WILLIAM CHILLINGWORTH

REASON, FAITH, AND RELIGIOUS UNITY:

A STUDY OF

THE THOUGHT OF WILLIAM CHILLINGWORTH

By

JANE NEISH, B. A.

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AUTHOR: Jane Neish, B.A. (Vind.)

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Abstract

The intent of this study is to illuminate specific aspects of William Chillingworth's thought, particularly his position on the importance of reason in religion and the necessity of religious unity. This encompasses his rejection of Catholic infallibility, tradition and the Fathers of the church, in his attempt to abolish all religious authority except that of individual reason. The centrality of scripture is emphasized as the only rule of faith, and Chillingworth argued that the fundamentals of faith contained in the bible could be apprehended by any searching person. This position led Chillingworth to argue that individual reason was the ultimate authority in religious matters, and he rejected the idea that people could be told what to believe as fundamental to salvation. By this Chillingworth intended to make the church open to all who professed themselves Christians, but was labelled a heretic for his efforts. The result of his thinking led Chillingworth into some difficulties in that he could not reconcile the belief that there were fundamentals of faith necessary to be believed for salvation with the position that no one could be told what was required to attain it. The final chapter attempts to show the continuity of Chillingworth's thought after his death. Chillingworth's influence on the Latitudinarian movement, of which he was considered to be the 'fountain-head', grew out of the civil wars and interregnum and came into prominence in the 1660s and 1670s.

Modern religious liberalism can be seen to have had its beginnings in Chillingworth's rationalism which called for a permissive church. Moreover, the importance of Chillingworth is found in his conception of reason, which he considered to be a critical faculty, and therefore he can be seen as the precursor to the rationalism of Locke and the Enlightenment. Therefore, a study of his reason is integral to an understanding of the changes occurring in seventeenth-century thought.

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Introduction

This is a study of the thought of William Chillingworth, born in 1602 in Oxford,

England, who was the godson of William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury 1633-45.

Chillingworth converted to Roman Catholicism in 1628, having been persuaded by the

arguments of the Jesuit, John Fisher, that the Catholic church was infallible in matters of

religion. His reconversion to Protestantism occurred publically around 1634, by which

time he was writing his defence of the Protestant religion, *The Religion of Protestants a*

Safe Way to Salvation, which was published in 1638. It is this work which this thesis

studies in depth, in conjunction with a number of Chillingworth's unpublished

manuscript writings and several published sermons and discourses. These writings

illuminate Chillingworth's thought concerning authority in religion, the nature and role

of reason in matters of faith, and his desire for a unified Christendom, all influenced by

the political and religious conflicts of his time.

Chapter one elucidates the political and religious framework in which

Chillingworth grew up and which influenced his religious views, especially those

concerning toleration. The reigns of James I and Charles I are examined to establish a

temporal context, followed by an account of Chillingworth's life, his conversion to

Catholicism and reconversion to Protestantism. Chapter two deals with Chillingworth's

rejection of infallibility in religious matters and the question of authority in the church.

Chillingworth is considered in relation to Richard Hooker, who advocated the use of

reason in religion and whose apology for English church, *The Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity*, influenced Chillingworth, and to Hugo Grotius, whose writings were also influential for Chillingworth's thought on toleration and unity in the church. An examination of the theology of these two men in relation to Chillingworth places him in the context of his time and also serves to show how he moved beyond Hooker's thought and away from medieval scholasticism. Chillingworth can be seen to have been a transitional figure between the scholasticism of Hooker and the rationalism of the Enlightenment of the later seventeenth century.

Chapter three examines in detail Chillingworth's conception of reason and his theory of religious unity. The relation of faith and grace to reason, as Chillingworth saw it, is explored. This is of importance, because, at first sight, it appears as if reason negates the necessity of faith and grace. This was not the case, but Chillingworth was attacked by his opponents as being a Socinian because he placed a great emphasis on the abilities of reason to ascertain for itself the fundamentals of religion necessary for salvation. It is in this discussion of reason that Chillingworth's differences with Hooker are exemplified. The thought of Grotius is also examined in greater detail, particularly with an emphasis upon his ideas of religious toleration and the necessity for political unity. Chillingworth advocated unity, but almost to the exclusion of an institutional church. This was the case because Chillingworth limited the fundamentals of religion necessary to be believed and left this determination up to each individual, not to any

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church. Thus, the role of the church was made largely, but silently, superfluous.

Chapter four reveals the influence of Chillingworth's thought on the Latitudinarians after the Civil War. Chillingworth's influence on the Latitudinarians was great, as is evident in the role they gave to reason in religion and their desire for a comprehensive church. There are differences between their perspectives, but these differences do not obscure the similarities. The intellectual debt owed to Chillingworth was acknowledged by the Latitudinarians, and thus key aspects of his thought survived and lived on throughout the seventeenth century.

Chillingworth is of interest because he exemplifies the seventeenth-century problem in Western Christianty regarding the question of the nature of authority. His writings reflect a man strongly influenced by the political and religious upheavals of his time and it is his response to these problems which makes him an interesting study, for he was not typical of the majority of English thinkers at that time. While Chillingworth has not been the focus of study by most historians, he is worth reading because he is a transitional figure between medieval scholasticism and the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and therefore of interest in the development of the history of ideas. This thesis attempts to elucidate his thought and to examine him in reference to other religious thinkers, both to place him in the context of his time, but also to show how his religious views were not those of most Catholic and Protestant thinkers.

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Chapter 1
The Early Stuart Church and William Chillingworth

The first half of the seventeenth century was a time of uncertainty for the Church of England. The death of Elizabeth I in March 1603 created unease as English men and women wondered what the next monarch would do in matters of religion. There was hope that James I would allow there to be further reform along Calvinist lines because the Kirk of his native Scotland was presbyterian in government. Roman Catholics hoped that James would be lenient towards them on account of his deceased mother's religion. The years of James' reign saw his desire for a unified church and a willingness to tolerate a variety of religious opinion. This changed, however, when Charles I ascended the throne in 1625. Clearly, Charles favoured men whose religious views were decidedly anti-Calvinist, and William Laud's appointment to the Privy Council in 1627 and to the see of Canterbury in 1633 caused further conflict. Laud's reforms, in conjunction with the king's desires, aroused fears of Arminianism and Roman Catholicism among both radical and moderate Calvinist believers. The international political situation, which had led to fears of a popish plot to subvert the state under James, worsened after Charles dissolved parliament in 1629. Also, Roman Catholic conversions became common in a court led by Queen Henrietta Maria, who was the Catholic sister of Henry IV of France. The events of the 1620s established a volatile religious situation and created a radicalized Puritan opposition to the reforms of the Laudians.[1] This opposition viewed their opponents as undermining the Church of England by allowing Catholics greater freedom of religious expression and suggesting the suppression of English liberty to the forces of Catholic Spain and France within the polarized Europe of the Thirty Years War. It was in this religious context that William Chillingworth came of age, attended Oxford and in 1628 converted to Catholicism.

While Chillingworth's conversion cannot be viewed as of particular historiographical importance in itself, it was emblematic of the uncertainty within the

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[1]The term Puritan is used here to denote the religion of non-conformists who wanted further reform along Calvinist lines, including a presbyterian church government. Conforming Puritans are defined as those willing to worship within the current church even as they desired further reforms . Not all Calvinists were Puritans, but all Puritans were Calvinist. The majority of Calvinists in the Church of England were conformists, willing to support the established church under the monarch as Supreme Governor. During Charles' reign many conformists could no longer be so and became radacalized in opposition to the church and, eventually, the crown.

church concerning true religion. Conversions were a grave concern, and seemingly more widespread throughout England because of politics and the laxity in which recusant laws were enforced against Catholics. Henrietta Maria practiced her Catholic religion openly in her court and the Jesuits were not forbidden to stop their missionary work. In fact, at Oxford university, where Chillingworth studied, the Jesuits were actively pursuing conversions among its students and faculty. It is of interest, however, that Chillingworth reconverted to Protestantism by 1634. In 1638 he published his book, *The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation,* which asserted the validity of the Protestant religion against the false claims of Rome. By this date the Elizabethan Settlement of religion was no longer cohesive, and the divide between Calvinists and Laudians had widened. Chillingworth's desire for religious unity was an impossibility, and he was accused by both Catholics and Calvinists as being a heretic. As will be seen, the religious situation in early seventeenth-century England created an atmosphere which made Chillingworth's appeal to toleration and unity inconceivable.

The accession of James I to the throne of England and Wales saw a renewed effort for reform by those who wanted the Church of England to be more Calvinist in both its doctrine and ceremonies. This effort first appeared in the form of the Millenary Petition in 1603. The petitioners, "desiring and longing for the redress of diverse abuses of the Church" asked that James remove, amend and qualify what they perceived to be abuses.[2] These abuses pertained to church ceremony, ministers, discipline, church livings and maintenance.[3] James' response to the petition was to hold the Hampton Court Conference in January 1604, where he presided over discussions concerning doctrine, rites and ceremonies of the church. The end result of the conference was two-fold. Puritan hopes for greater reform were not realized to the full extent and the beginnings of an Arminian resistence was first in evidence.[4] While under James,

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[2]*The Millenary Petition,* in *The Stuart Constitution 1603-1688, Documents and Commentary,* edited by J. Kenyon (Cambridge: University Press, 1986),117.

[3]For the full record of the petitioners requests see *ibid.,* 117-119.

[4]See Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: the Rise of English Arminianism c. 1590-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), ch. 1 and Patrick Collinson, "The Jacobean Religious Settlement: the Hampton Court Conference" in *Before the English Civil War,* edited by H. Tomlinson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 27-52, for the Hampton Court Conference proceedings.

Calvinism received greater royal favour than had been the case under Elizabeth I, he would only accept moderate reforms which were moderately presented. Those radical reformers who wished to replace the episcopal hierarchy of the church with a presbyterian church government were not granted a hearing.[5] James made clear his position on the episcopal hierarchy in his famous saying recorded by William Barlow at the conference: "No Bishop, No King".[6]

James' reign was comparably peaceful in religious matters. His attitude towards the church was irenic and he desired the reunification of Christendom. This desire became evident upon his accession to the English throne but the germination of these ideas had begun while he was James VI of Scotland.[7] James' desire for peace and church unity grew from his observations of religious strife in Scotland between Catholics and Protestants and from his evaluation of the international situation. Religion was a volatile and intractable issue among various European countries, including Spain, the Netherlands, France and the Holy Roman Empire. James' practice was one of moderation. He remained on peaceful terms with both continental Catholics and Protestants and he treated Catholics in his own kingdom leniently, admonishing them rather than persecuting them.[8] In fact, Catholics had been prominent in both James' court and government in Scotland, and even after his accession to the English throne Catholics were key figures in the Scottish administration.[9]

James believed that only a general religious council would be able to alleviate the religious conflict in Europe and restore peace.[10] In keeping with James' irenicism, he had on a number of occasions attempted to bring together Protestants and Catholics

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[5]Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 28.

[6]William Barlow, *Sum and Substance of the Conference* in *Constitutional Documents of the Reign of James 1*, edited by J.R. Tanner (Cambridge: University Press, 1961), 61.

[7]W. B. Patterson, *King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom* (Cambridge: University Press, 1997), 4.

[8]*Ibid.*, 19.

[9]*Ibid.*, 20.

[10]*Ibid.*, 68.

in an ecumenical council.[11] He appealed to the pope to convene such a council and in 1605 James' proposal for one was discussed, but came to nothing. James' belief that only an eucumenical council could reunite Christendom is evident in his *Premonition* to all Christian states published in 1606 and reissued in 1616. He wrote:

> Whereas, if euer there were a possibilitie to be expected of reducing all Christians to an vniformitie of Religion, it must come by the means of a Generall Councel: the place of their meeting being chosen so indifferent, as all Christian Princes, either in their owne Persons, or their Deputie Commissioners, and all Church-men of Christian profession that beleeue and professe all the ancient grounds of the trew, ancient, Catholike, and Apostolike Faith, might haue *tutum accessum* thereunto; All the incendiaries and Nouelist fire-brands on either side being debarred from the same, as well *Iesuites* as *Puritanes*.[12]

James believed that it was the place of a king to foster religious unity and to maintain religious peace. In his *Basilikon Doron*, written for the edification of his eldest son Henry in 1599, James was clear that the king be "a louing nourish-father to the Church" so that "the flourishing of your Church in pietie, peace, and learning, may be one of the chiefe points of your earthly glory."[13]

James' personal beliefs were Calvinist and he subscribed to a moderate position concerning the doctrine of grace.[14] He believed there was,

> a Heauen and a Hell, *praemium & pena*, for the Elect and reprobate: How many other roomes there be, I am not on God his counsell. *Multae sunt mansiones in domo Patris mei*, saith **Christ**, who is the trew Purgatorie for our sinnes: But how many chambers and anti-chambers the diuvell hath, they can best tell that goe to him: But in case there were more places for soules to goe to then we know of, yet let vs content vs with that

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[11]See *ibid., passim*, especially ch. 2.

[12]James I, *A Premonition to all Most Mightie Monarchies, Kings, Free Princes, and States of Christendome*, 1616, in *The Political Works of James I*, edited by Charles Howard McIlwain (New York: Russell & Russell Inc., 1965), 151.

[13]James I, *Basilikon Doron*, in *The Political Works of James I*, p. 24.

[14]See Patterson, *James VI and I* p. 16-17 and Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, "The Ecclesiastical Policies of James I and Charles I" in *The Early Stuart Church*, edited by K. Fincham (California: Stanford University Press, 1993), 31-32.

> which in his Word he hath reuealed vnto vs, *and not inquire further into secrets. Heauen and Hell are there reuealed to be the eternall home of all mankinde: let vs endeuour to winne the one and eschew the other; and there is an end.*[15]

Clearly, James' position on predestination was moderate and he advocated moderation on such a contentious subject in order to keep the peace.

James also wrote: "I am no *Apostate*, as the Cardinal [Bellarmine] would make me; onely hauing euer bene brought vp in that Religion which I presently professe...and so cannot be properly an Heretike, by their owne doctrine, since I neuer was of their Church."[16] He had been brought up Protestant and had tutors who were Calvinist: George Buchanan, a renowned scholar and poet, and Peter Young who had studied under Theodore Beza, Calvin's associate and successor.[17] This did not mean, however, that James was adverse to allowing a diversity of religious opinion. He fostered unity in the church by refusing to allow one religious position to have precedence over another. James advanced in the Church of England Calvinists who supported an episcopal hierarchy and godly preaching, such as Toby Matthew, appointed to the archbishopric of York in 1607 and George Abbot, who became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1611. Abbott was strongly anti-Catholic, but James balanced the church by appointing others who supported his view of an inclusive church, which meant moderation towards Catholics, such as Richard Neile, who was appointed as bishop of Lincoln in 1614 and John Overall who was made bishop of Coventry in 1614 and transferred to Norwich in 1618.[18]

The Catholic policy to which James adhered at the beginning of his reign was one of leniency and limited toleration of belief. Catholics could practice their religion quietly and in private as long as they kept the peace.[19] Such a diversity of theological opinion was not contradictory for James. His belief in Christian unity was based on an acceptance of a limited number of Catholic doctrines, like the creeds, and he accepted the first four church councils. His use of the term "Catholic" referred to the universality

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[15]*Premonition*, 125-126. My italics.

[16]*Ibid.*, 122.

[17]Patterson, *James VI and I*, 17.

[18]See: Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed* (Cambridge: University Press, 1996), 57 and Mark Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed: Britain 1603-1714* (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 77.

[19]Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 76.

of Christianity and he refuted many of the Roman Catholic practices:

> I am a **CATHOLIKE CHRISTIAN**, as beleeueth the three
> *Creeds*; That of the Apostles, that of the Councell of *Nice*, and that of
> *Athanasius*...I reuerence and admit the foure first generall Councells as
> Catholique and Orthodoxe...As for the Scriptures; no man doubteth I will
> beleeue them...I am no *Iconomachus*...As for Purgatorie and all the trash
> depending thereupon, it is not worth the talking of.[20]

Despite James' own well developed theological views, he allowed there to be
theological dispute among his clergy as long as these debates did not touch on matters
deemed central to the faith and remained peaceful.

Calvinism had also enjoyed royal favour from the beginning of James' reign, and
in 1618 at the Synod of Dort James openly supported the Calvinists against the
Arminians. He considered the Netherlands his ally and wanted to maintain religious
peace there because he feared that disputes would spread to and disrupt England. Thus,
his support of Calvinism at Dort was done for the preservation of peace.[21] Political
circumstances, however, caused James to support at court the anti-Calvinist faction
which had been in evidence during the Hampton Court Conference. By 1618 there was
talk of a marriage between Prince Charles and the Catholic Spanish infanta. Such an
alliance, which James hoped would promote unity between Catholics and Protestants,
was looked upon with fear by most English Protestants. The Gunpowder Plot in 1605
and the assassination of Henry IV of France in 1610 had frightened English Protestants
who were afraid of a Catholic conspiracy to destroy Protestantism and to encourage a
national conversion. The pope was seen as the anti-Christ and all Catholics were
viewed as subverters of protestant belief.[22]

James was willing to grant to Catholics limited toleration of belief even after the
Gunpowder Plot, but only if they took the Oath of Allegiance which was enacted in
1606 as part of the penal legislation against Catholics. This Oath established the grounds
for civil obedience to the state for those who recognized the pope as their spiritual

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[20]*Premonition*, 122, 123, 124, 125. For a full account of James' position on both
his beliefs and his view on those of the Catholics see 122-128. See also Fincham and
Lake, "James I and Charles I," 31.

[21]See Patterson, *James VI and I*, 260-292; Peter White, "The *via media* in the
early Stuart Church" in *The Early Stuart Church*, 224; Fincham and Lake, *James I and
Charles I*, 31-32 and Lake, "Calvinism and the English Church," in *Reformation to
Revolution*, edited by Margo Todd (New York: Routledge, 1995), 191-193.

[22]Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, p. 45.

authority. Catholics were required to acknowledge the king as the lawful civil authority and,

> that the Pope, neither of himself, nor by any authority of the Church or See of Rome, or by any other means with any other, hath any power or authority to depose the King...or to authorise any foreign prince to invade or annoy him...or to discharge any of his subjects of their allegiance and obedience to his Majesty, or to give licence or leave to any of them to bear arms, raise tumult, or to offer any violence or hurt to his Majesty's Royal Person, State, or Government, or to any of his Majesty's subjects...[23]

Fines were enacted for failure to attend church services regularly and for failure to receive Holy Communion at least once a year.[24] Catholics therefore, were commanded to conform outwardly to the established church, although the oath did not explicitly deny the spiritual authority of the Pope. James' wish was to accommodate moderate Catholics within the establishment by granting them *de facto* private toleration after they had taken the Oath of Allegiance.[25]

James' willingness to pursue the Spanish Match between 1618-1622, in the face of opposition from within parliament and his government, makes clear his dedication to a peaceful unification between Catholics and Protestants. It was this opposition, however, which caused James to distance himself from Calvinism and to support the anti-Calvinists. Moreover, the outbreak of the Thirty Years War in 1618 created a fervour in England as many Calvinists demanded that the king support the continental Protestants against Catholic forces. The combination of the Thirty Years War and the possibility of a Anglo-Spanish marriage alliance provoked vocal dissent from amongst James' Calvinist clergy who denounced James' policies from the pulpit. This roused James' latent fear of a Puritanism which he defined in terms of lack of conformity. When clergy used the pulpit as a vehicle to criticize publically the king's policies, James' fear of a Puritan political threat caused him to distance himself from Calvinism.[26] Calvinism had been made into a political issue as clergy and the House of

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[23] *An Act for the better discovering and repressing of Popish Recusants*, in *Constitutional Documents*, 1606, 90.

[24] *Ibid.*, 86-88.

[25] Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 55-56 and Patterson, *James VI and I*, 78-79.

[26] Fincham and Lake, "James I and Charles I", 34.

Commons urged the king to enter into the war on the continent.[27] The anti-Calvinists, as a result, benefited from their support of James who feared the eruption of political instability.

James' death in 1625 and the accession of Charles I to the throne marked a turning point in religious policy. The unity which James sought to maintain was destroyed by Charles' attempts to suppress Calvinist teaching and his support for the English Arminians, or Laudians.[28] Calvinist doctrine, especially that of predestination, had been a common bond among Protestants, uniting both the Calvinist moderates and conforming Puritans. The years after 1625 saw a separation between the two as a

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[27]Tyacke, "The Rise of Arminianism Reconsidered" in *Aspects of English Protestantism c. 1530-1700* (Manchester: University Press, 2001), 166.

[28]The continental Arminians followed the doctrines of the Dutch theologian, Arminius. The Arminians believed that salvation was available to everyone and they emphasized free will to accept God's grace as opposed to the Calvinists who argued that some people were predestined to believe and therefore God's grace was irresistible. Arminius, then, differentiated between resistible and irresistible grace, resistible grace being that grace which is offered to all men who believe and which man can choose or reject. See Howard A. Slaatte, *The Arminian Arm of Theology* (Washington: University Press of America, 1977), 63-68. The Laudians, a more accurate term than Arminian for the English movement, however, did not strictly adhere to all of Arminius' doctrines. "English 'Arminianism' was parallel to Arminianism proper, not its product; it was not created by Arminius nor did it follow him in detail." See T. M. Parker, "Arminianism and Laudianism in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Studies in Church History*, vol. I, edited by C. W. Dugmore and Charles Duggan (London: Thomas Nelson Ltd., 1964), 30. Parker explains that the dispute regarding grace, predestination and free-will had already been debated in England before Arminius was known. Such a debate occurred in 1595 when Archbishop Whitgift drafted what became known as the Lambeth Articles, which placed a Calvinist emphasis upon the doctrine of the Church of England in response to anti-Calvinist sentiments. The Laudians tended to place greater emphasis on the sacraments, rites, ceremonies and fabric of the church rather than on grace and free-will because they believed that the church should reflect the respect and honour due to God and Christ. Laudianism, therefore, can be seen as "a coherent, distinctive and polemically aggressive vision of the Church, the divine presence in the world and the appropriate ritual response to that presence." Lake, "The Laudian Style: Order, Uniformity and the Pursuit of the Beauty of Holiness in the 1630s," in *The Early Stuart Church*, 162. See also Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 546.

radical group formed in opposition to Laudianism.[29]

Charles' religious preferences began to make themselves clear early in his reign when he favoured a number of anti-Calvinists with preferment in the church. William Laud was appointed to preach before parliament in 1625 and 1626. Upon Lancelot Andrewes' death in the September of 1626, Laud was made Dean of the Chapel Royal and was promised the See of Canterbury by the king.[30] Richard Montagu was granted first a chaplaincy and then a bishopric, although some elements in parliament objected because his writings had been branded as promoting popery.[31] Both Laud and Neile were appointed to the Privy Council in April 1627 and other key positions in the king's court were held by opponents of Calvinism.[32] Moreover, by 1633 the four main sees, Canterbury, York, London and Winchester, were held by anti-Calvinists. Charles clearly was not promoting a middle way between diverse religious opinion in his appointments in both his government and the church.

