing paradoxes, he had a partiality for the unwise or dramatic statement, and all this tended to spoil his work, leaving him open to attack, but an attack which is not always justified. Sometimes, yes; but not always. There are things to be said on the other side.

Crisp has not always been handled fairly, and the context of his words has not always been given due weight. As with any man – including me!<sup>7</sup> – if his words are taken out of context they can be made to ‘prove’ almost anything – including that he was an antinomian. What is more, it is possible that his use of crude expressions can be explained, to a certain extent, by the fact that his works were published after his death, and from shorthand records compared with his notes. In addition, it is too easy to forget that Crisp was a child of his age – as we all are! What do I mean? Scores of preachers in Crisp’s day were using words and phrases which sound alarming to us – and some *were* alarming! Had Calvin not said things which could be misunderstood?<sup>8</sup> And Luther had used exciting, risky expressions, had he not? Crisp was preaching in a fevered age, and this undoubtedly coloured his – and his hearers’ – approach to sermons. While such things do not exonerate his excessive love of the dramatic, they should at least soften criticism of it. The fact is, however, by his love of the vivid turn of phrase, he left himself wide open to his critics.

Let me illustrate Crisp’s excesses in this way by reference to his preaching in three areas – assurance, the part played by unbelief in the non-bestowal of Christ, and the imputation of sin to Christ.

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<sup>7</sup> Indeed, it is true of Scripture!

<sup>8</sup> For instance: Paul ‘makes all external things subject to our liberty, provided the nature of that liberty approves itself to our minds as before God’; ‘the consciences of believers may rise above the law, and may forget the whole righteousness of the law’ (Calvin: *Institutes* Vol.2 pp135,683). Calvin, of course, did not mean what antinomians might deduce from his bald words. All I say is, Crisp in this respect should be given the same treatment as Calvin. Let’s be even-handed!

***1. Crisp was not always wise in the way he dealt with assurance***

When setting out his view of assurance, Crisp left himself open to the charge of antinomianism, or at least of travelling some distance along the road to it. And well he knew it.<sup>9</sup>

Let me glance, first of all, at the doctrine of assurance. This, in itself, is not without controversy! Biblically, there are three strands to assurance. Thus far all is plain sailing. Let me list the three strands – without in any way, at this stage, placing them in any order of time or priority.

*First*, there is the deduction a believer may make on the basis of the bare word of God. ‘What must I do to be saved?... Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved’ (Acts 16:30-31). I believe; the Bible tells me whoever believes is saved; therefore I am saved. ‘He who believes in [Christ] is not condemned’ (John 3:18). I believe; therefore I am not condemned. And so on. But this begs the question. True, a believer is saved – but am I truly a believer? *That* is the question.

*Secondly*, there is the inner witness of the Spirit of God: ‘The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God’ (Rom. 8:16). The believer is assured by the sense of the love of God shed abroad in his heart. See also Romans 8:9-16; Galatians 4:6; 1 John 5:10.

*Thirdly*, we are given the tests, marks or evidences of sanctification spelled out in Scripture by which a believer may – must (2 Cor. 13:5) – measure himself. The first letter of John is the prime example. ‘By this we know that we know him’ (1 John 2:3; 5; 3:14,24; 4:13; 5:2; *etc.*) ‘These things have I written... that you may know that you have eternal life’ (1 John 5:13).

The doctrine of assurance was vigorously debated in the 16th and 17th centuries, particularly the third aspect of assurance – namely, that outward evidences demonstrate inward grace – and its connection or otherwise with the second aspect – namely, the inner

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<sup>9</sup> Note the chorus in his sermons: ‘Let me not be mistaken’ or similar (Crisp Vol.1 pp10,34,150; Vol.2 p38; Vol.3 pp7,59,74,80,111,123,244). Crisp often showed he felt under attack. Did he welcome it?

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witness of the Spirit. The debate may have died down, but it has not gone away.