In 1626 a royal Proclamation was issued for establishing peace and quiet in the Church of England. It stated the king's displeasure for those who,

> adventure to stirre or move any new Opinions, not only contrary, but differing from the sound and Orthodoxall grounds of the true Religion, sincerely professed, and happily established in the Church of England; And...that neither in matter of Doctrine, or Discipline of the Church, nor in the government of the State, [the king] will admit of the least innovation.[33]

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[29]See: Tyacke, "Puritanism, Arminianism and counter-revolution,"in *The English Civil War*, edited by Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (London: Arnold, 1997), part 1.

[30]William Laud, *Works*, edited by James Bliss, vol. 3 (Oxford, 1853), 196.

[31]Fincham and Lake, "James I and Charles I," 37.

[32]Charles' Privy Councillors included Laud, Neile, Samuel Harsnett, bishop of Norwich in 1619, in 1629 transferred to the archbishopric of York and appointed to the Privy Council, and William Juxon, vice-Chancellor of Oxford. His Deans of the Chapel Royal included Laud, Juxon and Matthew Wren, who was a chaplain to Charles in 1622, made clerk of the closet in 1633 and bishop of Hereford in 1634. Other anti-Calvinists held the posts of clerks of the closet and royal almoner. *Ibid.*, 37-38.

[33]*A Proclamation for the establishing of the Peace and Quiet of the Church of England*, June 14, 1626, in *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, vol. 2, edited by James F. Larkin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 91.

The Proclamation forbade anyone from writing, preaching, printing or by any means to
raise doubts, or publish, or maintaine any new inventions, or opinions
concerning Religion, then such as are clearly grounded, and warranted by
the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church of England, heretofore
published, and happily established by authoritie.[34]
This Proclamation has been interpreted in different ways and the cause for confusion is
clear. The Proclamation appears ambiguous since it does not explicitly state what
doctrines were to be suppressed.

In 1629 the king's Declaration was prefixed to the Articles of Religion and this
action, it has been argued, points to a more decisive stand against Calvinist preaching on
predestination. The Declaration stated that there would be no "varying or departing in
the least degree" from "the *settled* continuance of the doctrine and discipline of the
Church of England *now established*."[35] The Articles were to be interpreted literally and
no one was to "put his own sense or comment to be the meaning of the Article."[36] It has
been argued that the Declaration was in no way in favour of the anti-Calvinists and that
instead it promoted unity.[37] Greater support, however, is given to the interpretation
which sees the Declaration as "abandoning the neutrality of the proclamation" and
limiting predestinarian preaching.[38]

That the Declaration was seen to have prohibited predestinarian preaching is
evident from the resolutions on religion drawn up by the House of Commons a few
months following. Among their complaints was the proliferation of Catholics in the
realm and the laxity in which the anti-recusant laws were being executed. More
importantly, however, was the complaint that the "true" sense of the Articles was not to
be expounded according to Calvinist interpretation:
The suppressing and restraint of the orthodox doctrine, contained in the
Articles of Religion, confirmed in Parliament, 13. Eliz., according to the
sense which hath been received publicly, and taught as the doctrine of the

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[34]*Ibid.*, 92.

[35]*The King's Declaration Prefixed to the Articles of Religion*, November 1628,
in *Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution 1625-1660*, edited by S. R.
Gardiner, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 76. My italics.

[36]*Ibid.*, 76.

[37]See White, "The *via media*," 226.

[38]Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, p. 50 and *idem*, "Archbishop Laud," in *The early
Stuart Church*, 65-66. See also Fincham and Lake, James I and Charles I," 39.

Church of England in those points, *wherein the Arminians differ from us and other the Reformed Churches*; wherein the essence of our Articles, in those controverted points, is known and proved.[39]

Clearly, Charles' appointments to positions in both church and his court were perceived as hostile to Calvinists. If bishops and clergy in Convocation were to concern themselves with the settled continuance of both the doctrine and discipline "now established" in the Church of England, then it would be their interpretation, in accord with Charles' wishes, which would carry weight.

Nevertheless, the Declaration did not give a free reign to anti-Calvinists nor was it used as a weapon consciously to subdue the Calvinists. Charles said the Declaration was to be followed by both sides in an effort to gain parliamentary support for a war against Spain, for which he needed funds granted by parliament. Thus, Charles' actions in the period 1625-9 must be seen in a political context. During this period Charles did try to appease parliament with a few appointments favourable to Calvinists and his political position would explain the ambiguity of his religious position in reference to both the proclamation and the Declaration. In any event, when any hope of parliamentary support and supply had gone the situation changed.[40] The appointment of Laud to Canterbury in 1633 marked a further shift away from Calvinism, as can be perceived from the policies followed by Laud and Charles.

In 1629 a royal proclamation ordered that chapels and churches be repaired and kept in "good, decent, and substantiall repaire."[41] Royal instructions to the bishops in 1629 also demanded that afternoon sermons be replaced with catechizing and that the divine service be read "according to the liturgy printed by authority, in ...surplice and hood."[42] After Laud's appointment to Canterbury further changes were enacted. The Book of Sports, which had never been strictly enforced, was reissued in October 1633. In November the king supported the removal of the communion table at St. Gregory's church, London, to the east end of the church and placed "altar-wise." This change was not considered an innovation because it was "consonant to the practice of approved antiquity" and it followed the practice in "all other cathedrals and in His Majesty's own

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[39]*Resolutions on Religion Drawn up by a Sub-Committee of the House of Commons*, February 24, 1628/9, in *Constitutional Documents*, 80. My italics.

[40]Fincham and Lake, "James I and Charles I," 38-40.

[41]*A Proclamation for preventing the decayes of Churches and Chappels for the time to come*, in *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, 249.

[42]Charles I, *Instructions sent from the King to Archbishop Abbot, in the Year 1629*, in Laud, *Works*, vol. 5, 307-308.

chapel."[43]

Further changes to churches as well as in ceremony and liturgical practice are evident in Laud's annual account to the king of his provinces. In 1634 Laud noted that the cathedral in Salisbury "is much pestered with seats, and I have given order to remove them."[44] Such action was bound to cause conflict as some cases involved the destruction of gentry family pews which had been elaborately constructed.[45] In 1636 Laud noted that in the diocese of Lincoln there was dispute over receiving communion at the rails which had been recently erected. In this case, however, Laud urged patience, and suggested that since it was not canonical to receive at the rails it would be better not to force the issue, but rather that "the people will best be won by the decency of the thing itself."[46]

By 1640 it was evident that the new policies and ceremonies were not well accepted by much of the population because of the similarities to popish practices and the belief that these new practices were innovations. The king's preface to the canons of 1640 was an attempt to alleviate this concern: "It well appeareth unto us upon mature consideration, that the said rites and ceremonies, which are now so much quarrelled at, were not only approved of, and used...under King Edward the Sixth...but also again taken up by this whole Church under Queen Elizabeth."[47] Nevertheless, canon VII required not only placing the communion table altar-wise under the east window, but that it must have a rail at which communicants were to receive. Moreover, the congregation was required to bow to the altar.[48] These practices were perceived as a return to Catholicism and an overturning of true religion, although the Puritans

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[43]*An Act of the Privy Council on the Position of the Communion Table at St. Gregory's*, November 3, 1633, in *Constitutional Documents*, 104.

[44]Laud, *Works*, vol. 5, 324.

[45]Andrew Foster, "Church Policies of the 1630s," in *Conflict in Early Stuart England*, edited by Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (New York: Longman Press, 1989), 216.

[46]Laud, *Works*, vol. 5, 343.

[47]Laud, *Works*, vol. 5, 610.

[48]Laud, *Works*, vol. 5, 625-626.

exaggerated the danger of these reforms.[49]

The Root and Branch petition of 1640 makes clear the disfavour with which the changes in the church were held. The petition called for the ecclesiastical government to be abolished "roots and branches" and be replaced with a government "according to God's Word."[50] Among other matters, the House of Commons objected to the restrictions placed upon preaching which did not allow the doctrine of predestination to be preached and protested against the use of surplices and hoods, bowing and the church's episcopal government. The altar policies pursued by Laud and the king were also attacked as was the Book of Sports. The canons of 1640 were considered to contain "many strange and dangerous devices to undermine the Gospel and the subjects' liberties" and only Papists and Arminians were considered to have any liberty at all.[51] Clearly, the reign of Charles I was a departure from that of James I. Charles did not pursue a policy of moderation, but favoured the anti-Calvinists who helped him enforce a policy of ceremonial and liturgical uniformity in the face of opposition from parliament and others who favoured Calvinist doctrines and policies of church government.

That Charles' reign saw the suppression and overthrowing of Calvinist doctrine and consensus is hotly debated. Kevin Sharpe asserts that Laud and Charles were following a policy of uniformity that was not meant to divide the church. Their policies were concerned only with the externals of worship because dilapidated buildings which were used for more than just church services suggested a lack of faith to the Papist.[52] Peter White is in agreement with Sharpe. He sees Charles' reign as a continuation of the policies followed by James I which were meant to keep a middle way.[53] In many respects, Laudian ecclesiastical policy was not unusual and belonged to a long tradition of churchmanship. However, Laudian policy was a break from previous practice in the sense that this policy was distinguished by being exceptionally rigorous and ambitious. There was a greater extensive attempt to affirm the importance of the visible church

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[49]Darren Oldridge, *Religion and Society in Early Stuart England* (Brookfield, Vermont: Ashcroft Publishing, 1998), 3.

[50]*The Root and Branch Petition*, in *Constitutional Documents*, 138.

[51]*Ibid.*, 141. See 137-144 for a full list of the complaints.

[52]Kevin Sharpe, "Archbishop Laud," in *Reformation to Revolution*, 74-75.

[53]See White, "The *via media*," 211-230.

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than had been the case with the policies of Elizabeth and James,[54] and the result was a marked shift in ecclesiastical policy.[55]

Charles' reign, however, did follow a coherent policy based on a view of the church which placed an emphasis on the sacraments and forms of worship. The Puritans failed to grant to the church building any aura of sanctity as the house of God, to which the Laudians objected. Puritans allowed the church to be used for secular purposes and to fall into a state of disrepair; the Laudians perceived this as a threat to the unity of the church because it denigrated the house of God and the divine presence within and undermined the order of the church as a whole.[56] The religious policies followed under Charles I clearly show concern for the state of the fabric of the church and proper worship as a reflection of the honour due to God. These policies were a reflection of a different view of the church than that held by Calvinists who stressed the theology of grace and predestination above the grace which Laudians believed was conveyed by the sacraments.[57] While these policies on their own were not without precedent, taken as a whole they were inimical to any kind of ceremonial laxity, Calvinist preaching and the conception of the "true" church as held by Puritans.[58]

The consequences of the religious policies followed by Laud and Charles in the 1630s was to force moderate Calvinists into a radicalized position against the king and the Laudians. The Laudian rejection of predestination placed them in direct conflict with all Calvinists, and what had been a common bond between conformists and non-conformists in James I's reign now drove these sides apart and destroyed the consensus which had previously existed. The changes in policy raised fears of popery, evident in the Root and Branch petition, and Laud and Charles were seen as threats to the established order of the church because the Calvinist consensus was being

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[54]Oldridge, *Religion and Society*, 9.

[55]*Ibid.*, 3, 38.

[56]Lake, "The Laudian Style," in *The Early Stuart Church*, 171, 179-180.

[57]That Charles' reign was a departure from James' in respect to religious policy and that this policy was coherent see Fincham and Lake, "James I and Charles I," 48-49; Foster, "Church Policies in the 1630s," 216-217; Lake, "The Laudian Style," 183; Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 437-8, 529-546 and Tyacke, "Puritanism, Arminianism and counter-revolution,"153, 157, *idem, Anti-Calvinists*, 245-247.

[58]Fincham and Lake, "James I and Charles I," 41.

undermined.[59] With the removal of the Laudians after the collapse of the Caroline government the church was left seriously divided and the nation was "fatally divided in its religion" with no hope for reconciliation.[60]

William Chillingworth's personal experiences illustrate the intense national conflict over what constituted true religion. His career illuminates the fear of popery which existed in the minds of those with Calvinist and puritan beliefs and the ambiguities of the time. Chillingworth's thought developed and changed over the years; however, his main concerns always pertained to reason, its ability to search and find religious truth, and religious toleration. Moreover, he was considerably concerned with the fact that churches required acceptance to particular points of faith which he believed was the cause of dissension and schism, apparent in the English situation. A progression of his thought is evident from his conversion to Rome, his reconversion to Protestantism, his affiliation with the Church of England in particular and finally his subscription to all particulars of faith as required by the Church of England for preferment in that church.

William Chillingworth was born in Oxford, St. Martin's parish, in 1602 . His father had been mayor there at one time and William Laud, then a fellow of St. John's College, became Chillingworth's godfather. Chillingworth first attended Trinity College in 1618 under the tutelage of Mr. Robert Skinner.[61] Chillingworth received a B. A. degree in 1620, followed by a M. A. in 1624. He had a reputation for intelligence and Anthony a` Wood described him as "going thro' with ease the classes of logic and

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[59]As Lake makes clear, "it must be emphasized that the notion of a Calvinist consensus does not necessarily imply that all the English who regarded themselves as Protestant in the period before 1625 were explicitly Calvinist or that the only serious religious or theological divide in that period was that involving the theology of grace between Calvinists or anti-Calvinists...The question is one of degree: which opinions predominated and at whose expense. The basic point, therefore, concerns Calvinist hegemony. But hegemony is not monopoly." Lake, "Calvinism and the English Church," 181.

[60]Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 546.

[61]Skinner, apparently, was esteemed by the Puritans for his preaching in the 1620s and Laud, then bishop of London, hoping "to take him off from his principles", made him one of the king's chaplains. Skinner was later given a parish and made bishop of Bristol in 1636. Anthony a` Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses an Exact History of all the Writers and Bishops who had Their Education in the University of Oxford*, vol. 4 (London, 1817), col. 842.

philosophy...he was no drudge at his study, but being a man of great parts would do much in a little time when he settled to it."[62] Edward Hyde, later the Earl of Clarendon, and Chillingworth's friend, described Chillingworth as having a "great subtilty of understanding..and a great advantage over all the men I ever knew".[63] Thomas Hobbes, who knew Chillingworth in the 1630s through their mutual friend Lucius Cary, Lord Falkland, is claimed to have said of him that "he was like a lusty fighting fellow" in argument and at Oxford it was claimed that if the Turks were to be converted by natural reason, then Chillingworth and Falkland were the ones who could succeed in the endeavour.[64]

Chillingworth was an intimate friend of Lucius Cary who became Lord Falkland in 1633. Gilbert Sheldon, the future archbishop of Canterbury, who was also a student at Trinity College with Chillingworth, was another close friend. Edward Hyde, the Earl of Clarendon, and John Hales, who attended the Synod of Dort in 1618 as chaplain to the English ambassador and who was a fellow at Eton, were also members of this circle of friends which came to be known as the Great Tew circle in the 1630s. Hales, in particular, was well known for his learning and he is said to have helped Chillingworth in the writing of *The Religion of Protestants*.[65] They gathered at Cary's home, Great Tew, near Oxford for conversation and debate and it was there that Chillingworth completed *The Religion of Protestants*.

The Great Tew circle is well known. In addition to these friends of Chillingworth, Thomas Hobbes, Henry Hammond, Thomas Barlowe, who later became a bishop, and the poet Sidney Godolphin were all frequent visitors at Great Tew.[66] The

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[62]Wood, *Athen. Oxon.*, vol. 3, col. 87.

[63]Edward Hyde the Lord Clarendon, *The Life of Edward Earl of Clarendon*, vol. 1 (Oxford: University Press, 1857), 52.

[64]John Aubrey, *Aubrey's Brief Lives* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1950), 64 and Wood, *Athen. Oxon.*, cols. 90-91.

[65]Wood, *Athen. Oxon.*, vol. 3, cols. 410-414. Laud made Hales one of his own chaplains in 1639.

[66]There were innumerable men who frequented Great Tew. Poets, theologians, rational philosophers and political philosophers all were part of the Great Tew circle. For a list of its members see Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans* (London: Fontana Press, 1989), 168-171, 175; B.H.G. Wormald, *Clarendon: Politics, Historiography and Religion* (Cambridge: University Press, 1964), 244, and H.R. McAdoo, *The Spirit of Anglicanism* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1965), 12.

intellectual life prospered through debate, discussion and reading, Lord Falkland being the possessor of a large library.[67] Clarendon described Great Tew as

> being within ten or twelve miles of the university [Oxford], [and] looked like the university itself, by the company that was always found there. There were Dr. [Gilbert] Sheldon, Dr. [George] Morley, Dr. [Henry] Hammond, Dr. [John] Earles, Mr. Chillingworth, and indeed all men of eminent parts and faculties in Oxford, besides those who resorted thither from London...to study in a better air, finding all the books they could desire in his [Falkland's] library, and all the persons together, whose company they could wish, and not find in any other society.[68]

Thomas Triplet, a friend of Falkland's, echoed Clarendon's sentiments of Tew being a place of intellectual stimulus. It was the friendship of Falkland which "made Tew so valued a Mansion to us: For as when we went from Oxford thither, we found our selves never out of the University."[69] Great Tew represented a freedom from the strictures of the Laudian church and opinions were varied and there was no orthodoxy of thought. In fact, the members embraced a diversity of theological opinion,[70] such as the Calvinist George Morley and the Laudian Henry Hammond, as well as Chillingworth and Hales.[71] The men who came to Tew were all concerned with the question of authority and freedom, whether or not their primary interest was ecclesiastical.[72] It is, however, generally accepted that the dominant members were the theologians,[73] particularly

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[67]Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans*, 168.

[68]Clarendon, *The Life*, vol. 1, 39-40.

[69]Thomas Triplet, "Letter to Lord Viscount Henry Falkland", preface to *Sir Lucius Cary, Late Lord Viscount of Falkland His Discourse of Infallibility, with an Answer to it: And his Lordships Reply* (London, 1651).

[70]Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans*, 170 and R. Eccleshall, "Hooker and the Peculiarities of the English: The Reception of the *Ecclesiastical Polity* in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *History of Political Thought* 2 (1981): 73.

[71]Peter Lake, review of *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans*, by Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 42(1991): 627.

[72]Cragg, *Freedom and Authority*, 270.

[73]*Ibid.*, 270.

Chillingworth, Hales, and Falkland who shared similar theological positions. Mr. Wormald claims that "between them these three gave the circle of Tew the character of a theological group with distinctive tenets."[74] There was a freedom at Tew not found at Oxford, considering the proclamation in 1626 and the Declaration in 1629, to discuss any matter and the group predominately discussed theology.[75]

The charge of Socinianism was levelled at the members of the Great Tew circle, although none of them were unitarian, one of the beliefs of Socinians.[76] However, these men represented a revival of the humanism of Erasmus and Acontius.[77] They widely read Socinian works and they were all rationalists. These men were critical and sceptical of the current religious controversies and they were willing to question and consider any argument.[78] Chillingworth's association with this group is, therefore, of no surprise, since he himself adhered to these attitudes.

The history of Trinity College dates back to its creation in 1555, during the reign of the Roman Catholic Queen Mary. Upon the accession of Elizabeth, several members resigned from the College, unable to accept the new religion.[79] In the proceeding years Calvinism became the predominant theology taught at Oxford,[80] and anti-Calvinist thought and Arminian ideas, which had developed relatively late at Oxford, were

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[74] Wormald, *Clarendon*, 244.

[75] Wormald, *Clarendon*, 244-253; McAdoo, *The Spirit of Anglicanism*, 12-13; Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans*, 188-199.

[76] Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans*, 188. H. John McLachlan agrees with S. R. Gardiner that "the charge of Socinianism brought against Falkland and his friends [was] due to their application of 'reason to questions of revelation'." Gardiner quoted by McLachlan in *Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), 68..

[77] Wormald, *Clarendon*, 247.

[78] Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans*, 188.

[79] Charles Edward Mallet, *A History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 2 (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968), 161.

[80] Tyacke, "Puritanism, Arminianism and counter-revolution," 137, and *idem*, "Religious Controversy During the Seventeenth Century: the Case of Oxford," in *Aspects of English Protestantism*," 269.

condemned at the University in 1613.[81] By the late 1620s the religious disputes which were disrupting the kingdom were in full evidence there. Calvinist theology was beginning to lose its ascendency and the religious changes under Charles I were cause for dispute. Despite the proclamation for peace and quiet in the church in 1626 sermons were used to debate matters which the king had forbidden to be discussed.[82] The declaration prefixed to the Thirty-Nine Articles, however, effectively silenced public discussion at Oxford of predestinarian theology.[83]

According to Pierre des Maizeaux, the controversies which occupied the university during Chillingworth's time there concerned the Church of England and Church of Rome.[84] Catholics were tolerated and recusant laws were not enforced,[85] and Jesuits who lived near Oxford made frequent attempts to convert students. This became such a problem that in 1628 parliament petitioned the king to order a watch on the sea ports in order to apprehend both Jesuits and students, although this was unsuccessful.[86]

In 1628 Chillingworth became a fellow of Trinity College.[87] Around this time Chillingworth met the Jesuit John Fisher and was engaged by his arguments. Fisher, whose true name was John Percey, had been involved in a debate with James I, Francis White (a royal chaplain), and Laud in 1622 concerning the Church of Rome and the Church of England. The conference took place as a result of the countess of

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[81]Tyacke, "Religious Controversy," 270.

[82]Mallet, *A History*, 305.

[83]Tyacke, "Science and Religion at Oxford before the Civil War," in *Aspects of English Protestantism*, 249.

[84]Pierre des Maizeaux, *An Historical and Critical Account of the Life and Writings of William Chillingworth* (London, 1725), 3.

[85]Charles reissued proclamations concerning the enforcement of recusant laws in 1626, 1627, 1628, 1640, 1641 and 1642. The years in which they were reissued suggests that Charles did so to appease parliament.

[86]Maizeaux, *An Historical and Critical Account*, 3-5.

[87]"The life of William Chillingworth" in *The Works of William Chillingworth, M. A.*, 10th ed., vol. I (Oxford: University Press, 1838), xii.

Buckingham's decision to convert to Catholicism, having been persuaded by Fisher.[88]
Fisher's arguments with Chillingworth, particularly those concerning the necessity of an
infallible living judge in matters of faith, caused Chillingworth to rethink his position as
a Protestant. His sceptical nature drove him to search for an infallible living judge in
matters of faith which would provide religious certainty. Chillingworth was unable to
satisfactorily answer the Jesuit's arguments in favour of a living judge and came to the
conclusion that it must be, therefore, necessary for there to be an infallible living judge
in matters of faith and that Rome was this judge.[89]

The result of these discussions was Chillingworth's conversion to Rome in 1628.
He could not refute Fisher to his own satisfaction and thus realized that his own beliefs
were inadequate, because he could not provide a convincing argument in the defence of
his Protestantism. Chillingworth, unable to get satisfactory answers from members of
the Church of England concerning his doubts on the question of infallibility, was thus
persuaded by Fisher.[90] However, in Clarendon's opinion, it was because of
Chillingworth's love of debate that he,

> contracted such an irresolution and habit of doubting, that by degrees he
> grew confident of nothing, and a sceptic, at least in the greatest mysteries
> of faith. This made him, from first wavering in religion, and indulging to
> scruples, to reconcile himself too soon and too easily to the church of
> Rome.[91]

It was because Chillingworth was "unsettled in his thoughts" that he was believed to
have been persuaded by the "sophistical disputant" Fisher.[92] Chillingworth left England
and his fellowship at the college for the French Roman Catholic monastery in Douai to
further his study of Roman Catholicism.

There is some confusion as to where Chillingworth actually studied in France.
Some accounts, such as those of Wood and Clarendon, say that he went to St. Omer's.
An anonymous account also claims that Chillingworth "went beyond sea I thinke to St.

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[88]The countess was the mother of James I's favourite, Patterson, *James VI and I*,
342 and Maizeaux, *An Historical and Critical Account*, 6.

[89]Maizeaux, *An Historical and Critical Account*, 6-7.

[90]Wood., *Athen. Oxon.*, vol. 3, col. 87.

[91] Clarendon, *The Life*, vol. 1, 52.

[92]Wood, *Athen. Oxon.* Vol. 3, col. 87.

Omer's."[93] It is more likely, however, that Chillingworth settled at Douai. Maizeaux makes this assertion,[94] based on what Laud himself claimed during his trial in 1644: "Mr. Chillingworth's learning and abilities are sufficiently known to your Lordships. He was gone, and settled at Doway."[95] Stronger evidence comes from the daughter of Elizabeth Cary, Lady Falkland, Lucius Cary's sister. She wrote in her life of her mother that Chillingworth spent a great deal of time with the Lady Falkland and her family in their home, being an intimate friend of her brother. Lady Falkland's daughter's account is probably the most accurate since after his return from France Chillingworth "continually frequented [Lady Falkland's] house" and was held in "great account" by her mother.[96] Her account states that "Mr. Chillingworth (who, having been a fellow of Trinity College in Oxford, and there by reading become a Catholic, went over to Doway to the Benedictine College, where not shining so much as he expected...he returned to Oxford a Protestant (at least no Catholic)."[97] The likelihood that Lady Falkland's daughter heard from Chillingworth himself that he had been in Douai is quite probable, as "he was much with them [the children], and they heard him with an open ear."[98] Chillingworth's own words, however, should put an end to the question of where he resided in France: "I myself...was present...in the cloister of St. Vedastus in the monastery in Doway."[99]

Chillingworth's conversion to Catholicism had been put down to haste by his friends, as Clarendon intimates. Clarendon believed that Chillingworth had converted to Catholicism because he thought that Chillingworth's doubts about Catholicism had been fully dispelled by Fisher, but quickly saw that he had been wrong:

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[93]" An Account of Mr. Chillingworth's Recovery from the Church of Rome," undated, Rawlinson Manuscript Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford, B. 158. 170.

[94]Maizeaux, *An Historical and Critical Account*, 9.

[95]Laud, *Works*, vol. 4, 65.

[96] See *The Lady Falkland: Her Life*, by one of her Daughters, in *The Tragedy of Miriam, the Fair Queen of Jewry*, edited by Berry Weller and Margaret Ferguson (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 232.

[97]*Ibid.*, 226.

[98]*Ibid.*, 233.

[99]William Chillingworth, "A Conference concerning the Infallibility of the Roman Church," undated, in *Works*, vol. 3, 330.

> And carrying still his own inquisitiveness about him, without any resignation to their authority, (which is the only temper can make that church sure of its proselytes,) having made a journey to St. Omer's...he found as little satisfaction there; and returned with as much haste from them.[100]

Chillingworth himself, in *The Preface to the Author of Charity Maintain'd*, admitted that he had been seduced by sophistical argumentation all of which had proceeded "upon mistakes and false suppositions, which unadvisedly [he] took for granted."[101] He was "loath to proclaime to all the world so much weaknesse as [he] shewed, in suffering [himself] to be abus'd by such silly Sophismes."[102] Yet Chillingworth's own words reflect that this was not a hasty decision, but one based on a rational decision. He says of his conversion:

> I reconciled myself to the church of Rome, because I thought myself to have *sufficient reason* to believe, that there was and must be always in the world some church that could not err; and consequently, seeing all other churches disclaimed this privilege of not being subject to error, the church of Rome must be that church which cannot err.[103]

This rationalism, which is evident here, suffuses all of Chillingworth's writings and became the basis for which he refuted Catholic claims to infallibility and advocated religious toleration. Chillingworth's conversion was not an immature decision made in haste, which he then quickly rectified. His conversion can be seen as a phase in a life-long philosophical inquiry into religious truth for which he continued to search for the rest of his life.[104]

At the time of Chillingworth's conversion the political and religious situation had deteriorated and the Elizabethan Settlement had lost its cohesiveness, no longer

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[100]Clarendon, *The Life*, vol. 1, 52.

[101]William Chillingworth, *The Preface to the Author of Charity Maintain'd with an Answer to his Direction to N. N.*, in *The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation* (Oxford, 1638), sect. 41.

[102]*Ibid.*, sect. 41.

[103]Chillingworth,"An account of what moved the author to turn Papist with his own Confutation of the Arguments that persuaded him thereto," undated, in *Works*, vol. 3, 386. My italics.

[104]Robert Orr, *Reason and Authority: the Thought of William Chillingworth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 2.

allowing a variety of religious opinion to exist within the one institution. Considering Chillingworth's desire for toleration and unity within the church this must have been difficult to withstand. In the months before he converted what Chillingworth saw "was that the Church of England could claim to be one national Church in an increasingly formal sense only. Its comprehensiveness, now more than ever to depend on force, was to be imposed on the terms of a minority".[105] Thus, the claim of the Roman church as "an infallible guide in the way to heaven"[106] appealed to Chillingworth both logically and historically - encompassing tradition and the primitive church.

Clearly the Church of England was restrictive. The ban on preaching and publically debating various religious opinions did not allow for inquiry and questioning for anyone with doubts. In the minds of the king's subjects Calvinism, which had been the *de facto* religion of England, was being overthrown by a minority who gave the impression of reducing the differences between Catholics and Protestants. Fears of a popish plot were rampant and the laxity of laws against Catholics gave cause for concern as did the number of Catholics who frequented Henrietta Maria's court. Clearly, the Church of England was not unified and did not allow a diversity of belief to exist within itself. Rome's claim to be an infallible guide was supported by its tradition and by Chillingworth's belief that there must be one church that was infallible in matters of faith.

That infallibility was a concern of Chillingworth's is evident from a letter he wrote to Gilbert Sheldon, then a chaplain to the lord keeper of the great seal,[107] shortly after his conversion. In it he stated his reasons for his conversion, from a historical perspective: that it is evident from scripture, reason, the Fathers and "a necessity of mankind, that there must be some one church infallible in matters of faith."[108] He also argued that only the Roman church made the claim of infallibility "upon good warrant" and that no other church can "challenge to itself the privilege of infallibility in matter of faith."[109] He concludes that Sheldon will "follow the way wherein I have had the

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[105]*Ibid.*, 9.

[106]Chillingworth, "An Account of what moved the Author to turn Papist," in *Works*, vol. 3, 388.

[107]Wood, *Athen. Oxon.*, vol. 4, col. 854. Sheldon was made Archbishop of Canterbury in 1663.

[108]Chillingworth to Gilbert Sheldon, undated, Tanner Manuscript Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford, 72. f. 3.

[109]*Ibid*

happiness to enter before you" should he consider the matter.[110]

However, Chillingworth's decision to go to Rome was more than a desire for an infallible church. In *The Preface to the Author of Charity maintain'd with an answer to his Direction to N.N.* which Chillingworth prefaced to his *Religion of Protestants*, Chillingworth acknowledged that his conversion to Catholicism was in part because he believed that Luther and other Protestants were "damnable Schismaticks" and that Protestant doctrine was in part heretical.[111] He truly believed that Rome was the true church and that Luther and his followers had, in separating from Rome, "*separated also from all churches, pure or impure, true or false, then being in the world*"[112] Clearly then, Chillingworth was not convinced of the validity of the Protestant position and this was "*because the Protestant cause is now, and hath been from the beginning, maintained with grosse falsifications and Calumnies; whereof their prime Controversy writers, are notoriously, and in high degree guilty.*"[113] Moreover, Chillingworth also believed that "*by denying all human authority, either of Pope or Councells, or Church, to determine Controversies of Faith, they* [ie: Lutherans] *have abolished all possible meanes of suppressing Heresy, **or restoring unity to the Church.***"[114]

Here then, Chillingworth's concern with the unity of Christendom is evident and he saw Luther as having destroyed this unity. The Church of England certainly did not hold within itself diversity of opinion; on the contrary, religious conflict was tearing the church apart. Chillingworth believed that he could not remain a Protestant under these circumstances. As one scholar has stated, "he was concerned with the overriding need to restore the Christian unity which had been shattered by the Reformation, and with the complementary problem of finding a single, supreme, religious authority."[115] Chillingworth believed that as a Roman Catholic he would find a church amenable to diversity of opinion and intellectual inquiry. He held this belief because notable Catholics, St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure and Alexander of Hales, all questioned and

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[110]*Ibid.*

[111]*Preface to the Author*, sect.41.

[112]*Ibid.*

[113]*Ibid.*

[114]*Ibid.* My emphasis.

[115]Orr, *Reason and Authority*, 14.

"challenged some beliefs of the Fathers".[116] The Catholic Church had also attempted to heal the schism between it and the Greek church at the Council of Florence which took place between 1438-1445.[117]

For Chillingworth, the Roman Church appeared to include men of a diversity of religious opinion and allowed intellectual speculation. It seemed that it was the church of Rome which could mend the divisions in the church which the Reformation had caused. In France, however, Chillingworth came to the conclusion that he was wrong. His expectations were ill-founded for he discovered that the doctrines of the Roman Church could not be questioned and "he had found those same disintegrating forces which he disliked in Protestantism."[118] He was convinced by Laud, who had corresponded with Chillingworth in Douai, to rethink his conversion.

An anonymous account of Chillingworth's re-conversion comments on Laud's concern, perhaps because "many young men of the university [Oxford] began to take up his [Chillingworth's] opinions, and to talk also of reconciliation and going beyond sea."[119] But Laud also had a personal interest in Chillingworth as his godson. When Laud stated, during his trial in 1644, that Chillingworth "was gone, and settled at Doway" he continued, "my letters brought him back; and he lived and died a defender of the Church of England."[120] Laud was defending himself against charges of popery and Chillingworth was one example of those whom Laud had converted to Protestantism or prevented from going to Rome.[121] Unfortunately, William Prynne took these letters from Laud and they have disappeared.[122]

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[116]*Ibid.*, 15.

[117]*Ibid.*, 16.

[118]*Ibid.*, 29.

[119]:An Account of Mr. Chilliongworth's Recovery from the Church of Rome," undated, Ms. Rawl. B. 158, f.170.

[120]William Laud, *History of the Troubles and Trial of Archbishop Laud*, in *Works*, vol. 4, 65.

[121]See Laud, *Works*, vol. 4, 62-66.

[122]Prynne was one of whom Laud had had hauled before Star Chamber to answer charges of questioning his authority in published tracts and who Laud had had branded after conviction along with John Bastwick and Henry Burton. Prynne was one of the judges at Laud's trial in 1644.

Chillingworth was back in England by 1631 and welcomed by Laud, now bishop of London, who "kindly received" him.[123] Chillingworth, however, did not openly profess himself a Protestant and hence the sincerity of his conversion was doubted. State Papers state that even in March 1632 Laud and William Juxon, Laud's trusted friend who later succeeded Laud to the bishopric of London in 1633, considered that Chillingworth was still in need of conversion. Juxon's letter to Laud dated March 19 states that Chillingworth was "ready to take any course for satisfaction that his friends advise...or to confer with any other man the Bishop [Laud] should direct him unto, provided he might be secured of his liberty, in case he were unsatisified."[124] In Juxon's opinion, however, Chillingworth was "ambitious to be Bishop Laud's convert" and that "all his motives are not spiritual, protest he ever so much."[125] Even while Chillingworth was writing his *Religion of Protestants* in 1634 Laud regretfully placed a watch on him. In a letter dated March 3rd,1636/7, to Dr. Prideaux, who was to examine Chillingworth's book for orthodoxy, Laud wrote: " I am very sorry, that the young man hath given cause, why a more watchful eye should be held over him and his writings."[126]

Chillingworth also spent time in the London home of Elizabeth Cary the Lady Falkland, herself a Catholic, in 1634. She was unaware that Chillingworth had left the Roman Church and held Chillingworth in high regard: "He had gained from her the great esteem of a saint" and she "had no suspicion of him" that he had left Rome.[127] When, having overheard Chillingworth say that the Catholic religion was "founded on lies, and maintained by them"[128] she sent him from her home. Her daughter too, was confused as to which religion Chillingworth professed:

> He returned to Oxford a Protestant (at least no Catholic)...and there again becoming a Catholic or towards it, coming to London, he much frequented this house, and calling Protestants "we", and...he was secretly Catholic...for in him there seemed to be a kind of impossibility of

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[123]See Wood, *Athen. Oxon.*, col. 89.

[124]Public Record Office, "Dr. William Juxon to Bishop Laud," 19 March 1632, *Calendar of State Papers of the reign of Charles I* (April 1631-March 1633) (London, 1862), no. 49.

[125]*Ibid.*

[126]Laud, *Works*, vol. 5, 165.

[127]*The Lady Falkland her Life*, 232, 237.

[128]*Ibid.*, 240.

agreement between his heart and his tongue.[129]
Catholics and Protestants alike doubted Chillingworth's sincerity, as Clarendon had said
was the case in hasty conversions: "Such a levity, and propensity to change, is
commonly attended with great infirmities in, and no less reproach and prejudice to the
person."[130] The Catholic Matthew Wilson said of Chillingworth that he "be neyther
Catholike nor *Protestant* for his belief,"[131] and the Protestant Francis Cheynell, a
puritan, asserted that "his returne to England, *commonly called his* Conversion, *was but
a false and* pretended Conversion: *And for my owne part, I am fully convinced that he
did not live or dye a genuine Sonne of the Church of England.*"[132]

By the end of 1634 it seems that Chillingworth had made the decision publically
to return to Protestantism. Certainly, he was given an offer of church preferment in
1635 which he refused, as a letter from Chillingworth to Sheldon dated September 21st,
1635 makes clear, but he refused it even though he was in financial difficulties:

> Sir, so it is that though I am in debt to yourself and others of my friends
> above twenty pounds more than I know how to pay...though in another
> thing, which you perhaps guess at what it is but I will not tell you, which
> would make me more joyfull of preferment than all these, (if I could
> come honestly to it) though money comes to me from my father's purse
> like blood from his veins or from his heart; Though I am very sensible
> that I have been too long already an unprofitable burden to my Lord, and
> must not still continue to do so, though my refusing preferment may
> perhaps (which fear I assure you does much afflict me) be injurious to my
> friends...though conscience of my own good intentions and desires,
> suggests unto me many flattering hopes of great possibilities of doing
> God and his Church good service, if I had that preferment which I may
> fairly hope for. Though I may justly fear that by refusing those
> preferments which I sought for, I shall gain the reputation of weaknesse
> and levity, and incurre their displeasure, whose good opinion of me...I do
> esteem and desire above all things...yet I am at legnth firmly and
> unmoveably resolved, if I can have no preferment without subscription,

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[129]*The Lady Falkland*, 226-227.

[130]Clarendon, *The Life*, vol. 1, 53.

[131]Matthew Wilson, *A Reply unto M. Chillingworthes Answere to his owne Motives, of his Conversion to Cath. Religion*, (St. Omer, 1638), 3.

[132]Francis Cheynell, *A Relation of Mr. Chillingworths Sicknesse, Death, and Buriall*, in *Chillingworthi Novissima*, (London, 1644), no pagination.

that I neither can nor will have any.[133]

Efforts by Laud, Juxon and Sheldon, through letters, had been made to procure this return to Protestantism and there was some frustration at Chillingworth's failure to make the final decision to proclaim himself Protestant. Chillingworth acknowledged that his friends might be frustrated with him and hoped that he "not need to entreat you [Sheldon] not to be offended with me for this my most honest and (as I verily believe) most wise resolution" and begged Sheldon not to add to his grief over refusing preferment by "being angry with me for doing that which I must."[134]

     Clarendon's remarks reflected some of this frustration on the part of Chillingworth's friends for Chillingworth to make up his mind, although he tried to be understanding of Chillingworth's desire for certainty:

> But the sincerity of his heart was so conspicuous, and without the least temptation of any corrupt end; and the innocence and candour of his nature so evident, and without any perverseness; that all who knew him clearly discerned, *that all those restless motions and fluctuation proceeded only from the warmth and jealousy of his own thoughts, in a too nice inquisition for truth.*[135]

It can be surmised that such determined action on the part of Laud and Sheldon to procure Chillingworth for the Church of England was due to personal feelings on their part, but also because Chillingworth's conversion to Catholicism had raised the interest of ecclesiastics and academics. Moreover, his conversion had occurred during a time when the Church of England was redefining itself and attempting to show itself both Catholic, in the universal sense, whose heritage was based on tradition and the Father's, but also reformed.[136]

     Chillingworth's conversion was also of concern because his reputation was well known, and because he was associated with Laud, as his godson. Conversions to Rome and the charge of popery against the English Arminians threatened to undermine their programme and there could be nothing more damaging than the defection of people

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[133]Copy of the letter from Chillingworth to Gilbert Sheldon, 21 September 1653, Henry Wharton Manuscript Collection, vol. 943, Lambeth Palace Library, London, f. 935-6.

[134]*Ibid.*, f. 936, 937.

[135]Clarendon, *The Life*, vol. 1, 53. My italics.

[136]Orr, *Reason and Authority*, 32.

associated with them.[137] Such defections gave credence to the belief that the Laudians were re-introducing popery. Therefore, reclaiming Chillingworth to Protestantism and publishing a book by him against Rome would benefit the Laudian party.

Chillingworth's reluctance to return to Protestantism was because he wanted to be certain that he could rationally accept Protestant doctrines. He would not enter blindly into any religion, especially after what had happened during his experience in the Church of Rome:

> But I, for my part, unless I deceive myself, was and still am so affected, as I have made profession, not willing, I confess, to take anything upon trust, and to believe it without asking myself why; no nor able to command myself (were I never so willing) to follow, like a sheep, every shepherd that should take upon him to guide me; or every flock that should chance go before me; but most apt and willing to be led by reason to any way, or from it, and always submitting all other reasons to this one - God hath said so, therefore it is true.[138]

Chillingworth went to Lucius Cary's residence in Oxford and there took it upon himself to write a defence of Protestantism, which he had begun by 1635.[139] He had by this time accepted Protestantism but he was unable to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion and thus was unable to accept preferment in the Church of England. Although he believed "the church of England a true member of the Church, that she wants nothing necessary to salvation and holds nothing repugnant to it"[140] he could not in good conscience subscribe.

His reasons for his refusal to subscribe, which he explained to Sheldon in the 1635 letter, concerned two points of the Articles of Religion. The first was that he could not accept that the fourth commandment, "remember to keep holy the Sabbath day", was true and lawful for Christians.[141] In Chillingworth's mind this bound Christians to the Jewish Sabbath. This "he found contrary, both to the Doctrine of the

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[137]Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 85.