In the New England antinomian controversy of the 1630s, Anne Hutchinson and John Wheelwright had gone as far as to say that even though a man lived a ‘sanctified’ life it was no evidence that he was truly saved.<sup>10</sup> In saying this, they were contradicting the orthodox Puritan doctrine, the biblical doctrine, that sanctification *is* an evidence of justification; in other words, they were weakening, if not rejecting, the third strand of assurance. It is easy to see how this could lead to the charge – and practice – of antinomianism. If sanctification does not count for assurance, does it count at all? In the corresponding debate in England, Crisp, while he played down the first and third aspects of the way of assurance, did not actually go as far as to say that outward marks are no evidence of saving grace. Nevertheless, he got too close for comfort, and left himself open to the accusation of antinomianism.<sup>11</sup>

Crisp, it is important to note, entered the field with pastoral concern. And when he was addressing the subject, he was not, at that point, primarily trying to establish the necessity of progressive sanctification. What did concern him was that the emphasis upon sanctification as an evidence for assurance could lead to a glorying in good works and not Christ. Just as an emphasis upon free grace can lead to antinomianism, so an emphasis upon sanctification for assurance can lead to legalism. The gospel is always open to

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<sup>10</sup> But sanctification and civil obedience were confused in New England in the 1630s. This must not be forgotten. Anne Hutchinson was adamant: emphasising such obedience – sanctification – as an evidence of justification could actually delude men and entice them down the path of salvation by works. History proved them too right for comfort! See, for instance, Miller, Perry: *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1961; Morgan, Edmund S.: *The Puritan Dilemma. The Story of John Winthrop*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1958; *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1963; Pettit, Norman: *The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in Puritan Spiritual Life*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1966; Stout, Harry S.: *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England*, Oxford University Press, 1986.

<sup>11</sup> For his sermons on assurance, see Crisp Vol.3 pp42-60,61-79,79-100.

extremes! Crisp began by raising the question: ‘I know that among tender consciences, there is nothing pursued with so much vehemence of spirit, earnestness and zeal of affection, as to attain to know certainly they have a part and portion in this grace’; that is, ‘whether they are discharged of their sins or not’.<sup>12</sup> How can this be resolved? Will believers get assurance by looking at their evidences of sanctification?<sup>13</sup> Although Crisp did not think much of this method,<sup>14</sup> he did not reject it altogether: ‘I will not say but that there may be comfort in some sort, even from the fruits of the Spirit’<sup>15</sup> in men; yet that which must resolve the case... and satisfy the spirit of a person, that he has [an] interest in Christ... must be something else besides his own righteousness’.<sup>16</sup> So what will resolve the case? According to Crisp, the second strand of biblical assurance is the answer; namely, the inner witness of the Spirit: ‘There are evidences to resolve men, if the Lord do but give them unto them, and power to receive them... Which are they?... They are two. The one is a revealing evidence, and the other is a receiving evidence. The revealing evidence is the voice of the Spirit of God to a man’s own spirit’.<sup>17</sup>

This, of course, was dangerous talk; Crisp was leaving himself open to the accusation of being on the high road to antinomianism. The inner witness, it seems, is more or less all that counts; evidences of sanctification, apparently, are not the main way of assurance. It is, of course, but a short step from saying evidences are not the be-all and end-all of assurance to saying they do not count at all. And to say that sanctification does not demonstrate grace, and therefore does not count for assurance, is wrong. It *is* one of the biblical ways of gaining assurance.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Crisp Vol.3 pp43-44,61-62.

<sup>13</sup> Crisp Vol.3 pp43,55-59.

<sup>14</sup> Crisp Vol.3 pp43-59,62,64,80,84.

<sup>15</sup> Crisp had ‘spirit’.

<sup>16</sup> Crisp Vol.3 p64.

<sup>17</sup> Crisp Vol.3 pp65,73-74.