[138]Chillingworth, *Preface*, 3.

[139]A letter to Sheldon in 1635 mentions Chillingworth's "defence of Dr. Potter," MS. Wharton 943. f. 937, as does the letter Laud wrote to Prideaux in 1634 in which Laud refers to Chillingworth's book concerning the Church of England, Laud, *Works*, vol. 5, 165.

[140]"Letter to Sheldon," Wharton MS 943. f. 937.

[141]"Letter to Sheldon," Wharton MS. 943. f. 936.

Gospel, whereby the Jewish Sabbath is abolish'd; and to the sense of the Church of England, concerning the holy Day of the Christians, which is call'd *Sunday*."[142] Secondly, Chillingworth objected to the St. Athanasius creed in which there were sentences which he considered "damning", "false", and "in a high degree presumptuous and schismatical."[143] This creed explicitly outlined articles of faith and that "whosoever would be saved, needeth before all things to hold fast the Catholic Faith; which faith, except every one do keep whole, and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly."[144] As will become clear later, Chillingworth abhorred such restrictions on points of faith considered necessary for salvation. Such restrictions caused schism and divisions in the church, to which Chillingworth was clearly opposed. By the time that the *Religion of Protestants* was published, however, Chillingworth's return to the Church of England was clear and on July 20th, 1638 he had overcome his qualms about the Thirty-Nine Articles and subscribed to them.

Chillingworth's conversion to Catholicism epitomizes the growing religious conflict in the Church of England concerning its own identity and its relation to tradition and the reformation. His search for religious truth and certainty preoccupied him for his whole life and his belief that Christendom should be unified stemmed from his desire for peace and religious toleration. Thus, the religious atmosphere of the late 1620s and 1630s influenced Chillingworth's decision to convert to Rome and was formative in his later views on religious toleration expounded in his *Religion of Protestants*.

Chillingworth's reconversion to Protestantism and finally to the Church of England further exemplifies his quest for rational certainty concerning matters of faith. Some aspects of faith he could not accept solely on the authority of any church which, in his mind, had no claim to infallibility. Therefore, there was no basis for any church to demand acceptance to articles of faith which had no explicit foundation in the bible. His dispute with the Roman Catholic, Matthew Wilson, illuminates the divisions between Rome and Protestantism which were being argued in the seventeenth century, especially the argument over infallibility and tradition. Chillingworth, however, following the thought of Richard Hooker, placed a pronounced emphasis on reason and its ability to procure for itself sufficient faith for salvation. In this way, Chillingworth's thought is a departure from the traditionally accepted methods of defending Protestantism from that of his contemporaries. Moreover, like Hooker and Hugo Grotius, two men whom Chillingworth explicitly admired in his *Religion of Protestants*,

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[142]Maizeaux, *An Historical and Critical Account*, 82.

[143]"Letter to Sheldon," Wharton MS. 943, f. 936.

[144]In Maizeaux, *An Historical and Critical Account*, 81.

Chillingworth expounded a profound irenicism. This desire for religious unity and toleration suffuses his thought.

Chapter 2
Certainty of Religion? The Questions of Infallibility and Authority

Underlying the whole of Chillingworth's thought in the *Religion of Protestants* is the problem of infallibility and the possibility of obtaining certainty in religion. This question was of great importance to Chillingworth, who converted to Roman Catholicism because he thought "that there was and must be always in the world some church that could not err".[1] Chillingworth, however, came to refute Roman Catholic claims to infallibility because he discovered that such a claim could not be supported by the evidence. Furthermore, Chillingworth's position on the role of the Fathers and universal tradition in the church questioned the authority which Rome gave to them. In fact, he rejected the Roman position that councils and papal decrees were binding upon the individual as necessary to be believed and he rejected the argument that any church could be the judge in religious controversy. Thus Chillingworth spurned the authority of the Roman Church, or any church, to dictate what was fundamentally imperative for salvation because he believed that such decrees caused dissent and schism, which he abhorred. Following Richard Hooker, Chillingworth came to believe that right reason, when used to search for truth in the bible, was all that was necessary to discover the fundamentals needed for salvation contained therein. Chillingworth's dismissal of the claims of infallibility and the authority of the Fathers and councils to decide religious controversy overturned the authority of Rome to proclaim with certitude what was necessary for salvation. Ultimately, Chillingworth rejected the possibility that humans could be absolutely certain of the truth of the Christian religion. For Chillingworth, the bible was the only authority in religious matters but each individual used his own natural reason to interpret scripture. Thus, the church had no authority to prescribe what was necessary to be believed for salvation because the authority, and responsibility, to make this determination rested with each individual conscience.

Chillingworth rejected the Roman Catholic claim to infallibility because he argued that such claims were illogical and irrational and thus constituted an indefensible position as there was no scriptural warrant for it. The belief in infallibility meant that a person accepted blindly what the church claimed to be necessary for salvation without questioning whether or not it was true. For Chillingworth this was unacceptable; it meant that people did not search for the truth because they believed they already had it, or alternatively, the doctrine of infallibility intimidated those who had questions but

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[1]Chillingworth, "An account of what moved the Author to turn Papist," in *Works*, vol 3, 386.

could not ask them for fear of being labelled a heretic or unbeliever.[2] Chillingworth's belief in the ability of reason to search for and apprehend truth was not peculiar, nor unique to his time. Many of Chillingworth's friends and acquaintances in the Great Tew circle were rationalists or sceptics like himself and Richard Hooker was their predecessor. Chillingworth quoted at length from Hooker's *Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity* throughout the *Religion of Protestants* and Hooker's position on reason is reflected in Chillingworth's thought.[3] Hooker's debate with Thomas Cartwright and the other Puritans of the Elizabethan church was meant to show that reason was given to man from God and thus should be used to search for truth.[4] Reason did not supercede faith, nor did scripture make reason worthless. Scripture was in itself sufficient and complete, however:

> So our owne wordes also when wee extoll the complete sufficiencie of the whole intire bodie of the scripture, must in like sorte be understoode with this caution, that the benefite of natures light be not thought excluded as unnecessarie, because the necessitie of a diviner light is magnifyed. There is in scripture therefore no defect, but that any man what place or calling soever hee holde in the Church of God, may have thereby the light of his naturall understanding so perfected, that the one being relieved by the other, there can want no part of needfull instruction unto any good worke which God himselfe requireth, be it naturall or supernaturall, belonging simplie unto men as men...It sufficeth therefore that *nature and scripture doe serve in such full sort, that they both joyntly and not severallye eyther of them be so complete*, that unto everlasting felicitie wee neede not the knowledge of any thing more than

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[2]*Religion of Protestants*, book 1, paragraph 4, page 32, hereafter cited as 1.4.32, 2.18.60, 2.49.71.

[3]See Orr, *Reason and Authority*, ix.

[4]"God being the author of nature, her voyce is but his instrument. By her from him we receive whatsoever in such sort we learn...by force of the light of reason, wherewith God illuminateth every one which commeth into the world, men being inabled to know truth from falsehood, and good from evill, do thereby learne in many things what the will of God is." Richard Hooker, *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity*, in *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, vol. 1, edited by Georges Edelen (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1977), 84. Hereafter cited as Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity, book, chapter, section; LEP 1.8.3, and Folger Library Edition, volume and page number; FLE 1:84.

these two...and therefore they which adde traditions as a part of
supernaturall necessarye truth, have not the truth, but are in error."[5]

Chillingworth followed Hooker's position on the relationship between scripture
and reason in his argument against infallibility. He questioned the veracity of the
doctrine of infallibility because he could find no validation for it in scripture. He read
the texts which the Catholics presented in support of infallibility but was not convinced
that they presented sufficient evidence to support the claim. In fact, that church's claim
to infallibility rested upon the church's interpretation of scripture while the church
denounced interpretations to the contrary. He stated: "In those Texts of Scripture, which
you alleage for the infallibility of your Church, doe not you allow what sense you thinke
is true, and disallow the contrary? And doe you not this by the direction of your private
reason? If you doe, why doe you condemne it in others?"[6] Lord Falkland, whose mother
had converted to Roman Catholicism and who attempted to convert all her children,[7]
saw infallibility as a faulty basis on which to rest one's faith, especially if church
doctrine was not examined by one's reason:

> Your Religion is built upon your Church, her authoritie upon reasons,
> which we think slight and fallacious, and your selves think but
> prudentiall and probable; ought we not then, nay, must we not examine
> them by reason, or receive them upon your word? And allowing them
> probable reason, yet I have still cause to examine further...For to be
> persuaded by reason, that to such an authoritie I ought to submit it, is still
> to follow reason, and not to quit her.[8]

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[5]Hooker, LEP 1. 14.4-5, FLE 1:128-9. My italics. See also Robert Eccleshall,
"Richard Hooker's Synthesis and the Problem of Allegiance", *Journal of the History of
Ideas*, 37(1976): 118, on the necessity of reason to interpret scripture in Hooker's
thought.

[6]*Religion of Protestants*, 2.118.97-98.

[7]Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans*, 167-168; Kenneth
Murdoch, *The Sun at Noon; Three Biographical Sketches* (New York: MacMillan
Company, 1939), 104-106.

[8]Lucius Cary the Lord Falkland, *Discourse of Infallibility*, London, 1651, 117-
118. The only written work of Falkland's which survives concerning his theological
views is his *Discourse of Infallibility* which was published posthumously in 1651,
Falkland having died in 1643 during the Civil War. Henry Hammond said of this work
that it was an "'epitome' of Chillingworth's *Religion of Protestants*, 'usefu̧l and gainful

The Roman church argued that the scriptural basis for infallibility was self-evident, but Chillingworth rejected this:

> Neither is it so evident as to need no proofe: otherwise why brought you this text to prove it? Nor is it of such strange quality, above all other Propositions, as to bee able to prove it selfe. What then remaines but that you say, Reasons drawn out of the Circumstances of the Text, will evince that this is the sense of it. Perhaps they will. But Reasons cannot convince mee, unlesse I judge of them by my Reason.[9]

In *A Discourse against the Infallibility of the Roman Church* Chillingworth explicitly outlined his objections to infallibility. He reiterated again that there was no scriptural warrant that the Roman Church was infallible because it was not written in scripture that there must be an infallible authority. Based on reason, there was no assurance "that the infallibility of the church of Rome may be deduced from scripture by good and firm consequence."[10]

Chillingworth granted that perhaps Catholic contentions for infallibility were credible, but this was only morally certain, and should not require absolute, certain assent as a prerequisite to salvation, but only a "Morall and modest assent".[11] Moral certainty was not certain knowledge, but rather was based upon the evidence of sense perception and the reliable testimony of dependable witnesses.[12] The level of assent, however, must be equal to the evidence. Certain knowledge was only attainable in mathematics and metaphysics:

> The Schools distinguish of two kinds of certainty Metaphysical whereby we know that a thing is so and cannot be otherwise; and Moral whereby we are assured a thing is so, and never will be otherwise though there is no absolute impossibility nor contradiction but that it may be: Metaphysical and absolute certainty must proceed either from sense, or

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to supersede the trouble of reading the larger book.'"Henry Hammond, quoted in Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans*, 174.

[9]*Religion of Protestants.*, 2.118.98.

[10]Chillingworth, *A Discourse against the Infallibility of the Roman Church*, undated, in *Works*, vol. 3, 309.

[11]*Religion of Protestants*, 2.154.112-113

[12]See W. M. Spellman, *The Latitudinarians and the Church of England 1660-1700* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 21.

demonstration, or revelation. For by all these means and no more we may know, that a thing is so and cannot be otherwise: I say by divine revelation because there is no doubt but God can make me know anything immediately without the interposing of sense or reason as he did the prophets: but then to make me undoubtedly certain thereof, it is requisite not only that God reveal the truth, but also assure me, that it was his revelation, and no fancy or illusion: Moral certainty, is begot in us, by presumption and probabilities, which either by their strength and ... by their multitude, make up a moral demonstration, to which being well considered, though a ... obstinate wrangler, may, but no prudent or sober man can possibly refuse to yield, a firm, certain, undoubting, reasonable assent and adherence: I say as firm and reasonable, as if he had seen it with his eyes, or had it proved by a mathematical demonstration: Sure I am, that if I should see Rome or Constantinople, my certainty that there are such cities in the world, would not be one scruple augmented: and I believe, it would be far easier, for a company conspiring together by some art, to persuade me, that I see not what I see, but am deluded by my imagination.[13]

There was a difference between belief and knowledge, but belief could be as strong as knowledge and "we may say we know that, which in truth we only believe, provided the grounds of our belief be morally certain."[14] The belief that there was such a city as Rome or Constantinople, based on the testimony of witnesses, created only a moral certainty.[15] This belief was as great as knowledge, however, because seeing either city

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[13]Chillingworth, "Chillingworth's answer to Mr. Peake's Five Questions," undated, Wharton MS 943, f. 871. See also *Religion of Protestants*, 6.3.325, 6.8.330-331.

[14]Chillingworth, "An Answer to some Passages in Rushworth's Dialogues," undated, in *Works*, vol. 3, 392-393.

[15]Martin Griffin points out how Chillingworth gave a "novel twist" to the basic "argument of apologetics of Christian evidences," which were based on Aristotle's *Ethics*, in his discussion of Chillingworth's distinction between absolute and moral certainty. "This concept of "moral certainty," as we have seen, was the keystone of the Latitudinarians' rational theology, and their use of the term is a clear signal of Chillingworth's profound influence upon them. Chillingworth, and Falkland and Hammond following him, appear to have been the first Christian apologists to employ the notion of "moral certainty" in this way. The term had, to be sure, existed before

with one's own eyes only changed the degree of assent, not the level of certainty.[16] The same could be true with religious belief based as it is on divine revelation. While one can believe that religious truths are as certain as a metaphysical belief, one cannot be compelled to adhere to religious beliefs with a certainty equal to sense or science and it was wrong of the Roman Church to require of anyone such certain assent to articles of faith which could be only be morally certain.[17]

For Chillingworth and others who wanted to search for truth, as opposed to being told what the truth was the claim to infallibility did not withstand examination:

> It is impossible that any man should certainly believe any thing, unless either it be evident of itself, or he have some certain reason (at least some supposed certain reason) and infallible ground for his belief. Now the doctrines which the church of Rome teacheth, it is evident and undeniable that they are not evident of themselves, neither evidently true, nor evidently credible...There is no other ground for a man's belief of them, especially in many points, but only an assurance of the infallibility of the church of Rome. No man can be assured that that church is infallible...which hath believed and taught irreconcilable contradictions.[18]

The necessity to exercise one's reason was a desire to discover the truth for oneself. As John Hales pointed out, without discovering the 'why' of things "there is no possibility of not being deceived."[19] The infallibility of Rome was not self-evident. In

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Chillingworth, and had various significations...But as the term had been employed by medieval theologians and subsequent religious writers, it had referred to the order of natural knowledge, or to the realm of ethics and behaviour, not to the supernatural order of Christian assent." Martin Griffin, *Latitudinarianism in the Seventeenth-Century Church of England* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 95, 96.

[16]*Ibid.*, p. 393. See also Henry G. Van Leeuwen, *The Problem of Certainty in English Thought 1630-1690* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963), 25. For a full discussion of the problem of certainty in Chillingworth's thought see 15-32.

[17]*Religion of Protestants*, 6.2-3.325.

[18]Chillingworth, "An Argument drawn from the admitting Infants to the Eucharist, as without which they could not be saved, against the Church's Infallibility," undated, in *Works*, vol. 3, 356-357.

[19]John Hales, "Of Enquiry and Private Judgement in Religion," *Works*, vol. 3 (London, 1765), 152.

Chillingworth's view the Church of Rome required firm acceptance of its doctrines with no room for doubt. This was problematic because one should not have to accept as truth something which was not sufficiently supported by the evidence:

> But neither God doth, nor man may require of us as our dutie, to give a greater assent to the conclusion then the premises deserve; to build an infallible Faith upon Motives that are only highly credible, and not infallible...But though God require not of us such unreasonable things, You doe, and tell men they cannot be saved, unlesse they believe your proposals with an infallible Faith...Now how is it possible for them to give a rational assent to the Churches infallibility, unlesse they have some infallible meanes to know that she is infallible?...But the last resolution of all is into Motives, which indeed upon examination will scarce appeare probable, but are not so much as avouched to be any more then very credible.[20]

Chillingworth was confident that God was morally good and would "require no impossibilities of us: not an Infallible, nor a certainly-unerring belief, unlesse he hath given us certain meanes to avoid error; and if we use those which we have, will never require of us that which we have not."[21] Chillingworth believed that not only did God not expect assent to something which was not based on sound premises, but that God would furnish adequate means by which to come to belief:

> 1. That if we were required to believe with certainty (I mean a Morall certainty,) things no way represented as infallible and certain, (I mean morally,) an unreasonable obedience were required of us. And so likewise were it, were we required to believe as absolutely certain, that which is no way represented to us as absolutely certain. 2. That whom God obligeth to believe any thing, he will not fail to furnish their understandings with such inducements, as are sufficient (if they be not negligent or perverse) to perswade them to believe. 3. That there is an abundance of Arguments exceedingly credible, inducing men to believe the Truth of Christianity: I say so credible, that though they cannot make us evidently see what we believe, yet they evidently convince that in true wisdome and prudence, the Articles of it deserve credit, and ought to be

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[20]*Religion of Protestants*, 2.154.112-113. "Now it is not required or can be exacted at our hands, that we should yeeld unto any thing other assent, then such as doth answere the evidence which is to be had of that we assent unto." Hooker, LEP 2.7.5, FLE 1:179.

[21]*Ibid.*, 2.152.112.

> accepted as things revealed by God. 4. That without such reasons and inducements, our choice even of the true faith, is not to be commended as prudent, but to condemned of rashness and levity.[22]

This conception of God in moral terms was one of the fundamental convictions of the liberals of the seventeenth century and they were emphatic that God must be seen in this way. The liberals, men like Chillingworth who challenged the restrictions of the church, viewed man and God as linked in a relationship which was "profoundly moral in quality."[23] Therefore, man must not avoid his ethical responsibility to exercise both thought and action. One must contemplate on truth but also actively look for it. Falkland doubted "not but God ...hath given me a will, to seek his Will...and if I have not the truth already, I shall be taught the truth by him."[24] Hales argued that the Roman church may or may not be deceived, but "yet if you know not so much, you are not yet excused...Think we that the neglect of these our faculties shall escape unpunished with God?"[25] In his mind, intellectual idleness was laziness: "Peace which ariseth out of ignorance is but a kind of sloth, or moral lethargy."[26] He was adamant upon this point and claimed that men who rejected the faculty of reason because of mistrust showed, "nothing but poverty of spirit and indiscretion" which was "an error amongst men."[27]

Chillingworth's conception of God's moral goodness was the foundation of his advocation of religious toleration and freedom of conscience. God would not condemn a man who searched for the truth and through unintentional error came to the wrong conclusion; however, if the error was avoidable and voluntary then "the Error is it selfe sinfull."[28] Thus, Chillingworth accepted that people could come to diverse interpretations of scripture through reason because each person's capacity to reason was not equal. Even in cases where one's reason was faulty, this did not condemn one if he searched for the truth: "Nor [is it] required of Almighty God, to believe the true sense of

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[22]*Ibid.*, 6.9.331.

[23]Gerald Cragg, *Freedom and Authority: A Study of English Thought in the Early Seventeenth Century* (The Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1975), 250, 252.

[24]Falkland, *Discourse*, 54.

[25]Hales, "Of Enquiry," 152, 154.

[26]*Ibid.*, 156.

[27]*Ibid.*, 155.

[28]*Religion of Protestants*, 3.52.158.

Scripture in all places, but only that we should endeavour to doe so."[29] Moreover, Chillingworth believed that the bible was equally intelligible to both the educated and uneducated alike,

> because nothing is necessary to be believed, but what is plainly revealed. For to say, that when a place of Scripture, by reason of ambiguous termes, lies indifferent between divers senses, wherof one is true and the other is false, that God obliges men under pain of damnation, not to mistake through error and humane frailty, is to make God a Tyrant, and to say that he requires us certainly to attain that end, for the attaining whereof we have no certain meanes.[30]

One must search for truth. In fact, one has an obligation to do so, but for a church to require acceptance of doctrine which was debated obscured God's moral nature, threatened the intellectual integrity of a person and placed in jeopardy the possibility for one to be reunited with God.[31]

Chillingworth was concerned not only with the lack of evidence to support the claim to infallibility but the repercussions of following blindly any dictate the church professed to be necessary for salvation. "He that affirms with you [Roman Catholics], the Popes infallibility, puts himself into his hands and power to be led by him at his ease and pleasure into all Heresy...So dethroning Christ from his dominion over mens consciences, and instead of Christ, setting up himself."[32] Chillingworth deplored unwavering acceptance of doctrine as the basis of faith without any rational consideration of its truth.[33] Chillingworth searched for knowledge by examining and questioning the evidence and making a rational decision based on a reasonable consideration of the facts. Chillingworth believed that it was each man's responsibility to use his reason to search for the truth and failure to do so would hold him accountable to God: "For my part, I am certain that God hath given us our Reason to discern between Truth and Falshood, and he that makes not use of it, but beleeves things he knowes not why, I say it is by chance that he believes the Truth, and not by choice: and that I cannot

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[29]*Ibid.*, 3.52.159.

[30]*Ibid.*, 2.104.92.

[31]Cragg, *Freedom and Authority*, 353.

[32]Chillingworth, *Preface to the Author* in *The Religion of Protestants*, Sec.10.

[33]*Religion of Protestants*, 2.49.71.

but feare, that God will not accept of this *Sacrifice of fooles.*"[34]

Chillingworth argued that the doctrine of infallibility caused schism in the church because the Church of Rome imposed "upon the Faith of Christians, Doctrines unwritten and unnecessary,"[35] which the Roman Church claimed to have the same force as scripture.[36] It was in questioning these unwritten doctrines that had caused the Reformation, but it was better that "an honest man...obey his rightly informed conscience, rather then the unjust commands of his tyrannous Superiours."[37] Chillingworth saw the Roman Church as being the cause of the Reformation because of its implacable refusal to allow its doctrines to be questioned and damning those who did:

> This presumptuous imposing of the senses of men upon the words of God, the speciall senses of men upon the generall words of God, and laying them upon mens consciences together, under the equall penaltie of death, and damnation; this Vaine conceit that we can speak of the things of God, better then in the word of God: This Deifying our owne Interpretations, and Tyrannous inforcing them upon others; This restraining of the word of God from that latitude and generality, and the understandings of men from that liberty, wherein Christ and the Apostles left them, is, and hath been the only fountaine of all Schismes of the Church, and that which makes them immortal.[38]

Hales and Falkland both strenuously disapproved of rigid ecclesiastical authority and like Chillingworth believed that it was the Roman Church's unyielding attitude to disallow its doctrines to be questioned which resulted in schism. Rome's uncompromising nature and labelling men heretics who did not follow the church's decrees was, in Falkland's opinion, the reason "which made so many, so suddenly leave the Church of Rome."[39] Hales argued that the excessive doctrinal demands placed upon believers was the cause of schism: 'If the spiritual Guides and Fathers of the Church would be a little sparing of incumbering Churches with superfluities, and not overrigid

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[34]*Ibid.*, 2.113.96.

[35]*Preface to the Author*, sec. 34.

[36]*Religion of Protestants*, 2.1.52.

[37]*Ibid.*, 5.108.308.

[38]*Ibid.*, 4.16.198.

[39]Falkland, *Discourse*, 15.

either in reviving obsolete Customs, or imposing new there were far less danger of *Schism* or *Superstition*."[40] The doctrine of infallibility could not be granted with absolute certainty and blind obedience could lead to error and it did lead to schism.

In arguing against infallibility Chillingworth presented the circular argument which the Roman Catholics used in defence of infallibility: "the Church is infallible because the Scripture saies so, and the Scripture meanes so because the Church saies so."[41] This was problematic for Chillingworth and he pointed out a flaw in this argument. The Roman Catholic Church argued that in scripture it was written that the church was infallible. How did one know what was scripture? The answer to this from a Roman view point must be the church because any other reply immediately admitted that there was another authority other than its own. Thus, the church claimed infallibility through scripture, but scripture was declared to be the word of God by the authority of the church. Therefore, the Roman church was caught in a never-ending circle which posited "the church is infallible, because the church says so, which is infallible."[42] Chillingworth then argued that one must "resolve all into reason and private spirit; or that we are still in the circle."[43] It was not written in scripture that there was to be an infallible authority and so for Chillingworth the church was not infallible, but the question debated between Protestants and Catholics was on whose authority it was to be decided what was scripture and what was not in respect to disputed books of the bible and who or what was to resolve religious controversy. The Roman Catholics argued that the Church made this decision and that it was the infallibility of the Roman Church through the ages which had preserved scripture through the ages.[44] Chillingworth rejected these arguments and in so doing questioned the authority to which Rome gave universal tradition and the Fathers.

The claim for infallibility was found neither in scripture or the universal

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[40]Hales, "A tract concerning schism," *Tracts* (London, 1677), 217-218.

[41]*Religion of Protestants*, 2.118.98, 99.

[42]Chillingworth, "A Discourse against the Infallibility of the Roman Church," in *Works*, vol. 3, 308.

[43]*Ibid.*, p. 311. See also Grace Ferrier, *William Chillingworth: A Champion of Latitude* (MA thesis: Claremont College, 1939), 77, on this problem of Roman infallibility.

[44]See Wilson's arguments in *Charity Maintained by Catholiques*, in *Religion of Protestants*, 1.7.27, 1.9-10.27-28.

tradition of the church. Chillingworth accepted the credibility of universal tradition, but he believed that the Catholics had misrepresented tradition when they claimed that tradition supported infallibility. In the first five centuries after Christ not one Father explicitly stated that the Roman church was infallible.[45] Moreover, there was not agreement among the Fathers or even the various councils and popes concerning church doctrine. Chillingworth noted that,

> there are Popes against Popes, Councells against Councells, some Fathers against others, the same Fathers against themselves, a consent of Fathers of one age against a consent of Fathers of another age, the Church of one age against the Church of another age. Traditive interpretations are pretended, but there are few or none to be found.[46]

Hence, from Chillingworth's point of view, the church had no authority to enforce its doctrine upon its members, nor did it have the right to object to an individual's questioning of doctrine, since the church itself had not maintained constancy of doctrine through the centuries. Thus, the Roman Catholic claim that tradition supported infallibility was clearly wrong.

For Chillingworth and many other Church of England divines, the universal tradition of the church, while not binding on men's consciences, was not rejected in totality.[47] Francis White, who became the bishop of Ely in 1631, clearly defined his position in his *A Treatise of the Sabbath Day:* "Reformed Churches reject not all Traditions, but such as are spurious, superstitious, and not consonant to the prime rule of faith, to wit, the Holy Scripture." White argued that: "Genuine Traditions agreeable to the Rule of Faith, subservient to piety, consonant with Holy Scripture, derived from the Apostolical times by a successive current, and which have the uniform testimony of pious Antiquity, are received and honoured by us."[48]

James Ussher, made Archbishop of Armagh in Ireland in 1625, and William Laud both believed that tradition had a place in the church. Ussher claimed that it was

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[45]*Religion of Protestants*, 2.119.99.

[46]*Ibid.*, 6.56.376 and 3.44.152.

[47]McAdoo, *The Spirit of Anglicanism*, 316-414.

[48]Francis White, *A Treatise of the Sabbath Day containing a Defence of the Orthodoxal Doctrine of the Church of England Against Sabbatarian Novelty*, 1635, in Paul More and Frank Cross, *Anglicanism* (London: SPCK, 1957), 132.

not the case that "traditions of all sorts promiscuously are struck at by our religion."[49]
He made a distinction between the tradition of the transmission of scripture which had
been delivered by the Apostles and the tradition of rites and ceremonies "which are left
to the disposition of the Church, and consequently be not of Divine but of positive and
human right."[50]   Ussher appealed to the Fathers of the church in support of the
sufficiency of scripture and argued that the controversy about traditions should not be
concerned with the transmission of scripture, but rather with the "substance of the
doctrine delivered."[51] No tradition should go against what was "either expressly therein
contained [in scripture] or by sound inference may be deduced from thence."[52]   Laud
supported the appeal to antiquity and the use of the Fathers to show that the Church of
England was part of the continuity of the universal church throughout the ages. Laud
did not accept the Fathers unequivocally and cautioned that it is difficult "to reconcile
the fathers, which seem to speak differently in no few places, both one from another."[53]
However, Laud argued that "we are content to be judged by the joint and constant belief
of the Fathers, which lived within the first four or five hundred years after Christ, when
the Church was at its best; and by the Councils held within those times; and to submit to
them in all those points of doctrine."[54] Laud's appeal to the Fathers was limited because
their writings could not be accepted uncritically. Scripture, however "is sufficient to
salvation, and contains in it all things necessary to it."[55] The tradition of the church and
scripture were connected in Laud's view:

> Tradition and Scripture, without any vicious circle, do mutually confirm
> the authority either of the other...though they do mutually, yet they do not
> equally, confirm the authority either of the other. For Scripture doth
> infallibly confirm the authority of Church traditions, truly so called; but

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[49]James Ussher, *An Answer to a Challenge made by a Jesuit in Ireland Wherein
the Judgement of Antiquity in the Points Questioned is truly delivered*, 1625, in More
and Cross, 135.

[50]*Ibid.*

[51]*Ibid.*

[52]*Ibid.*

[53]Laud, *Conference with Fisher*, in *Works*, vol. 2, 116.

[54]*Ibid.*, 62-63.

[55]*Ibid.*, 61.

tradition doth but morally and probably confirm the authority of the Scripture.[56]

This connection, however, did not grant to tradition unlimited authority. While it was tradition that led men to believe scripture to be the word of God,[57] "we cannot resolve our faith into it [tradition], nor settle our faith upon it, till it resolve itself into the prime tradition of the Apostles, or the Scripture, or both."[58]

Chillingworth, whose approach to the Fathers and antiquity was more critical than that of Laud,[59] and Hooker,[60] was opposed to the authority placed on the tradition of the church and the Fathers. He was more cautious in advocating the use of the Fathers because of the differences among them, but, he argued, both could be advisory if not in opposition to scripture: "Yet I willingly confesse the judgement of a Councell, though not infallible, is yet so farre directive, and obliging, that without apparent reason to the contrary, it may be sinne to reject it, at least not to afford it an outward submission for publique peace-sake."[61] The debate over tradition, the Fathers and scripture was a dispute over the nature of the authority of scripture.

For Chillingworth tradition, which included both written and unwritten traditions like the Fathers, councils, and scriptural exegesis, did play a role in the church although he was critical of using tradition as a means to resolve disputes because of the differences among the various interpreters: "If we consult the ancient Interpreters, we

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[56]*Ibid.*, 112.

[57]*Ibid.*, 115.

[58]*Ibid.*, 117.

[59]McAdoo, *Spirit of Anglicanism*, 353-355.

[60]See Hooker, LEP 4.14, FLE I. 336-345.

[61]*Religion of Protestants*, 4.18.200. Chillingworth was also opposed to the actions of the radical puritans who disturbed the peace of the church. While he recognized the necessity of following individual conscience he believed that opposition to the Church of England was uncalled for because there was nothing in its doctrine contrary to scripture. Though he did not believe that all protestant doctrine was "absoluetly true" he thought that the "constant doctrine" of the Church of England was "so pure and Orthodoxe, that whosoever believes it and lives according to it, undoubtedly he shall be saved; and that there is no error in it which may necessitate or warrant any man to disturbe the peace or renounce the Communion of it." *Preface to the Author,* in *Religion of Protestants*, sect.39.

shall hardly find any two of them agree about the sense of any one of them."[62] The discrepancies among these churchmen make clear that they did not provide a sound basis on which to claim authority in the church. Various unwritten traditions were not rejected,

> only because they are not in the Scripture, but because they are neyther in Scripture, nor can otherwise sufficiently by any reason be proved to be of God. That which is of God, and may be evidently proved to be so, we denie not but it hath in his kinde, although unwritten, yet the selfe same force and authoritie with the written lawes of God.[63]

The problem then was on whose authority scripture could be called the word of God. The Roman Catholics claimed their own authority to make this judgement. Matthew Wilson, a Jesuit who had contended that Protestantism did not lead to salvation, argued that "without the Churches authority, no certainty can be had what Scripture is Canonicall" because scripture cannot validate itself.[64] The Roman Church argued that by reading the bible it was impossible to know if it was divinely inspired - one had to be told this was so and this responsibility fell to the church.[65] Chillingworth, however, while agreeing that Scripture could not validate itself,[66] disagreed with this position.

For Chillingworth, it was tradition which validated scripture, but the perfection of scripture as a rule of faith was not derived from tradition. Scripture was complete on its own.[67] The authority of scripture, from Chillingworth's point of view, rested upon the universal tradition of the primitive church and the testaments of witnesses.[68] The

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[62]*Ibid.*, 3.46.154.

[63]Hooker, *Lawes,* LEP 1.14.5, FLE 1:129.

[64]Matthew Wilson, *Charity Maintained by Catholiques*, in *Religion of Protestants*, 43.

[65]*Ibid.*, 45.

[66]*Religion of Protestants*, 2.27.63.

[67]Ferrier, *William Chillingworth*, 82, 83.

[68]"For whatsoever we believe concerning salvation by Christ, although the scripture be therein the ground of our beliefe; yet the authority of man is, if we marke it, the key which openeth the dore of entrance into the knowledge of the scripture. The scripture could not teach us the thinges that are of God, unlesse we did credite men who have taught us that the wordes of scripture doe signifie those things." Hooker, *Lawes,*

authority of tradition was a rational principle common to all persons, not just to Christians.[69] It was a rational principle because it was self evident - it was "the joint Tradition of all the Apostolique Churches, with one mouth and one voice *teaching the same doctrine*."[70] Chillingworth, however, made clear that tradition did not rest upon the authority of the Roman Church which had departed from the church of antiquity:

> Tradition of all ages is one thing; and the authority of the present Church, much more of the Roman Church, is another. And therefore though we are ready to receive both Scripture and the sense of Scripture upon the authority of *Original Tradition*, yet we receive neither the one, nor the other, upon the authority of your Church.[71]

Chillingworth was willing to accept the authority of universal tradition because he made a correlation between the ancient and primitive church and the tradition that came forth from it.[72] The primitive church was founded upon the authority of scripture and the universal tradition of the church was also based on this authority. For Chillingworth there is " no Tradition but only of Scripture, [that] can derive itself from the fountain, but may be plainly prov'd, either to have been brought in, in such an age after Christ; or that in such an age it was not in. In a word, there is no sufficient certainty but of Scripture only."[73] Chillingworth was also clear that the tradition to which he referred must conform to the practices of the primitive church: "Not any antiquity therefore, unlesse it be absolute and primitive, is a certain signe of true Doctrine."[74] He looked back to a time where he perceived the church to have been uncorrupted by numerous

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LEP 2.7.3, FLE 1:177.

[69]Ferrier, 81.

[70]*Religion of Protestants*, 6.40.361. My italics.

[71]*Ibid.*, 2.89.85.

[72]"One of these notes, indeed the only note of a true and uncorrupted Church, is conformity with Antiquity; I mean the most ancient of all, that is the Primitive and Apostolique." *Religion of Protestants*, 2.113.95.

[73]*Ibid.*, 6.56.376.

[74]*Ibid.*, 5.91.292.

Roman practices,[75] but the authority of scripture was independent of the Roman Catholic Church because it was more ancient than the Roman Church.[76] Moreover, the appeal to antiquity, councils and the Fathers was not an adequate argument to sustain the claim to infallibility because it left out reason.[77] While Falkland and Hales, like Chillingworth, did not reject antiquity in totality,[78] antiquity was only "but man's authority born some ages before us."[79] To claim antiquity as a proof for infallibility was not sufficient unless it was an "invincible proof" which pleaded for "nothing but the truth."[80] Otherwise the appeal to antiquity, though ancient, was "no proof of truth."[81] Moreover, to argue that councils could not err, but individuals may was

> at first sight a merry speech...And since it is confest, that all single persons not only may, but do err, it will prove a very hard matter to gather out of these a multitude...[where] we may be secured they cannot err. I must for my own part confess, that councils and synods not only may and have erred, but considering the means how they are managed, it were a great marvel if they did not err.[82]

Infallibility in interpreting scripture was not annexed to any bishop, church, the Fathers or councils.[83] For Falkland and Hales, as with Chillingworth, scripture was the grounds

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[75]*Ibid.*, 2.113.96.

[76]*Ibid.*, 4.84.235, 6.58.376.

[77]McAdoo, *Spirit of Anglicanism*, 142.

[78]*Ibid.*, 347

[79]Hales, "Of Enquiry," 163. See also Cragg, *Freedom and Authority*, 266.

[80]Hales, "Of Enquiry,"164.

[81]*Ibid.*, 164.

[82]Hales, "A Tract on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper and concerning the Church's Mistaking Itself about Fundamentals," *Works*, vol. 1, 65.

[83]Hales, "Abuses of Hard Places of Scripture," in *Golden Remains* (London, 1688), 25.

of which belief was based, not tradition or the Fathers.[84] Hales criticized the emphasis placed on scholarship and the church's argument that only the educated could understand scripture. Scripture was given to all to learn, but "many of the learned themselves are fallen upon this preposterous conceit, That Learning consisteth rather in variety of turning and quoting of sundry Authors, then in soundly discerning and laying down the truth of things."[85] This "too great presumption upon the strength and subtlety of our own wits" was an abuse of scripture.[86] Scripture was evident of itself and the Roman Catholics had abused it by adding to it traditions which had no biblical foundation. The literal evidence of scripture was clear enough to prove Roman traditions unscriptural,[87] but it was incumbent upon each individual to discover the truth for oneself.

Chillingworth accepted scripture to be the word of God because he believeed the eyewitness accounts of the apostles and others of the early church to be true.[88] Chillingworth believed that

> the Apostles were led into all Truths by the Spirit, *efficaciter.* The Church is also led into all truth by the Apostles *writings, sufficienter...*the Apostles...in their writing were Infallibly assisted to propose nothing as a divine Truth, but what was so. The Church is also led into all Truth, but it is by the intervening of the Apostles writings...led sufficiently, but not irresistibly.[89]

The church, consisting of a society of men, was subject to error; while there was sufficient guidance in the scriptures to lead to truth, it was possible for the church to err, as the Roman church had done. Chillingworth therefore, only looked to the bible for truth, which he trusted to be God's word. The content of scripture was "very fit and worthy to be thought to come from God, *nec vox hominem sonat,* and that they which

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[84]John Packer, *The Transformation of Anglicanism 1643-1660 with special reference to Henry Hammond* (Manchester: University Press, 1969), 66 and McAdoo, *Spirit of Anglicanism*, 352-3.

[85]Hales, "Of Dealing with Erring Christians," in *Golden Remains of the ever memorable Mr. John Hales of Eaton*, (London, 1688), 35.

[86]Hales, "Abuses of Hard Places of Scripture," 8.

[87]*Ibid.*, 26.

[88]*The Preface to the Author*, sect. 14 and *Religion of Protestants*, 6.7.329.

[89]*Religion of Protestants*, 3.34.146.

wrote and delivered it, confirmed it to be the word of God, by doing such works as could not be done, but by power from God himselfe."[90] Like Chillingworth, Laud argued:

> The credit of Scripture to be divine, resolves finally into that faith which we have touching God Himself, and in the same order. For as that, so this, hath three main grounds, to which all other are reducible. The first is, the tradition of the Church: and this leads us to a reverend persuasion of it. The second is, the light of Nature: and this shows us how necessary such a revealed learning is...the third is, The light of the Text itself: in conversing with wherewith, we meet with the Spirit of God inwardly inclining our hearts, and sealing the full assurance of the sufficiency of all three unto us. And then, and not before, we are certain that the Scripture is the word of God, both by divine and infallible proof. But our certainty is by faith, and so voluntary.[91]

Moreover, there was consent among both the ancient records and universal tradition which gave assurance as to the truth of scripture and "the consent and testimony of the *Ancient and Primitive Church*" judged which books were canonical.[92] Thus, it was the universal tradition of the church which had preserved scripture and which granted assurance of the truth of scripture.[93]

Chillingworth conceded that the assurance that scripture had not been altered was only a moral assurance and not metaphysically certain.[94] However, God's moral nature preserved scripture from material alteration:

> God is not defective in things necessary: neither will he leave himselfe without witnesse, nor the World without meanes of knowing his will and doing it. And therefore it was necessary that by his Providence he should preserve the Scripture from any undiscernable corruption, in those things which he would have known: otherwise it is apparent, it had not been his will, that these things should be known, the only meanes of continuing

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[90]*Ibid.*, 4.53.220.

[91]Laud, *Conference with Fisher*, 130.

[92]*Religion of Protestants*, 2.35.66, see also 2.45.69.

[93]See *Religion of Protestants* 2.2.52, 2.24.62, 2.35.66, 2.45.69, 2.89.85, 2.114.96, 2.155.114, 3.27.140, 4.53.220.

[94]*Ibid.*, 2.24.62, 2.32-35.66, 6.6.328.

the knowledge of them being perished.[95]

In Chillingworth's estimation, he believed "that God would always by his Providence so order humane affayres, that there should be alwayes meanes sufficient to bring men to the beleefe of the doctrine of Christ."[96] It was God's responsibility, in fact, to preserve scripture from alteration.[97] Thus, it was left to each individual to use his reason to read the bible and search for truth in it.

Chillingworth clearly placed an emphasis upon the authority of individual reason to discover the truths in scripture necessary to be believed for salvation. He did not doubt that scripture, God's revelation to man, was complete and sufficient for man's salvation and that the truth of scripture did not depend upon the infallibility of the Roman Church. Having shown that the Roman Church was not infallible and therefore could not be the judge of religious controversies, Chillingworth explained that it was in fact scripture which was the only guide in religious disputes. Thus, it was by scripture which religious controversies should be determined, not by a church.[98]

Chillingworth argued throughout his refutation of Roman infallibility that had God desired there to be a judge in religious matters he would have appointed one in scripture.[99] Since he did not the Roman Church could not claim to be that judge. Chillingworth was clear that scripture itself was not a judge, but only a rule by which

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[95]*Ibid.*, 2.93.86.

[96]Chillingworth, "The Absurdity of Departing from the Church of England for want of Succession of visible Professors in all Ages," undated, Wharton MSS.943, f.927.

[97]That scripture needed to be kept under a watchful eye is "very true, but this is no other then the watchfull eye of divine providence: the goodnesse whereof will never suffer, that the Scripture should be depraved and corrupted, but that in them should be alwaies extant a conspicuous and plain way to eternall happinesse. Neither can any thing be more palpably unconsistent with his goodnesse, then to suffer Scripture to be undiscernably corrupted in any matter of moment, and yet exact of men the beliefe of those verities, which without their fault, or knowledge, or possibility of prevention, were defac'd out of them. So that God requiring of men to believe Scripture in its purity, ingages himselfe to see it preserv'd in sufficient purity." *Religion of Protestants*, 2. 24.61.

[98]Chillingworth, *Preface to the Author*, sect. 31.