<sup>18</sup> In addition – and more important – sanctification is essential for salvation (Heb. 12:14). Crisp could avoid the obvious thrust of 1 John 3:14 only by a tortured exposition. Even such a supporter as Gill was embarrassed and had to point it out: ‘I cannot agree with him’ – who

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But despite appearances, Crisp was not, in fact, an antinomian on the issue! He was simply saying that full assurance is not possible *merely* by testing oneself against signs and evidences of sanctification. He was not saying that evidences of sanctification are not required for any purpose. Indeed, he was not saying that they are utterly useless as far as assurance goes; it is simply that they are not *sufficient by themselves* to bring about the desired assurance.<sup>19</sup> The witness of the Spirit is the only sure way. *But even this needs to be verified by Scripture*, as Crisp acknowledged; a mere impression is not enough.<sup>20</sup> But for Crisp, as well as Scripture, the inner witness is supreme.<sup>21</sup>

The trouble is, Crisp was too grudging in all this. If he had said evidences of sanctification are not sufficient to give *full* assurance, but they are *necessary* for it, not merely useful; if he had said in a more positive way – not that ‘I do not deny’ – that the fruits of the Spirit accompany the inner witness – not that they ‘may come in as handmaids’; if he had robustly pointed out that the Spirit who witnesses within will surely and inevitably work grace within the same person; if he had said *such* things, and said them as strongly as he made his other points, he would not have left himself open to the charge of antinomianism. While, in my opinion, he said just enough to rebut the charge, he was not sufficiently clear or positive.

But let him try to explain himself:

I do not determine peremptorily that a man cannot, by way of evidence, receive any comfort from his sanctification; I will give you somewhat for the clearing of my judgement... The Spirit must first reveal the gracious mind of the Lord to our spirits, and give us faith to

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could? – to have the grace of 1 John 3:14, as Gill said, ‘must be an evidence of passing from death to life’ (Crisp Vol.3 p59).

<sup>19</sup> Crisp Vol.3 pp59-60,80,84.

<sup>20</sup> Crisp Vol.3 pp74-75,76,79,95,97.

<sup>21</sup> Crisp explained what he meant by the written word: ‘You may understand the word in a double sense, either the word of the law, or of grace in the gospel. Now mark, when we say it is the Spirit of God bearing witness with our spirits, according to the word, that we are the sons of God, it is not the word of the law that agrees in this with the voice of the Spirit; that speaks nothing but curses... The word, according to which the Spirit of the Lord speaks, when he speaks to his people, is the word of grace’ (Crisp Vol.3 p76).

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receive that testimony, and to sit down satisfied with it, before ever any work of sanctification can possibly give any evidence; but when the testimony of the Spirit is received by faith, and the soul sits down satisfied with it, then all the gifts of the Spirit bear witness together with it, and with faith. In brief, beloved, all the righteousness that ever mere man reached unto since the fall, of itself, was never able to say, upon good grounds, such a person is a child of God.<sup>22</sup>

Do not miss the ‘of itself’. *That* was Crisp’s point. But even here, unfortunately, he was putting too low a value on the evidences of sanctification. He was not denying sanctification as evidence of justification, of a man’s interest in Christ and hope of heaven – but putting it forward as a verification only of a lesser kind, a secondary evidence.<sup>23</sup> As I say, it was enough to release him from the charge of antinomianism, but even so he fell short of the scriptural emphasis.

As I explained when beginning this section, for all his dangerous talk in these sermons on assurance, Crisp’s aim was admirable:

All I aim at is that our God, in our Saviour Jesus Christ, might have the pre-eminence in all things; that not only our salvation and justification might have their rise from Christ alone, but that our peace of conscience might be fetched from thence; and that he that gives to us the great things of the gospel, might speak the same things by himself, or by his Spirit, unto us, according to his word, and so we rest satisfied on that; if anything swerve from this principle... I... abhor it.