[99]*Religion of Protestants*, 2.10.57, 2.23.61.

one could be guided. Christians, he argued, were furnished with adequate means to determine controversies of religion which were necessary to be decided,[100] but not every controversy was necessary to be decided in order to obtain salvation:

> *God gives to all men sufficient meanes of Salvation*...sufficient to determine all controversies, which *were necessary to be determin'd*. For if some controversies may for many ages be undetermined, and yet in the meanwhile men be sav'd; why should, or how can the *Churches being furnisht with effectual meanes to determine all Controversies in Religion* be necessary to Salvation, the end it selfe, to which these meanes are ordained being as experience shewes not necessary? Plain sense will teach every man, that the necessity of the meanes must alwaies be measured by, and can never exceed the necessity of the end...Is it necessary that all Controversies in Religion should be determin'd or is it not? If it be, why is the question of *Predetermination*, of the *immaculate conception*, of the *Popes indirect power in temporalities*, so long undetermined? If not, what is it but hypocrisy to pretend such great necessity of such effectual meanes, for the atchieving that end, which is it selfe not necessary. Christians therefore have and shall have *means sufficient* (though not alwaies effectuall)*to determine* not all *controversies* but *all necessary to be determined*.[101]

Scripture was a perfect rule by which to judge controversies because it contained within itself everything necessary for salvation.[102] That scripture was not a judge, but only a rule by which decisions were guided was reiterated repeatedly by Chillingworth,[103] and he made a clear distinction between the two.[104] He refrained from naming scripture as a judge of controversy, as other Protestants had done,[105] because he did not want to set up

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[100]*Ibid.*, 1.7.34. "For all these purposes, he gave at the beginning...*Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Doctours*: who by word of mouth taught their contemporaries, and by writings...taught their Christian posterity to the worlds end, how all these ends, and that which is the end of all these, Salvation, is to be achieved."

[101]*Ibid.*, 1.7.35.

[102]*Ibid.*, 2.8-9.55-56

[103]*Ibid.*, 2.3.53, 2.5.54, 2.11.57, 2.104.92.

[104]*Ibid.*, 2.12.58.

[105]*Ibid.*, 2.103.92.

an authority dependent upon human interpretation which compelled men's consciences. While he believed that scripture was a perfect rule, the application of this rule to controversy could not be guaranteed to be infallible because of human failings. The problem was not a question of the truth of scripture, but rather a problem in determining whether or not the rule was correctly applied to the controversy.[106] Therefore, scripture "though not the Judge, is the sentence of the Judge."[107]

Chillingworth believed that scripture was the only necessary guide to be followed in order to obtain salvation and that if scripture was read one would come to an individual determination of the truth concerning controversies. Scripture was clear on the necessary points; therefore no judge was needed to determine controversies related to them. And where scripture was obscure it was only required to search for the truth. Falling into error with respect to difficult passages did not condemn a man, and a judge was not needed in these cases because clearly these passages of scripture were not necessary to believed to be saved.[108] As Hales pointed out, there were only "two certain

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[106]Van Leeuwen, *The Problem of Certainty*, 19-20 and Orr, *Reason and Authority*, 158.

[107]*Religion of Protestants*, 2.12.58.

[108]"*If the Popes decrees* (you will say) *be obscure, he can explain himselfe, and so the Scripture cannot.* But the holy Ghost, that speaks in Scripture, can doe so, if he please, and when he is pleas'd will do so. In the mean time it will be fit for you to wait his leasure, and to be content, that those things of Scripture which are plain should be so, and those which are obscure should remain obscure, untill he please to declare them. Besides he can (which you cannot warrant me of the Pope or a Councell) speak at first so plainly, that his words shall need no farther explanation; and so in things necessary we believe he has done. And if you say, *the Decrees of Councells touching Controversies, though they be not the Judge, yet they are the Judges sentence*: So, I say, the Scripture, though not the Judge, is the sentence of the Judge. When therefore you conclude, *That to say a Judge is necessary for deciding controversies, about the meaning of Scripture, is as much as to say, he is necessary to decide what the holy Ghost speakes in Scripture*: This I grant is true, but I may not grant that a Judge (such a one as we dispute of) is necessary either to doe the one, or the other. For if the Scripture (as it is in things necessary) be plain, why should it be more necessary to have a judge to interpret them in plain places, then to have a judge to interpret the meaning of a Councell's decrees, and others to interpret their Interpretations, and others to interpret theirs, and so on for ever? And where they are not plaine, there if we, using diligence to finde the truth, doe yet misse of it and fall into errour, there is no danger in

and infallible interpreters of Scripture; either itself, or the holy Ghost the author of it."[109] Ambiguous passages of scripture were open to numerous interpretations,[110] and no person could claim infallibly to interpret these passages. What is deduced from scripture is "at the best but *our Opinions*: for this peremptory manner of setting down our own Conclusions, under this high commanding form of *necessary Truths*, is generally one of the greatest causes, which keeps the Churches this day so far asunder."[111] This reflects again Chillingworth's and his adherents' perception of God in moral terms, that God would not demand of one adherence to what was unclear.

Chillingworth impugned the authority of the Roman Church by questioning its infallibility and its reliance on tradition and scripture to prove its infallibility. There could be no certainty of infallibility and to base one's faith on this belief was to neglect one's reason. Ultimately, there could be no absolute, metaphysical certainty of the Christian religion. The belief that scripture was the word of God could only be based on moral certainty.[112] Probability was as close to certainty as one could hope come,[113] but considering the stakes involved it was best to act as if Christianity was a metaphysical certainty.[114]

In defence of his opinion, Chillingworth pointed out that many people invest money and suffer great hardships "upon a probable hope of some future gain and commodity, and that not a infinite and eternall, but finite and temporall."[115] People,

abstain from many things they exceedingly desire, not upon any certain

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it. They that erre, and they that doe not erre may both be saved. So that those places which containe things necessary, and wherein errour were dangerous, need no infallible interpreter because they are plaine: and those that are obscure need none because they contain not things necessary, neither is errour in them dangerous." *Religion of Protestants*, 2.12.58-59.

[109]Hales, "Abuses of Hard Places of Scripture," 18.

[110]*Ibid.*, 6.

[111]Hales, "Of dealing with Erring Christians," in *Golden Remains* (1688), 66.

[112]Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 96.

[113]Cragg, *Freedom and Authority* 254.

[114]Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 96.

[115]*Religion of Protestants*, 6.5.327.

assurance, but a probable feare of danger that may come after[.] What man ever was there so madly in love with a present penny, but that hee would willingly spend it upon any little hope that by doing so hee might gain an hundred thousand pound? And I would fain know *what gay probabilities* you could devise to disswade him from this Resolution. And if you can devise none, what reason then, or sense is there, but that a probable hope of infinite and eternall happiness, provided for all those that obey *Christ Jesus*, and much more a firme faith, though not so certain, in some sort, as sense or science, may be able to sway our will to obedience...Men may therefore talke their pleasure of an absolute and most infallible certainty, but did they generally believe that obedience to Christ were the only way to present and eternall felicity, but as firmly and undoubtedly as that there is such a Citty as *Constantinople*, nay but as much as *Caesars* Commentaries, or the History of *Salust*, I believe that the lives of most men, both Papists and Protestants would be better then they are.[116]

For Chillingworth, that the probability of Christianity was only a moral certainty, however, was by no means an excuse not to believe in it because it was *reasonable* to believe its truth. Christianity, although not a form of rationalism, was a rational way whereby the truths of revelation could be apprehended,[117] and therefore must be believed:

Yet though I deny that it is required of us to be certain in the highest

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[116]*Ibid.*, 6.5.327. Chillingworth repeated his opinion that one should act as if Christianity was metaphysically certain in one of his sermons: "Between heaven and earth, between finite and infinite, between eternity and a moment, there is utterly no proportion; and therefore seeing we are so apt, upon trifling occasions, to hazard this heaven for this earth, this infinite for this finite, this all for this is nothing; is it not much to be feared, that though many of us pretend to much faith, we have indeed but very little, or none at all[.] The sum of all which hath been spoken concerning this point is this: were we firmly persuaded that obedience to the gospel of Christ is the true and the only way to present and eternal happiness, (without which faith no man living can be justified,) then the innate desire of our own happiness could not but make us studious inquirers of the will of Christ, and conscionable performers of it: but there are (as experience shews) very few who make it their care and business to know the will of Christ; and of those few again very many who make no conscience at all of doing what they know". *Sermon 1*, in *Works*, vol. 3, 17.

[117]Cragg, *Freedom and Authority*, 257.

degree, infallibly certain of the truth of the things which we believe, for
this were to know and not believe, neither is it possible unlesse our
evidence of it, be it naturall or supernaturall, were of the highest degree;
yet I deny not but, that wee are to believe the Religion of Christ, we are
and may be infallibly certain. For first, this is most certain, that we are in
all things to doe according to wisdome and reason rather than against it.
Secondly, this is as certain, That wisdome and Reason require that wee
should believe these things which are by many degrees more credible and
probable then the contrary. Thirdly, this is as certain, that to every man
who considers impartially what great things may be said for the truth of
Christianity, and what poore things they are which may be said against it,
either for any other Religion or for none at all, it cannot but appear by
many degrees more credible, that Christian Religion, is true then the
contrary. And from all these premises, this conclusion evidently
followes, that it is infallibly certain, that we are firmely to beleeve the
truth of Christian Religion.[118]

Moral certainty, while not infallible or inerrant, was the best grounds upon which one's
faith could be demonstrated.[119]

     Chillingworth was greatly influenced by the writings of Hugo Grotius, the Dutch
legal theologian, who advocated religious unity and he quoted at length a passage from
Grotius' *Of the Truth of the Christian Religion* which appealed to the reasonableness of
Christianity.[120] In this work Grotius refrained from discussing Christian doctrine which

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[118]*Religion of Protestants*, 6.8.330-331.

[119]Spellmen, *The Latitudinarians*, 22.

[120]Hugo Grotius, *True Religion* (London, 1632), 147-151. "Finally if any yet be
not satisfied with these *arguments* abovesaid, but desire more forcible *reasons* for
confirmation of the *excellency* of *Christian Religion*; let such know that as there are
variety of things which be *true*, so are there divers *wayes* of proving or manifesting the
truth. Thus is there one way in *Mathematicks*; another in *Phsyicks*, a third in *Ethicks*,
and lastly another kinde when a *matter of fact* is in question: wherein verily wee must
rest content with such *testimonies* as are free from all supposition of untruth; otherwise
downe goes all the frame and use of *history*, and a great part of the *art* of *Physicke*,
together with all *dutifulnesse* that ought to be betweene parents and children: for
matters of *practice* can no way else be knowne but by such *testimonies*. Now it is the
pleasure of *Almighty God* that those things which he would have us to *beleeve* (so that
the very beleefe thereof may bee imputed to us for obedience) should not so evidently

he believed would alienate those unfamiliar with it because the understanding of doctrine, which was separate from scripture, could not be understood without divine revelation.[121] His purpose was to appeal to non-Christians and to implore peace and unity in the Christian states.[122] Force was an unacceptable means to promote Christianity;[123] belief must come from voluntary assent because "Christ being the author of a new law, will have no one brought to embrace his doctrine by the fear of

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appeare, as those things which are apprehended by *sense* and plaine *demonstration* but only be so farre forth *revealed* as may beget *faith*, and a perswasion thereof in the hearts and minds of such as are not *obstinate*: That so the *Gospell* may be as a *touchstone* for triall of mens *judgements*, whether they be sound or unsound: For seeing these *arguments*, whereof wee have spoken, have induced so many honest, godly, and wise men to approve of this *Religion*, it is thereby plaine enough that the fault of other mens *infidelity* is not for want of sufficient *testimony*, but because they would not have *that* to bee had and embraced for *truth* which is contrary to their wilfull desires; it being a hard matter for them to relinquish their *honours*, and set at naught other *commodities*; which thing they know they ought to doe, if they admit of *Christs doctrine* and obey what hee hath *commanded*. And *this* is the rather to bee *noted* of them, for that many other *historicall* narrations are approved by them to bee *true*, which notwithstanding are onely manifest by *authority*, and not by any such *strong proofes*, and perswasions, or tokens, as doe declare the *history* of *Christ* to bee true: which are evident partly by the *confession* of those *Jewes* that are yet alive; and partly in those companies and congregations of *Christians* which are any where to bee found; whereof doubtlesse there was some cause. Lastly, seeing the long *duration* or continuance of *Christian Religion*, and the *large extent* thereof can bee ascribed to no *humane power*, therefore the same must bee attributed to *miracles*: or if any deny that it came to passe through a *miraculous* manner; this very getting so great strength and power without a *miracle*, may bee thought to surpasse any *miracle*." See reference to Grotius in *Religion of Protestants*, 6.51.372. For a comparison between Grotius and Chillingworth see Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 93-95.

[121]Jan Paul Heering, "Hugo Grotius' *De Veritate Religionis Christianae*," in *Hugo Grotius Theologian*, edited by Henk J. M. Nellen and Edwin Rabbie (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 50.

[122]*Ibid.*, 49.

[123]*Religion of Protestants*, 2.18.60.

human punishments."[124] Grotius, like Chillingworth, believed the truth of the Gospel as told by the eyewitnesses to Christ's resurrection and the truth of this testimony showed "that this *Religion* is more excellent than others in regard that *Christ* the author of it hath *himselfe* performed what hee commanded."[125] The miraculous works of Christ, which surpass human power and which the prophets foretold, were enough to gain human assent.[126] Christianity was then by demonstration more reasonable and ethically better than other religions.[127] Christianity did not depend upon the Roman Church for validation but upon the "serious and mature deliberation" of scripture which inclined one to believe.[128]

Chillingworth extricated the bible from the authority of the Roman Church and argued for the use of individual reason to interpret it. His rejection of infallibility, the Fathers and church councils as necessary and binding upon an individual for salvation challenged all religious authority, but Chillingworth was concerned with more than impugning the church's authority in religious matters. He wanted to avoid schism and unrest from destroying the Christian religion and so he appealed to individual reason instead of a church authority to determine what was necessary for salvation. While the proofs of Christianity were not metaphysically certain, the belief that God was inherently moral and thus would provide all that was necessary to be saved meant that the truth of the Christian religion was morally certain. The Christian religion Chillingworth believed to be reasonable and the basis of Christian faith was the bible

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[124]Grotius, *The Rights of War and Peace*, translated by A. C. Campbell (Washington: M. Walter Dunne, 1901), 254. Grotius also discusses here why he believes in the reasonableness of the Christian religion. See 250-255.

[125]*Ibid.*, 135.

[126]"But the admirable works of Christ are more powerful than any other weapon in conquering the tardiness of human assent, they surpass all human power and that of created rational beings to such a degree that, taking everything into careful consideration, it would be far more difficult not to believe that it was God who did those things than to believe it; particularly because these very works, the time of Christ's birth, his ancestry and country, his entire life and death had been unanimously predicted by the prophets several centuries before." Grotius, *Meletius*, translated by G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988)sect. 49, 118.

[127]Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 93.

[128]*Religion of Protestants*, 6.51.372.

which contained all that was necessary to be saved.

Chapter 3
Reason, Faith and Religious Toleration in Chillingworth's Thought

William Chillingworth's insistence upon the necessity of an individual's reason to interpret scripture for oneself and his rejection of any church authority to determine what was necessary for salvation was related to his abhorrence of disunity and schism in the church and in the world in the mid-seventeenth century. His position on religious toleration was different from Richard Hooker's irenicism, for Chillingworth advocated far greater religious freedom and tolerance than Hooker had ever championed in his *Lawes*. His position was closer to the one advanced by Hugo Grotius, who also limited severely the necessary fundamentals of religious belief in his attempt to promote unity. Chillingworth's insistence upon the necessity of individual reason to find salvation in the bible meant that the fundamentals of religion which had to be believed were left to the individual to determine through scripture. This position gave generous latitude to the abilities of individual reason, but also meant that Chillingworth could not say that there were, in fact, specific truths in the bible which had to believed. To do so would mean an assertion of an authority over an individual's conscience. Chillingworth's position on the ability of reason to attain salvation appears at first sight to disregard the necessity of faith and grace. However, Chillingworth's adherence to the ability of reason to achieve salvation, from which stemmed his desire for toleration, was not incompatible with the role he believed faith and grace have in the attainment of salvation.

A further examination of Chillingworth's position on reason and its abilities in the search for salvation is necessary to show his distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental points of faith. For Chillingworth, reason was given to man so that man could choose God, or, in Chillingworth's words, choose his religion.[1] Moreover, Chillingworth also believed that reason was a gift from God to act as a directive in the use of the rule of scripture.[2] Chillingworth, like Hooker, believed that reason was not rendered invalid after the fall of man and that reason, as a gift from God given only to humans, could not be rejected in the search for truth.[3] Chillingworth believed that one

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[1] *Religion of Protestants*, 2.120.99.

[2] *Ibid.*, 6.55.375.

[3] "Hooker held reason to be part of God's immutable order, an expression of the divine will." Paul E. Forte, "Richard Hooker's theory of law," in *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 12(1982): 144. As Eccleshall has observed: "Yet grace restored rather than superseded nature so that reason was not rendered

was guided by "right reason, *grounded on Divine revelation* and common notions, written by God in the hearts of all men."[4] It was reason which validated scripture as God's word by examining the evidence,[5] and it was reason which interpreted scripture to discover what was necessary for salvation.

Chillingworth debated with the Roman Catholic, Matthew Wilson, over fundamentals necessary to be believed and the non-fundamentals which were left up to the individual to decide whether or not they were necessary for salvation. Chillingworth argued that non-fundamentals of religion, which he claimed the Roman Church required to be believed upon pain of damnation, were not essential to belief. In this he was opposed by Wilson, who contended that there could be no distinction between fundamentals and non-fundamentals of faith because there was no doctrine of faith which was not fundamental to salvation.[6] Furthermore, one "must rely on the authority of the Church, for some fundamentall point, not contained in Scripture, but delivered by tradition."[7] The latter statement Chillingworth refuted in his argument against infallibility. To Wilson's former statement Chillingworth objected on the grounds that the meaning of the bible was obscure in places and therefore there could be various interpretations. He developed a clear, albeit controversial position: Fundamental truths were those which were evidently contained in the bible; non-fundamentals were those

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superfluous in the search for human felicity. Indeed, reason was necessary to authenticate and interpret Scripture itself (III.viii.13), which was why the Puritans were so mistaken in supposing that reason had been made worthless by the Fall." See "Richard Hooker's Synthesis", 118. Rudolph Almasy has also noted the importance which Hooker placed upon reason: "In arguing that Scripture is not the only source for God's laws, Hooker answers that Nature and reason are available to the church." See "The Purpose of Richard Hooker's Polemic," in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 39(1978): 258. That Chillingworth believed the same of reason is clear.

[4]Chillingworth, *Preface to the Author*, sect. 12. My italics. See also *Sermon VIII* in *Works*, 226-227.

[5]Chapter 2 examines how Chillingworth believed that scripture was authenticated by universal tradition, which was a rational principle. It was reason which made the final judgement.

[6]Wilson, *Charity Mistaken with the want whereof, catholickes are unjustly charged,*(St. Omer, 1630), 71, 74.

[7]Wilson, *Charity Maintained*, 125.

which were left unclear.[8] Therefore, the distinction between the two would "appear very good and pertinent. For those truths will be fundamentall, which, are evidently delivered in Scripture and commanded to be preach't to all men; Those not fundamentall which are obscure...nothing that is obscure can be necessary to be understood, or not mistaken.[9] Thus, what was fundamental to one might not be to another, and consequently it could not be requisite to expect the same adherence to obscure passages of the bible as to those which were obvious. Chillingworth believed that God would not and could not expect one to adhere to human interpretations of obscure passages in the bible to which one could be opposed as a matter of conscience and who did not accept that the obscure passages contained matters of faith, and it was these "obscure" points which divided religions and caused strife:

> It is a matter of faith to believe that the sense of them [obscure passages of scripture], whatsoever it is, which was intended by God is true; for he that does not doe so calls Gods Truth into question. But to believe this or that to be the true sense of them, or to believe the true sense of them, and to avoid the false, is not necessary either to Faith or Salvation. For if God would have had his meaning in these places certainly known, how could it stand with his wisdome, to be so wanting to his own will and end, as to speak obscurely? Or how can it consist with his justice, to require of men to know certainly the meaning of those words, which he himselfe hath not revealed?"[10]

Chillingworth was clear that misinterpreting obscure passages of scripture was not a damnable sin:

> For if the Scripture (as it is in things necessary) be plain, why should it be more necessary to have a judge to interpret them in plain places, then to have a judge to interpret the meaning of a Councell's decrees, and others to interpret their Interpretations, and others to interpret theirs, and so on for ever? And where they are not plaine, there if we, using diligence to finde the truth, doe yet misse of it and fall into errour, there is no danger in it. *They that erre, and they that doe not erre may both be saved.* So that those places which containe things necessary, and wherein errour were dangerous, need no infallible interpreter because they are plaine: and those that are obscure need none because they contain not things

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[8]Chillingworth, *Preface to the Author*, sect. 32.

[9]*Ibid.* See also *Religion of Protestants*, 2.84.83.

[10]*Religion of Protestants*, 2.127.102.

necessary, neither is errour in them dangerous.[11]

Falkland, echoing Chillingworth, argued that "in the Scripture I conceive...all that is necessary is clear, or if any man that strives to square both his actions and opinions by that Rule, chance to fall into any error (for which his understanding is onely in fault and not his will) it shall not hinder his rising to heaven."[12] Moreover, the "variety of tempers, abilities, educations, & unavoidable prejudices, whereby mens understandings are variously form'd and fashion'd" meant that men "doe embrace severall Opinions, whereof some must be erroneous. To say that God will damne them for such errors, who are lovers of him, and lovers of truth, is to rob man of his comfort, and God of his goodnesse; it is to make Man desperate and God a Tyrant."[13] The key here is Chillingworth's statement "to rob man of his comfort". He firmly believed that the conflict in Christendom stemmed in large part from the trouble of gaining certainty about one's salvation. The Roman Catholics argued for infallibility to overcome this dilemma, but that did not solve the problem for independent thinkers.[14] Protestants who believed in predestination argued that this doctrine also solved the problem of certainty of salvation, but Chillingworth maintained that predestination gave no such comfort. This doctrine extinguished "Christian hope, and filiall feare, and...[led] some men to despaire, others to presumption, all to wretchlesse and impious life."[15] Therefore Chillingworth depended upon reason to grant this assurance of salvation to the individual. If an error occurred in judgement whereby one did not think they had "sufficient reason to believe that God had so testified [to a particular truth], would ...[it not be thought]... a hard case to be damned for such a denyall?"[16] Thus, Chillingworth stressed his interpretation of the difference between fundamentals and non-

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[11]*Ibid.*, 2.12.58-59. My italics.