Unfortunately, Crisp, taking the argument to his opponents, immediately plunged on, once again getting himself into hot water:

To make the evidence of the Spirit, according to the word of grace, and the faith of a believer, no infallible testimonies of our interest in Christ, must of necessity produce this effect; [namely,] to rest and build on our own works, and to give the glory of our peace of conscience and comfort thereunto; but to preach that it is only these [that is, the inner witness, and so on] that evidence to us our interest in Christ, is to give unto the Lord Jesus the honour and glory of all, and to assume nothing to our own works.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Crisp Vol.3 p84.

<sup>23</sup> Crisp Vol.3 p84.

<sup>24</sup> Crisp Vol.3 pp98-99.

While he is commendably arguing that, in the ultimate, the inner witness is supreme, Crisp should have been more guarded, and expressed himself scripturally – the inner witness must be, and will be, supported by good works. Crisp seems to have been saying the inner witness *on its own* is infallible evidence and assurance. In this he was mistaken.

Having said that, we today have erred far, far too much on the other side. I will not press this further here – I intend to publish on Sandemanianism – but the truth is, we today, when thinking about assurance, are far too much inclined to concentrate on ourselves and our works in sanctification, to the detriment of the inner witness of the Spirit. If Crisp can help us anywhere, it is at this point. And we need help!

## ***2. Crisp was not always wise in the way he dealt with unbelief***

When speaking about unbelief, Crisp was also unguarded. ‘Unbelief’, he declared, ‘is not a bar to hinder one from having a part in Christ’.<sup>25</sup> What! How could he say such a thing? What else *but* unbelief keeps a sinner from Christ? But Crisp said it because he was trying to explain that God does not have regard for anything in the sinner when he comes to bestow Christ to him;<sup>26</sup> there is no cause whatever in the sinner; God’s motive is nothing but free grace. Does God demand anything of the sinner to make that sinner worthy to receive Christ? No, said Crisp, nothing at all:

The Father expects nothing in the world of men... God looks for nothing in the world of men; be they what they will, be they in the worst condition, no matter what it is, they are the men to whom Christ offers himself<sup>27</sup>... [The] giving and communicating Christ, and all that

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<sup>25</sup> Crisp Vol.1 p107.

<sup>26</sup> This is where Crisp sailed too close to the wind. God gave Christ to die – that is, he ‘bestowed’ Christ – *for* sinners, when they were sinners, unbelievers; their unbelief does not interfere with *this*. But he bestows Christ *to* sinners only as and when they believe. But in saying this, God does not bestow Christ to the sinner *because* he believes. This is the point Crisp was trying to make.

<sup>27</sup> This must not be missed. Crisp was talking about Christ offering himself *to* sinners *in the gospel* – not offering himself *for* them *on the cross*.



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is Christ's, unto men, [is] merely of grace, merely of gift, without consideration of anything in the world... [God] bestows Christ by grace... God looks for, asks, requires nothing of men to their partaking of him... No matter for bringing of anything with you; have you a mind to him?<sup>28</sup> [then] take him freely; God scorns to make a sale of his Son. If men take him as a deed of gift, well and good; if they will have him upon other terms, God never means to part with him. I tell you, could you bring angelical perfection and obedience, and present that to the Father as a motive to him to bestow his Christ upon you; if you dare offer the most perfect righteousness in the world for Christ; I say, you shall be accursed for it.<sup>29</sup>

Note Crisp's admirable point; he was talking about the Father's *motive* in bestowing Christ, not the way sinners receive him. God offers and bestows Christ to sinners only on the basis of his free and sovereign grace – not because of faith (actual or foreseen). Having established this from Scripture, Crisp moved on: 'As the Father looks for nothing in men to partake of Christ, so also it does imply, there is nothing in men, though never so vile, that can debar a person from a part in this Christ'.<sup>30</sup> Is there any sinner who is so bad that God will not offer Christ to him, will not give Christ to him, but will turn away from him, saying he is not worthy to receive Christ? No! Just as there is no merit in any sinner to deserve the gift of Christ, so there is no sin which is too much for God to deal with. And this includes unbelief: 'Unbelief is not simply a bar to the bestowing of Christ... [God] bestows him without any regard to belief or unbelief; if unbelief should be a bar to hinder Christ from being bestowed upon men, where is the man to whom Christ should be bestowed? There is no [unconverted] person under heaven... but he is considered an unbeliever'.<sup>31</sup>