[12]Falkland, *Discourse*, 95.

[13]Chillingworth, *Answere to the Preface*, sect. 25,. 18. See also *Religion of Protestants*, 1.13.41, 3.52.158; W. K. Jordan, *The Development of Religious Toleration in England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), 373 and John Marshall, "Locke and latitudinarianism", in *Philosophy, science and religion in England 1640-1700*, edited by Richard Kroll, Richard Ashcroft and Perez Zagorin (Cambridge: University Press, 1992), 264.

[14]See Chapter 2.

[15]*Religion of Protestants*, 7.4.387.

[16]Chillingworth, *Answere to the Preface*, sect. 25, 19.

fundamentals. However, his belief that no one could be told what was fundamental led him into the difficulty of being unable to state unequivocably that there were, in fact, any fundamentals of faith which, if not believed, led to damnation.

That Chillingworth believed that there were fundamental points in the bible which had to be believed is obvious, for otherwise he would not have made the distinction between them and non-fundamental points of faith. It has already been pointed out that Chillingworth believed that the non-debatable biblical passages constituted necessary points of faith, but when asked by Wilson to give a list of these fundamentals Chillingworth replied that this was impossible. A "variety of circumstances, makes its impossible to set down an exact Catalogue of Fundamentals...because none that can be given, can universally serve for all men, God requiring more of them to whom he gives more [of reason], and lesse of them to whom he gives lesse."[17] Chillingworth was adamant that persons must search for themselves to find the truth of scripture because a faith which was imposed was no faith at all without understanding. Therefore,

> to whom faith in Christ is sufficiently propounded, as necessary to Salvation, to them it is simply necessary & Fundamental to believe in Christ, that is, to expect remission of sinnes and Salvation from him, upon the performance of the conditions he requires; among which conditions one is, that we believe what he has revealed, when it is sufficiently declared, to have been revealed by him...Now that may be sufficiently declared to one (all things considered,) which, (all things considered,) to another is not sufficiently declared: and consequently that may be Fundamentall and necessary to one, which to another not so.[18]

Chillingworth declared that if one believed the bible then one was assured that all necessary points of faith were held: "Though we cannot perhaps say in particular, thus much, and no more is fundamentall, yet believing all the Bible, we are certain enough that we believe all that is fundamentall."[19] God did not require one to believe the "true sense" of the bible "in all places, but only that we should endeavour to do so, & be

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[17]*Religion of Protestants*, 3.13.134.

[18]*Ibid.*, 3.13.134. See also 4.19.201.

[19]*Ibid.*, 6.48.367. See also 2.32.65-66, 3.56.164 and *Preface to the Author*, sects. 33-37.

prepar'd in minde to doe so, whenever it shall be sufficiently propounded to us."[20] If one believed all fundamentals one could not be damned for an error in faith which was not willful: "He that believes all Fundamentalls, cannot bee damned for any errour in faith, though he believe more or lesse to bee fundamental then is so."[21] In other words, a belief that scripture contained all necessities meant that ones' faith was sufficient whether or not what one considered to be fundamental was the same as what another considered to be so:

> Without being able to make a Catalogue of Fundamentals, I may be assured of the Truth of this Assertion, if it be true, That *the Scripture containes all necessary points of faith*, and know that I believe explicitely all that is exprest in Scripture, and implicitely all that is contained in them. Now he that believes all this, must of necessity believe all things necessary; Therefore without being able to make a Catalogue of Fundamentals, I may be assured that I believe all things necessary, and consequently that my faith is sufficient. [22]

Chillingworth declined to make a list of fundamentals because he did not want to set up another authority, and also out of "Wisdome and Necessity".[23] Not only was he aware that individual understanding differed and so consequently interpretations were diverse, but he believed that one "may very easily erre in doing it; because though all which is necessary be plaine in Scripture, yet all which is plaine is not therefore written because it was necessary."[24] It was sufficient for one's salvation if one believed "the Scripture: That [one] endeavour to believe it in the true sense of it, as farre as concernes his dutie [or ability]: And that [one] conforme his life unto it either by Obedience or Repentance."[25] Hales was also of the opinion that "the scripture contains at least the

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[20]*Ibid.*, 3.52.159.

[21]*Ibid.*, 4.34.207.

[22]*Ibid.*, 3.53.160.

[23]Chillingworth, *Answer to the Preface*, sect.27.

[24]*Ibid.*, sect. 27. See also *Religion of Protestants*, 2.160.117.

[25]*Answer to the Preface*, sect. 27. See also *Religion of Protestants*, 3.52.159 and 6.56.376.

fundamental parts of Christian faith."[26] Careful study of scripture would reveal to anyone searching for the truth the fundamentals required without remaining in ignorance "of any necessary part of his faith."[27] Subsequently, "we must content our selves by a generall description to tell you [Roman Catholics] what is Fundamentall."[28] Religious education does not appear to have been important to Chillingworth as a means by which the disparity between different levels of understanding could be overcome because he viewed education as learning the opinions of others, and not thinking for oneself.[29]

Chillingworth did not believe that the creeds of the church could be said to hold all fundamental points of faith. Chillingworth agreed that they could be viewed as "a sufficient summarie, or rather more then a sufficient Summarie,"[30] but he qualified this by saying that it was the Fathers who said the Apostles creed was sufficient and therefore it was not "absolutely certain, but very probable."[31] Moreover, in Chillingworth's opinion, while the creeds may have been a sufficient summary of the articles of faith, the creeds by no means contained the "*Rules of obedience*" for which "all men are referred to Scripture."[32]

Chillingworth personally believed that the four Gospels contained all the fundamentals needed for salvation and that the gospel of Luke alone was "such a perfect Gospell" that one who believed it thus believed all fundamentals.[33] Even churches who rejected some books as not canonical were in no danger of damnation because they held in their canon the four gospels and it was "very probable that every one of the foure Evangelists [had] in his book the whole substance, all the necessary parts of the Gospell

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[26]Hales, "A Tract on the Sacrament," 72. See also McAdoo, *Spirit of Anglicanism*, 15 and Jordan, *Development of Religious Toleration*, 407.

[27]Hales, "A Tract on the Sacrament ," 72.

[28]*Religion of Protestants.*, 3.13.134.

[29]*Ibid.*, 2.49.71.

[30]*Ibid.*, 1.16.41.

[31]*Ibid.*, 4.4.194.

[32]*Ibid.*, 4.13.197.

[33]*Ibid.*, 4.43.212. On the sufficiency of the four gospels see 2.126.101, 4.40-43.210-212.

of Christ."[34] Chillingworth was attempting to abolish any restrictions to Christianity so that it would not exclude people who identified themselves as followers and believers in Christ. While he argued that the fundamental doctrines of Christ must be believed,[35] as he repeated over and over there was not an exhaustive list. Suffice to say, if one acknowledged and believed *"all such points of faith, whereof* [one] *may be sufficiently convinced that they belong to the Doctrine of Jesus Christ"* then this was sufficient for salvation.[36] Fundamental points of faith, thus, had to be decided by individual determination, not by a community, state or a church.

The refusal of the Roman Catholics to allow for individual judgements in theological matters stemmed in part from their concern that such practices would bring many people to heretical beliefs. Wilson averred that opposing "any truth propounded by the visible true Church as revealed by God, is formall *Heresie*" and that "every Errour against any doctrine revealed by God, is damnable Heresie."[37] Wilson upheld the authority of the church to make theological judgements. Chillingworth argued that not only was the church not infallible but that it could not determine what were heresies, or claim that one's beliefs were heretical. If a person believed he held the truth, their beliefs could not be heretical. Chillingworth defined a heresy as being "nothing else but a Doctrine Repugnant to some Article of the Christian Faith."[38] Moreover, a heresy had to be "an obstinate defence of any Errour, against any necessary Article of the Christian faith."[39] Therefore, an error in judgement was not damnable because it was not a willful rejection of an article of faith: "For questionless, no man can be an Heretique but he holds an Heresie, and an Heresie you say *is a voluntary Errour*; therefore no man can be necessitated to be an Heretique whether he will or no, by want of such a thing that is not in his power to have."[40] Furthermore,

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[34]*Ibid.*, 4.43.211-212, 2.126.101.

[35]*Ibid.*, 4.2.193.

[36]*Ibid.*, 4.19.201.

[37]Wilson, *Charity Maintained*, 316.

[38]*Religion of Protestants*, 4.18.199 and 4.14.197.

[39]*Ibid.*, 5.51.271 and *A Conference betwixt Mr. Chillingworth and Mr. Lewgar*, in *Works*, 288-289.

[40]*Ibid.*, 6.38.357

> Heresy you have defin'd above to be a voluntary error: but he that believes truth, though his belief be not qualified according to your minde, yet sure in believing truth he believes no error; & from hence according to ordinary Logick methinkes it should follow, that such a man for doing so, cannot be guilty of Heresy.[41]

Chillingworth argued that an infallible church was not required to determine heresies because the scripture was sufficient for this task. He wrote: "If Scripture be sufficient to informe us what is the faith, it must of necessity be also sufficient to teach us what is Heresy, seeing Heresy is nothing but a manifest deviation from, and an opposition to the faith."[42]

Chillingworth, always cautious never to say what was fundamental to salvation, did outline what he considered to be plain truths revealed in the bible which must be believed. These points he considered to be so evident that any rational person would accept them as fundamental points of faith:

> If any one should deny, that there is a God: That this God is omnipotent, omniscient, good, just, true, mercifull, a rewarder of them that seek him, a punisher of them that obstinatly offend him; that Jesus Christ is the Sonne of God, and the Saviour of the World: that it is he by obedience to whom men must look to be saved: If any man should deny either his Birth, or Passion, or Resurrection, or Ascension, or sitting at the right hand of God: his having all power given him in Heaven and Earth: That it is he whom God hath appointed to be judge of the quick and the dead: that all men shall rise again at the last day: That they which believe and repent shall be sav'd: That they which doe not believe or repent shall be damned: If a man should hold, that either the keeping of the *Mosaicall* Law is necessary to Salvation: or that good works are not necessary to Salvation: In a word, if any man should obstinatly contradict the truth of any thing plainly delivered in Scripture, who does not see, that every one which believes the Scripture, hath a sufficient meanes to discover, and condemne, and avoid that Heresy, without any need of an infallible guide?[43]

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[41]*Ibid.*, 6.43.364.

[42]*Ibid.*, 2.127.101.

[43]*Ibid.*, 2.127.101-102. Chillingworth avoided the heresy of Socinianism in this quotation, since he did not believe in the unipersonality of God.

Clearly Chillingworth, while attempting to limit debate and strife on the contentious issue of articles of faith necessary for salvation by refraining from cataloguing fundamentals, did not in actuality grant free immunity to anyone to declare what they believed to be fundamental points of faith. He may have granted individual responsibility to make this determination, as is obvious, but that he believed that there were some points of faith which were so manifestly apparent in scripture that the rejection of them would damn a person is plain. This position, however, placed Chillingworth in a contradictory position. While declaring on the one hand that each individual must ascertain what he believed to be necessary for salvation by means of his own reason, he also argued that people could not be told what to believe. This was the basis of his charitable argument, that one could not be told what to accept as plain in scripture, and only a perverse person would assert that plain places of scripture were not so; however there was no guide to even make this determination. In an attempt to abolish all schism and disunity and to guarantee salvation for all sincere people, Chillingworth was unable logically to make the argument that no person could be told what to believe while also arguing that there were some truths necessary to salvation which were evident in scripture.[44] This is a central difficulty in Chillingworth's thought, and one in which he unconsciously placed himself because he was aware that caution was needed in extrapolating fundamentals because "confident dogmatism" had the "practical consequences" of dissent.[45] Chillingworth hesitated to declare what constituted deliberate obtuseness because this was difficult to determine, God having "neither decreed nor foretold, that his true doctrine should *de facto* be alwaies visibly prfessed (sic), without any mixture of falsehood."[46] Only when the civil wars had broken out did Chillingworth openly and directly condemn the laziness and ignorance of men which he believed had brought England to war:

> You see, beloved, how many instances and examples I have given you of our gross ignorance of what is necessary and easy for us to know; and to these it were no difficult matter to add more; now from whence can this ignorance proceed, but from supine negligence? And from whence this negligence, but from our not believing what we pretend to believe? For did we believe firmly and heartily that this book [the bible] were given us by God for the rule of our actions, and that by obedience to it were the certain and only way to eternal happiness, it were impossible we should

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[44] Orr, *Reason and Authority*, 181.

[45] *Ibid.*

[46] *Preface to the Author*, sect. 43.

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> be such enemies to ourselves...But it is certain, and apparent to all the world, that the greatest part of Christians, through gross and wilful negligence, remain utterly ignorant of many necessary points of their duty to God and man.[47]

Chillingworth further complicated his argument advocating universal toleration of Christians when he argued that one need only perform the conditions of the New Testament without having to know of, or to believe, that scripture was God's word:

> If a man should believe Christian Religion wholly, and entirely, and live according to it, such a man, though he should not know or not believe the Scripture to be a Rule of Faith, no nor to be the word of God, my opinion is he may be saved; and my reason is, *because he performes the entire condition of the new Covenant, which is, that we believe the matter of the Gospell, and not that it is contained in these or these Bookes.* So that the Bookes of Scripture are not so much the objects of our faith, as the instruments of conveying it to our understanding.[48]

Chillingworth presents an argument made by Irenaeus in which he claimed that there were "some barbarous Nations, that *believed the Doctrine of Christ, and yet believed not the Scripture to be the Word of God, for they never heard of it, and Faith comes by hearing:*" Chillingworth argued that

> these barbarous people might be saved: therefore men might be saved without believing the Scripture to be the word of God; much more without believing it to be a Rule, and a perfect Rule of Faith. Neither doubt I, but if the bookes of Scripture had been proposed to them by other parts of the Church, where they had been received, and had been doubted of, or even rejected by those barbarous nations, but still by the bare beliefe and practice of Christianity, they might be saved: God requiring of us under pain of damnation, only to believe the verities therein contained, and not the divine Authority of the bookes wherein they are contained...Therefore as an Executor, that should performe the whole will of the dead, should fully satisfy the Law, though he did not believe that Parchment to be his written Will, which indeed is so: So I believe, that he who believes all the particular doctrines which integrate Christianity, and lives according to them, should be saved, though he neither believed nor knew that the Gospels were written by the

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[47]Chillingworth, *Sermon 1*, in *Works*, vol. 3, 15.

[48]*Religion of Protestants*, 2.159.116. My italics.

Evangelists, or the Epistles by the Apostles.[49]
While not denying the centrality of scripture, Chillingworth argued that the decrees of
the new covenant could be performed without knowing scripture. His purpose was to
eliminate all hindrances to salvation, but he seemed to set up a dichotomy between
fundamentals to be believed as a matter of faith, without which one is damned, and
decrees which must be performed, and which alone are sufficient to be saved. That
there is a difference is clear. In a discussion concerning points which Dr. Potter had
brought up in his debate with Wilson, Chillingworth differentiated between fundamental
doctrines of faith and rules of life:

> By *Fundamentalls* he [Dr. Potter] understands *not the Fundamentall
> rules of good life and action*, (though every one of these is to be believed
> to come from God, & therefore vertually includes an Article of Faith;)
> but the Fundamental *doctrines of Faith*; such, as though they have
> influence upon our lives, as every essentiall doctrine of Christianity hath,
> yet we are commanded to believe them, and not to doe them. The assent
> of our understandings is required to them, but no obedience from our
> wills.[50]

His distinction between fundamentals of faith to be believed and fundamental rules of
life decreed by the new covenant in the New Testament set up a diametrically opposed
and irreconcilable problem. He could not argue that there were fundamental points of
faith which were necessary to be believed and then say that it was sufficient only to
perform the conditions of the New Testament. This was a difficulty Chillingworth
could not solve, and perhaps did not realize, and therefore he did not see as a major
problem. This was so, possibly because the fundamentals of faith and rules of life were
set down in the bible, and thus clearly accessible to any reader of scripture, and for those
for whom scripture was unknown, living a virtuous life was "believed to come from
God, & therefore vertually includes an Article of Faith."[51]

Clearly the nature of Chillingworth's rationalism bears some examination.
Chillingworth acknowledged an intellectual debt to Hooker whom he quoted throughout
his work, *The Religion of Protestants*.[52] From Hooker, Chillingworth inherited a

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[49]*Ibid.*, 2.159.116-117.

[50]*Ibid.*, 4.2.193.

[51]*Ibid.*

[52]Chillingworth makes five major references and acknowledgements to
Hooker's *Lawes* in *The Religion of Protestants*. These are found in 2.30-32.64-66,

"medieval-scholastic" notion of the law of reason which viewed the human mind as "the receptacle of divinely implanted truths plainly written for all to perceive".[53] However, Chillingworth developed the notion of reason beyond the medieval-scholastic position, as is evident from his attack on infallibility. He extended Hooker's position on reason to such an extent in his attempt to justify toleration that private judgement became the definitive voice in determining religious authority, which was exactly the position which Hooker was attempting to refute.[54] Reason became a critical faculty used to examine and study the evidence for various propositions to which assent could only be given after analyzing the validity of the arguments.[55] Moreover, what Chillingworth meant by "reason" was not the same as what the scholastics had meant. Their perception of reason, which Hooker followed, assumed the truth of Christianity and their "reason" asserted "the religious truths that it purported to certify."[56] This kind of reason had functioned well prior to the scientific revolution, but it had components which were subjective, involving more than just the intellect, including "faith". Chillingworth, therefore, desired a totally objective 'reason' which would appeal to all people, Christian or not. Griffin argues that Chillingworth's perception of reason is closer to that of Locke, rather than that of Hooker.[57] Cragg claims that Chillingworth and his adherents did not explain clearly what they understood by reason, but that this was because "they were writing...in the days before Locke defined with greater precision the terms crucial to the discussion."[58] Thus, Chillingworth's perception of reason was viewed by his contemporaries as a "dangerous departure".[59] Francis Cheynell, a

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2.85.83, 4.49.217, 5.110.310-311, and 6.3.325.

[53]Orr, 157.

[54]R. Eccleshall, "Richard Hooker and the Peculiarities of the English," 2(1981):73.

[55]Orr, *Reason and Authority,* 157. See also Gerald Cragg, *Freedom and Authority,* 255.

[56]Martin Griffin, *Latitudinarianism,* 92.

[57]*Ibid.*

[58]Cragg, *Freedom and Authority,* 256

[59]*Ibid.,* 160. See also Jordan, *The Development of Religious Toleration,* 386-388.

presbyterian minister presented to the living of Petworth in Sussex in 1643 and the man who cared for Chillingworth during his illness in 1644 after the battle for Arundel Castle, argued that a dependence upon reason advanced "the power of Nature, and destroy[ed] the efficacy of Grace."[60] He rejected the idea, as he perceived it, that reason negated the necessity of "the inward and speciall revelation of the Spirit"[61] and he alleged that Chillingworth had not learned "the first lesson of Christianity, self-deniall."[62] Moreover, in Cheynell's opinion, one must "deny your reason, and submit to faith: Reason tells you that there are some things above reason, and you cannot be so unreasonable as to make reason judge of those things which are above reason."[63]

Chillingworth never claimed that reason was infallible, but rather that reason was the only critical faculty man had to distinguish truth from error, because "reason being a Publique and certain thing [was] exposed to all mens tryall and examination.[64] Falkland would rather follow his reason than follow the Roman church and its claims to infallibility.[65] Reason was the best judge of the Roman church's doctrines: "For the sense of their decrees, I can have no other expounder then reason; which if (though I mistake) I shall not be damned for following, why shall I for mistaking the sense of Scripture?"[66] Reason was a gift from God,[67] and one could "no more refuse or neglect the use of it, [or] rest [oneself] upon the use of other men's reason, than neglect [one's] own."[68] It was better to depend upon one's own reason rather than the decrees of the Roman Church. As Hales pointed out, in his opinion councils did not proceed to conclusions "by weight of reason, but by multitude of votes and suffrages...and I have

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[60]Cheynell, *The Rise, Danger and Growth of Socinianism* (London, 1643), 24.

[61]*Ibid.*, 29.

[62]Cheynell, *"A Letter to the Friends of Mr. Chillingworth,"* preface to *Chillingworthi Novissima.*

[63]*Ibid.*

[64]*Religion of Protestants*, 2.110.95, and Orr, *Reason and Authority*, 179.

[65]Jordan, *Development of Religious Toleration*, 372.

[66]Falkland, *Discourse*, 7.

[67]Hales, "Christian Omnipotency," in *Golden Remains* (London, 1673), 115.