Allowing for the colouring of Crisp's words by his belief in eternal justification, he was right. He was preaching pure gospel! He was speaking, as he said, of God's *motive* in offering and bestowing Christ to sinners, and the *sort* of people to whom he offers and bestows him. God saves *sinners*; Christ came for the sick, the *unrighteous* (Mark. 2:17); Christ died for *sinners* (Rom.

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<sup>28</sup> That is: Do you want him?

<sup>29</sup> Crisp Vol.1 pp100-102.

<sup>30</sup> Crisp Vol.1 pp102-103.

<sup>31</sup> Crisp Vol.1 pp107-108.

5:8); God invites *sinners* to Christ. Christ died for the *ungodly* (Rom. 5:6); God justifies the *ungodly* (Rom. 4:5). God did not give his Son for believers,<sup>32</sup> it was for sinners. Christ does not offer himself to believers; it is to sinners. This is the point Crisp was making. He was addressing *God's offering and bestowal* of Christ to sinners, **not** the *sinner's receiving* of him. There is nothing which makes the sinner fit for God to offer and give him Christ. Nothing!

*But only believers will receive Christ*, and sinners must believe before they receive Christ! Crisp knew this full well, and argued it stoutly: 'I need not tell you', he said, 'what I have so often mentioned, that there must be a believing in him that justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4)'.<sup>33</sup> Crisp spoke of two 'receivings of Christ', one passive, the other active; the latter being 'when we take him'.<sup>34</sup> In other words, unbelief does not hinder God offering and bestowing Christ, just as no good in the sinner merits his bestowal of Christ,<sup>35</sup> but until a sinner believes he will never receive Christ:

[Unbelief] is a bar to hinder the manifestation of Christ in the spirit, but it is not a bar to hinder anyone having a part in Christ, on whom God bestows him. It is true, that you, nor I, can say by experience that Christ is ours, until we believe.<sup>36</sup>

Crisp was teaching gospel truth here but, snatched out of context, his words sound dreadful. And, of course, his approach was coloured by his view of eternal justification; that is to say, belief for Crisp meant coming to realise one's justified state from eternity past. In this, he was mistaken. Let me briefly restate the biblical position: In eternity past, God determined to justify his elect. At the appointed time, Christ died and rose again to justify the elect. In God's sovereign appointment, the Holy Spirit brings the elect to trust the Redeemer to receive their actual justification. And in

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<sup>32</sup> How common a mistake is this among evangelicals, not excluding Calvinists. I mentioned this point when looking at John Saltmarsh.

<sup>33</sup> Crisp Vol.1 pp104-105.

<sup>34</sup> Crisp Vol.1 p107.

<sup>35</sup> Compare circumcision and uncircumcision; neither is the basis for justification (Rom. 3:30), 'the bestowal of Christ'.

<sup>36</sup> Crisp Vol.1 p107.

eternity to come, God will vindicate his elect as perfect before him for ever.

As for preaching the gospel to sinners, we must concentrate on the third aspect: sinners must trust Christ to be justified. Because of his free and sovereign grace, on the basis of that free and sovereign grace, God offers Christ to sinners as sinners, as unbelievers, ungodly. More: because of his free and sovereign grace, on the basis of his free and sovereign grace, God gives Christ to sinners. But he only gives Christ to sinners who, by his Spirit's gracious, sovereign and effectual action, believe. However, he does not give Christ to them because they believe, but even so believing is the means whereby sinners receive Christ. Without saving faith, sinners will not be saved. Unbelief does not hinder God offering Christ to sinners, but unless a sinner believes, he will be damned.

### ***3. Crisp was not always wise in the way he dealt with the imputation of sin to Christ***

Now for the third example of Crisp's tendency to say unwise things – this time, concerning the imputation of sin to Christ. On the one hand he could make this categorical statement: 'I have searched the Scripture as narrowly as possibly I may', he said, 'yet, this I find, that throughout the whole there is not one passage of it that speaks of imputing our sins to Christ'.<sup>37</sup> Naturally such a statement sets alarm bells ringing up and down the street. Whatever did he mean? Did he not believe in imputation? It certainly seems to be the case. But the truth is, Crisp *did* believe in it, and at the very time he made this amazing statement, he was in fact enforcing the *scriptural* doctrine against false and fanciful notions of the subject. The scriptural doctrine of imputation was the very thing he was trying to prove, and make men see.<sup>38</sup>

So why did he put it like this? Whatever did Crisp mean by his staggering statement that he had never found the Scripture speaking of imputing the sins of the elect to Christ? What was he thinking of? Just this: Crisp had two fish to fry. In the first place, he was dealing with a misunderstanding of the word 'imputation'. He

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<sup>37</sup> Crisp Vol.2 p91.

<sup>38</sup> Crisp Vol.2 p91.

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noted how the word itself ‘stumbles many a person’; that is, he explained, they think it implies a figment, an imagined transfer of sin, or some such ‘supposition or connivance’.<sup>39</sup> Not so, he replied. ‘I have searched the Scripture’ and never once come across this imaginary idea, this figment. Crisp asserted that the scriptural meaning of the word is ‘accounting’ or ‘reckoning’, and in this sense, he argued, Christ *did* take the sins of his people. He cited Romans 4:3-4. ‘There are two words that illustrate the nature of imputation, and they are these, accounting and reckoning... Imputing is nothing but God’s determination and conclusion that he passes upon things, as really and truly they are, without imagining things to be so and so, when indeed, and in truth, they are not so’.<sup>40</sup> Not only that; Crisp was trying to protect the sinlessness of Christ. Sins were imputed to the Redeemer, yes, but that did not mean he was actually guilty of sin in himself.

This is what Crisp was reaching for. In two sermons entitled: ‘Sin Transacted *Really* Upon Christ’,<sup>41</sup> he proclaimed a *real* transfer of sins, a *real* transfer of accountability to Christ, not some abstract theoretical device, as though God pretended to transfer sin’s debt to his Son. As Crisp had explained a few paragraphs earlier, when dealing with 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Romans 5:19: ‘God *really* passes over sin upon [Christ], still keeping this fact, that Christ sinned not; so that in respect of this act, not one sin of the believer is Christ’s, but in respect of transgression, the conveyance of it, or passing accounts from one head to another, there is a *reality* of making Christ to be sin’.<sup>42</sup> As he had said just before ‘Christ never sinned in all his life’.<sup>43</sup> Earlier still, in the previous sermon:

Christ himself becomes the transgressor in the room and stead of the person that had transgressed; so that, in respect of the reality of being a transgressor, Christ really is the transgressor... Beloved, mistake me not. I say not that Christ ever was, or ever could be, the actor or

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<sup>39</sup> See p106 for Eaton on the same theme; namely, that imputation is real not imaginary.

<sup>40</sup> Crisp Vol.2 pp91-93.

<sup>41</sup> Crisp Vol.2 pp84-113, emphasis mine.

<sup>42</sup> Crisp Vol.2 p88, emphasis mine.

<sup>43</sup> Crisp Vol.2 p87.

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committer of transgression, for he never committed any, but the Lord laid iniquity upon him, and this act of God's laying it upon him makes him as really a transgressor as if he himself had actually committed it.<sup>44</sup>

And this means that:

God lays iniquities upon [Christ], namely, by transferring them upon him, that he takes them away, and carries them into a land of forgetfulness... and, therefore, they are not left behind upon the person whose they were till Christ took them away.<sup>45</sup>

The context clears it all up: 'I will not contend about words; we will take it for granted, that it is consonant to Scripture, that our sins are imputed unto Christ; all the difficulty lies in a true understanding of the word *imputation*'.<sup>46</sup> In short, Crisp *did* believe in imputation, and tenaciously defended it. Yet, when he was most strongly arguing the biblical case, by a very unwise statement he seemed to be denying it!

And this makes my point perfectly. Although it is possible – for some of his critics, I might say *tempting* – to snatch a sentence from Crisp to 'prove' he did not believe in imputation, the context shows he was proving the very opposite. And so I could go on. Crisp was not careful enough over such statements as 'God... makes Christ as very [really, truly] a sinner as the creature himself was'.<sup>47</sup> Of course, as Gill said – indeed, as Crisp himself said<sup>48</sup> – 'that is, by imputation... by which all the sins of the sinner are put upon Christ, so that he, standing in his stead, is reckoned in the eye of justice as what the sinner is in himself'.<sup>49</sup> The point is, sins were not imputed to Christ so as to make him a sinner, but they were imputed to him in the sense that he assumed the debt, he took up and bore the punishment due to them, he settled the account.<sup>50</sup> But Crisp should

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<sup>44</sup> Crisp Vol.2 p73.

<sup>45</sup> Crisp Vol.2 p90. See Gill's note in Crisp Vol.2 p91.

<sup>46</sup> Crisp Vol.2 p92.

<sup>47</sup> Crisp Vol.2 p129.

<sup>48</sup> See above.

<sup>49</sup> Crisp Vol.2 p129.

<sup>50</sup> See Gill's note in Crisp Vol.2 p88.

have been more careful; he obscured his doctrine by the sensational way he expressed himself in his love of verbal fireworks.

All this illustrates the care which must be exercised when quoting him (and other so-called antinomians). Some of their statements offer rich pickings for those who are looking for a juicy tit-bit. He is not alone in this, of course, but it is especially true of Crisp. Even so, he usually clarified his meaning in the context. This cautionary note must not be forgotten.<sup>51</sup>

Finally, in arguing so strongly for the real imputation of sin to Christ, Crisp was in effect establishing another, inevitably connected, biblical doctrine: Christ's righteousness really is imputed to us when we believe. And this takes us back to the point I made right at the start: the Reformed and evangelical view of justification is too dry, concentrated too much on its legal aspect to the detriment of the fullness of free justification in Christ. As I said, while this legal aspect is an undoubted truth, the fact is, as these 'antinomians' have argued, when we trust Christ, we are made – yes, *made* (Rom. 5:19) – as righteous as Christ in God's sight. As Romans 5:19 makes clear beyond any vestige of doubt, just as sins were really transferred to Christ so that God regarded him as a sinner, so Christ's righteousness is transferred to the believer to make him perfect in God's sight.

Moreover, nothing – nothing whatsoever – can ever, will ever, cause God in Christ to reject the one who trusts Christ. Hence my choice of John 6:37 as part of the epigraph on the title page: 'All that the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out'; that is, under no circumstances whatsoever will God drive away the one who trusts his Son. As John Kent said: 'Once in him, in him for ever'.<sup>52</sup> Free and full redemption, indeed!

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<sup>51</sup> Getting closer to the subject in hand, in his sermon on Phil. 3:8-9, for instance, Crisp seemed to speak vehemently against a believer's holiness, but in truth he was not promoting sin. Rather, he was trying to point out the inevitable corruption found in every true believer this side of glory. See Crisp Vol.2 pp34-48.

<sup>52</sup> In his hymn: 'Sovereign grace o'er sin abounding'.