[68]Hales, "Of Enquiry and Private Judgement," 156.

often mused how it comes to pass, that the way which in all other sciences is not able to warrant the poorest conclusion, should be thought sufficient to give authority to conclusions in divinity, the supreme empress of science."[69] In the case of Roman Catholicism, Chillingworth argued that that church required the belief of:

> many things not only above reason but against it...whereas following the Scripture I shall believe many mysteries but no impossibilities; many things above reason, but nothing against it; many things which had they not been reveal'd, reason could never have discover'd, but nothing which by true reason may be confuted: many things which reason cannot comprehend how they can be, but nothing which reason can comprehend that it cannot be. Nay I shall believe nothing which reason will not convince that I ought to believe it: For reason will convince any man, unlesse he be of a perverse mind, that the Scripture is the word of God: And then no reason can be greater than this, God sayes so therefore it is true. Following your Church I must hold many things which to any mans judgement that will give himself the liberty of judgement, will seem much more plainly contradicted by Scripture, then the infallibility of your Church appeares to be confirm'd by it...If I follow your Church I must believe impossibilities, and that with an absolute certainty, upon motives which are confess'd to be but only *Prudentiall* and probable.[70]

Cheynell had picked up on an inconsistency in Chillingworth's thought on this point of believing things above or contrary to reason. While Chillingworth argued that he himself did believe things above reason, contrary to Cheynell's charge, it was reason by which he judged what was above or contrary to reason. The problem here was that Chillingworth argued that many Roman Catholic doctrines were contrary to reason, for example Transubstantiation, but he accepted the doctrine of the Trinity, Incarnation and Resurrection which he argued to be only above reason. Why should the one be against reason and the others above reason and what made this determination valid? Chillingworth does not give a straightforward answer, although his charge that transubstantiation was contrary to reason was related to his argument against infallibility, upon which the doctrine of transubstantiation rested.[71] An answer can be seen, however,

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[69]Hales, "A Tract on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper," 66.

[70]*Religion of Protestants*, 6.62-64.377-378.

[71]Chillingworth, "An Argument against the Infallibility of the present Church of Rome, taken from the Contradictions in your Doctrine of Transubstantiation", in *Works*, vol. 3, 382-386 and *Religion of Protestants*, 4.46.215-6.

in Chillingworth's whole argument in *The Religion of Protestants*. It has already been shown that he perceived reason to be a critical faculty by which a Christian could judge whether a doctrine had its foundations in scripture or in the authority of the church. Therefore, Chillingworth accepted some doctrines to be 'above reason' because they were in the bible or were directly and clearly derived from scripture. He accepted these doctrines because he believed scripture to be God's word and therefore he had to believe even what seemed contrary to reason. Thus, he took these matters on faith.

Chillingworth did not think that reason negated the necessity of faith contrary to what Cheynell had charged. He did believe that a rational faith was superior to a faith based upon insufficient evidence. Wisdom was "not essential to faith, [and] a man may truly beleeve truth, though upon insufficient motives."[72] Faith did not produce an infallible certainty,[73] and faith was, therefore, a belief but not knowledge: "Faith is not knowledge, no more than three is four, but eminently contained in it, so that he that knowes, believes, and something more, but he that believes many times does not know, nay if he doth barely and meerely believe, he doth never know."[74] Faith, because it was only a moral certainty, was "capable of augmentation and diminution."[75] Faith admitted of "degrees; and that as there may be a strong and weak Opinion, so there may be a strong and weak Faith."[76] One's faith could be strengthened or diminished. Therefore, there were different levels of faith, and "if it be but as a *grain of mustard seed*, if it *work by love*, shall certainly avail with him [God], and be accepted of him."[77] God's only requirement for a man's faith was "that we believe the conclusion, as much as the premises deserve, that the strength of our Faith be equall or proportionable to the credibility of the motives to it...Now our faith is an assent to this conclusion, that *the Doctrine of Christianity is true*...whreof (sic) we can have but a Morall certainty."[78] "God requires not any thing but Reason" because reason was the unique quality of

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[72]*Religion of Protestants*, 6.52.373. See also Orr, *Reason and Authority*, 164.

[73]Chillingworth, "Answer to Mr. Peake's Five Questions," undated, Wharton MS. 943, f. 875.

[74]*Religion of Protestants*, 6.2.325. See also Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 95.

[75]*Religion of Protestants*, 6.4.326, 6.2.325.

[76]*Ibid.*, 1.7.35.

[77]*Ibid.*, 1.9.37.

[78]*Ibid.*, 1.8.36.

mankind and,

> what God gives as a reward to believers, is one thing: and what he
> requires of all men, as their duty, is another...To those that believe and
> live according to their faith, he gives by degrees the *spirit of obsignation
> & confirmation*, which makes them know (though how they know not)
> what they did believe...He requires of all, that their Faith should be (as I
> have said) proportionable to the motives and Reasons enforcing to it; he
> will accept of the weakest and lowest degree of Faith, if it be living and
> effectual unto true obedience.[79]

Chillingworth believed that one must believe that the Christian religion was true;
however, he was clear that one need only assent to this probability to the best of one's
ability and reason. If one's faith was not as strong as another's, this did not matter to
God and should not matter to others since "faith worketh by Charity, and Charity is the
effect of faith."[80]

Charity was important to Chillingworth's argument in the *Religion of Protestants*
and he devoted the whole first chapter to the question of charity. Wilson had argued that
"amongst men of different Religions, one is only capable of being saved," although
Catholics, who believed themselves to be the only true church, did "pray for their
[Protestants'] Conversion."[81] Chillingworth objected to the Catholic belief that only
members of one church could be saved and argued that Catholics did not support their
charitable words with actions:

> You must not only not be peremptory, in damning Protestants, but you
> must hope well of their Salvation: and out of this hope, you must doe for
> them as well as others, those, as you conceive, Charitable offices...which
> usually you doe, for those of whose Salvation you are well and charitably
> perswaded; (for I believe you will never conceive so well of Protestants,
> as to assure your selves they goe directly to heaven.) These things when
> you doe I shall believe you think charitably as you speak. But until
> then...so may I say to you, *Quid verba audiam cum facta non videam?* [I
> hear words spoken but I do not see actions (to support these words)] To
> what purpose should you give us charitable words, which presently you

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[79]*Ibid.*, 1.8-9.36-37.

[80]*Ibid.*, 6.4.326.

[81]Wilson, *Charity Maintained*, 27.

retract again, by denying us your charitable actions."[82]
Charity had to be extended to those of different beliefs and it was not right that Catholics "affright poore people out of their Religion, with telling them, that *by the confession of both sides, your way is safe, but in your judgement, ours is damnable.*"[83]

Charity was a fundamental aspect of Chillingworth's view on religious toleration and he was adamant that charity was necessary for salvation: "Faith, Hope, & Charity, are necessary to salvation, so that whosoever wants any of them cannot obtain it, and he which hath them all cannot faile of it."[84] Charity was "required as a necessary disposition in the person to be justified, and that though in regard of the imperfection of it, no man can be justified without it."[85] Charity needed to be exercised by Christians when it came to differing opinions. Chillingworth used the debate over predestination as an example of the necessity for charity. For those who did not believe in predestination, it was still required "to hope well of their hope: and to assure ourselves that it cannot be offensive, but rather most acceptable to God, if notwithstanding this diversity of opinion, we embrace each other with the strict embraces of love & communion."[86] Charity had to be granted to all those who differed in opinion. The Roman church, in Chillingworth's view, was not charitable to others: "to you and your Church we leave it, to separate Christians from the Church, and to proscribe them from heaven upon triviall and trifling causes."[87] Protestants were more charitable regarding differences of opinion:

> As for ourselves, we conceive a charitable judgement of our Brethren and their errors, though untrue, much more pleasing to God then a true judgement, if it be uncharitable; and therefore shall alwaies choose (if we erre) to erre on the milder and more mercifull part, and rather to retain those in our Communion which deserve to be ejected, then to eject those that deserve to be retain'd.[88]

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[82]*Religion of Protestants*, 1.4.32. My translation.

[83]*Ibid.*, 1.4.32.

[84]*Ibid.*, 7.30.405.

[85]*Ibid.*, 7.32.406.

[86]*Ibid.*, 7.33.407.

[87]*Ibid.*, 7.33.407.

[88]*Ibid.*, 7.33.407.

Charity was necessary not only because it was the greatest of the theological virtues,[89] but because a person's reason could lead to a faulty interpretation of scripture. Charity had to be shown to one's opponents because:

> men of honest and upright hearts, true lovers of God and of truth, such as desire, above all things, to know Gods will and to doe it, may, without any fault at all, some goe one way, and some another, & some (& those as good men as either of the former) suspend their judgements, and expect some *Elias to solve doubts*, and to reconcile repugnancies. Now in all such Questions one side or other (which soever it is) holds that which indeed is opposite to the sense of the Scripture, which God intended; for it is impossible that God should intend Contradictions. But then this intended sense is not so fully declared, but that they which oppose it may verily believe that they indeed maintaine it, and have great shew of reason to induce them to believe so; and therefore are not to be damn'd, as men opposing that which they either knowe to be a truth delivered in Scripture, or have no probable Reason to believe the contrary; *but rather in Charity to be acquitted and absolv'd, as men who endeavour to finde the Truth, but fayle of it through humane frailty.*[90]

Charity clearly meant more than toleration of one's opponents; one had to love one's enemy. Chillingworth believed that one had to will the good of those who held different opinions. This was more than toleration, which allowed the right for people to hold diverse views, but lacked the love and goodwill to one's opponents which charity gave. Charity meant having to accept others as they were despite differences in belief, to allow them to remain in the church and to hope that they came to see that their position was erroneous. Charity was an expression of faith, and a person's faith could grow or diminish, but faith was not knowledge.

Chillingworth made a distinction between knowing and believing and argued that the basis of faith was grounded upon evidences to which one was not required to have a knowledge above sense or science as the Roman Catholics demanded: "Experience shews, and reason confirmes, that a firm faith, though not so certain as sense or science, may be able to encounter and overcome our will and affections. And therefore it followes...that faith which is not a most certain and infallible knowledge may be true and

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[89]See 1 Corinthians 13, especially verse 13: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity." King James Version.

[90]*Ibid.*, 1.13.41. My italics.

divine and saving faith."[91] Knowledge granted a certainty and firmness of belief which faith could not, and faith was, therefore, more open to shifting on its own without a rational basis. While a rational consideration of Christianity could not give absolute certainty of faith, a rational faith was better than a faith based only upon one's "education, and the authority of their Parents and Teachers."[92] The truth was identical in both cases and an absolute certainty would not change the truth, only the level of assent, but a faith without a rational foundation was a faith taken on chance. Religious education does not seem to be something which Chillingworth deemed to be necessary; he appeared to hold that education of any sort was only the indoctrination of someone else's beliefs. He was clear that the only necessity for salvation was to believe scripture. If one truly believed that the scriptures were "the certain and only way to happiness, which is perfect and eternal, it would be studied by all men with all diligence[.]"[93] Problems were encountered when men failed to do their duty to study the bible:

> Seeing therefore most Christians are so cold and negligent in the study of it [scripture], prefer all other business, all other pleasures, before it; is there not great reason to fear that many who pretend to believe firmly believe it not at all, or very weakly and faintly?...Seeing therefore most of us are so strangely careless, so grossly negligent of it, is there not great reason to fear, that though we have professors and protesters in abundance, yet the faithful...are in a manner failed from the children of men? What but this can be the cause that men are so commonly ignorant of so many articles, and particular mandates of it, which yet are as manifest in it as if they were written with beams of the sun?[94]

Contrary to his opponents who feared Socinianism and Pelagianism from Chillingworth's writings, Chillingworth believed that a rational faith was acceptable to God and that a rational faith was not a hindrance to salvation. A faith based upon reason was a true faith,[95] and it was sufficient for a person to have faith and obey the gospels and not be

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[91] *Ibid.*, 6.5.327.

[92] *Ibid.*, 2.49.71.

[93] Chillingworth, *Sermon I*, in *Works*, vol. 3, 8.

[94] *Ibid.*, 8-9.

[95] Chillingworth, "Answer to Mr. Peake's Five Questions," Wharton MSS. 943, f.859.

> vexed and tortured in mind by not being able to discern, whether their
> faith be of the right kind or not, but may be sure, that either their human
> faith doth justify them of itself, or is certainly accompanied with divine
> faith secretly infused into them, whereby they are and shall be justified. It
> is sufficient.[96]

Faith was given to man by different means, sufficient and supernatural grace. Faith
could be obtained through reason, or by the sight of miracles. Either way, faith was
attributed to God as the principle cause: "All true...faith whatsoever the means and
instrument be by which it is wrought, whether by the sight of miracles, or the persuasion
of reason...is to be...ascribed to God and his spirit as the principle cause."[97] A rational
faith was as worthy of justification as was a supernatural faith.[98] The two were not
incompatible, or mutually exclusive. Moreover, because Chillingworth held that reason
need not be infallible to be useful, he did not hold the fear of a flawed, imperfect human
reason characteristic of his opponents.

One of Chillingworth's sermons preached before the king elucidates his position
on justification and grace and the relation of faith. Whether one had a rational or
supernatural faith, it was only God's grace which made one righteous.[99] Faith itself had
no influence upon justification and Chillingworth was clear that salvation depended
upon God's mercy because justification was "an immanent, internal action of God, in
which there is no cooperation of any other agent".[100] Chillingworth understood the
Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone to be "a Point of great weight and
importance, if it be rightly understood."[101] But faith alone did not justify. Rather, one
had to have hope of justification which could only be effected through God's mercy.
Protestants

> have reason to esteem it [justification by faith alone] a principall and
> necessary duty of a Christian, to place his hope of justification and
> salvation, not in the perfection of his own righteousnesse, (which if it be
> imperfect will not justify,) but only in the mercies of God through Christs

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[96]*Ibid.*, Wharton MSS. 943, f. 859, 864.

[97]*Ibid.*, Wharton MSS. 943, f. 871, 863.

[98]*Ibid.*, Wharton MSS. 943, f. 865, 867.

[99]Chillingworth, *Sermon VIII*, in *Works*, vol. 3, 220.

[100]*Ibid.*, 237-238.

[101]*Religion of Protestants*, 7.33.406.

satisfaction: and yet notwithstanding this, nay the rather for this, may
preserve themselves in the right temper of good Christians, which is a
happy mixture and sweet composition of confidence and feare.[102]
Justification was a mystery, but it could be sought after by faith.[103]

Chillingworth attempted to discern what "respect and dependence" faith and justification had on one another.[104] Faith could be considered in several respects. There was the principal object of evangelical faith which was Christ, faith as an act or duty, seen as the obedience of faith, and the word of faith, as in the bible. These senses of faith "come all to one pass; for in effect it is all one to say, We are justified by our obedience or righteousness of faith, and to say, We are justified by the gospel, which prescribes that obedience."[105] Obedience to God's law was necessary to salvation and Chillingworth did "heartily wish" that the doctrine of justification by faith alone had not been corrupted into "a Doctrine of Liberty, not a Doctrine that turns hope into presumption, and carnall security, though it may justly be feared, that many licentious persons, taking it by halfes, have made this wicked use of it."[106] The doctrine of justification by faith alone, in his opinion, should never be preached except it be joined with this: "that universall obedience is necessary to salvation."[107] Obedience to the old covenant in the Old Testament was necessary to be saved,[108] as it was to the new covenant, but it was by God's grace that his will was performed: "God bestows upon us grace, whereby we are enabled to perform his will; and after we have done our duty, that he will freely, and not as wages, bestow upon us the reward thereof.[109] Justification then, was hoped for as the promised reward of having faith although salvation depended

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[102]*Ibid.*

[103]Chillingworth, *Sermon VIII*, in *Works*, vol. 3, 238.

[104]*Ibid.*, 229.

[105]*Ibid.*, 230.

[106]*Religion of Protestants*, 7.32.406.

[107]*Ibid.*

[108]Chillingworth, *Sermon VIII*, 231.

[109]*Ibid.*, 234-235. See also *Religion of Protestants*, 7.30.405.

"upon conditions; namely perseverance."[110] One must, therefore, always have faith to be saved, although as Chillingworth had made clear in *The Religion of Protestants*, there were varying degrees of faith. Hope for salvation is akin to assurance of salvation because of God's promise and hope for salvation could, by God's grace, be changed into confidence.[111] Accordingly,

> Since we know assuredly that as God has been so gracious to begin this good work in us, so he will not be wanting to perfect it even to the end, if we will but perform our parts, which he has already given us more than sufficient grace to do, and will never fail to supply us with more for the asking...since we know that not one, nor ten, nor a hundred sins shall be able so irreparably to cast us out of God's favour, but that he will be willing, upon our repentance, especially calling to mind his old memories, to restore us again to our lost happiness.[112]

Chillingworth believed that any person who had faith could be saved because God gave sufficient grace to man to perform his duty to God. Supernatural or efficient grace (grace which effected sanctification irresistibly), was clearly not the only means by which one could have a saving faith. Chillingworth argued that both Calvinists and Roman Catholics took "away the distinction of sufficient and effectual grace, and indeed [held] none to be sufficient, but only that which is effectual."[113] Sufficient grace could be resisted by the human will, and Chillingworth believed that grace should be resistible. If grace was irresistible then one did not chose God freely:

> Neither is God lavish in superfluities, and therefore having given us meanes sufficient for our direction, and power sufficient to make use of these meanes, he will not constraine or necessitate us to make use of these meanes. *For that were to crosse the end of our Creation, which was to be glorified by our free obedience: whereas necessity and freedome cannot stand together.*[114]

If grace was accepted by the individual, as Chillingworth made clear throughout his

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[110]Chillingworth, *Sermon VIII*, 249.

[111]*Ibid.*, 252.

[112]*Ibid.*, 251.

[113]*Religion of Protestants*, 7.30.405.

[114]*Ibid.*, 2.93.86. My italics.

whole argument in the *Religion of Protestants*, sufficient grace produced a faith which was acceptable to God.[115] A rational faith was assisted then, as with all faith, by God's grace, for Chillingworth did not assert the self-sufficiency of reason since he clearly advocated the necessity of grace.[116] Like Chillingworth, both Hales and Falkland regarded grace as necessary for reason to find the truth in scripture. Falkland claimed that "when [he himself spoke] thus of finding the truth by Reason, [he intended] not to exclude the Grace of God, which [he doubted] not (for as much as is necessarie to Salvation)."[117] This grace did not infuse knowledge without reason, but it "works by it...and dispels these Mists of Passions, which doe wrap up Truth from our understandings."[118] For Hales, he regarded reason as "being illuminated by revelation out of the written word."[119] Whether or not reason was guided by grace did not matter, for those "who follow their reason in the interpretation of the Scripture, God will either give his Grace for assistance to find the Truth, or his pardon if they miss it."[120] Thus, one had a moral obligation to use one's reason to search for the truth, but would not be damned if God withheld his grace and fell into error because heresy was an act of the will.[121]

Chillingworth advocated religious charity, or what would later be termed toleration, evident in his assertion that all men could be saved if they believed. Chillingworth argued that anyone who professed to be a Christian should be welcome

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[115]*Ibid.*, 1.7.34-35, 3.34.146.

[116]"The liberals stressed the rightful place of reason in religion; they never suggested that it could be regarded as sufficient by itself." Cragg, *Freedom and Authority*, 256. W. K. Jordan argues this point less clearly: "Chillingworth placed almost complete reliance in the power of reason." See *The Development of Religious Toleration*, 387. Elsewhere, however, Jordan says that Chillingworth had "an unlimited faith in the power of human reason" and that salvation could only be attained by means of "private judgement". 383, 390, also 377-400 *passim*. Jordan does not make explicit that Chillingworth believed in the necessity of grace.

[117]Falkland, *Discourse*, 117.

[118]*Ibid.*, 119.

[119]Hales, "A Tract on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper," 69.

[120]Falkland, *Discourse*, 5.

[121]Hales, "A Tract on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper," 64.

within the church. Unlike Hooker, Chillingworth's appeal for toleration allowed for a broad latitude of thought. Hooker had argued for peace in the church, but his position did not allow the freedom of thought as did Chillingworth's because Hooker placed a far greater emphasis upon the authority of the church.[122] Hooker was, in fact, intolerant of dissent if it disturbed the peace of the commonwealth, but tended towards comprehension in matters of dogma, which became the platform for seventeenth-century apologists of the Church of England.[123] Hooker contended that the church was the first cause leading man to belief and that to be "of a contrary minde without cause" was an "impudent thing for any man."[124] Chillingworth quoted Hooker on this, but he added a gloss to Hooker's text in a footnote, stating that Hooker "presseth a mans modesty more then his reason."[125] Hooker was clear that the church had authority in religious matters since he argued that "for redresse of professed errors and schismes it is and must be the Churches care that all maie in outward conformitie be one."[126] Furthermore,

> by experience we all know, that the first outward motive leading men so to esteeme of the scripture is the authority of Gods Church. For when we know the whole Church of God hath that opinion of the scripture, we

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[122]Hooker, LEP 3.8.13-14, FLE I. 230-232. See Orr, *Reason and Authority*, 110-112 for the differences between Hooker and Chillingworth on this question of authority. See G.H.M. Posthumus Meyjes, "Protestant Irenicism in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *End of Strife*, edited by David Loades (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1984), 78 for a more detailed explanation of the difference between irenicism and toleration.

[123]Joseph Lecler, *Toleration and the Reformation*, translated by T. L. Westow (NewYork: Association Press, 1960), 400. W. K. Jordan also recognizes Hooker's intolerance in matters of religion. Hooker "feared that full liberty of personal interpretation would lead to spiritual chaos, in which he was quite correct, and he was willing to submit private reason to public reason, legislatively determined...Hooker... was alternately tolerant and intolerant." See *The Development of Religious Toleration from the Beginning of the English Reformation to the Death of Queen Elizabeth* (Cambridge: University Press, 1932), 231.

[124]Hooker, quoted by Chillingworth in *Religion of Protestants*, 2.30.65. See Hooker, LEP 3.8.13-14, FLE I.231.

[125]*Ibid.*

[126]LEP 5.68.7, FLE 2. 352.

> judge it even at the first an impudent thinge for any man bredde and
> brought up in the Church to bee of a contrary mind without cause.
> Afterwards the more we bestow our labor in reading or hearing the
> misteries thereof, the more we find that the thing it selfe doth answer our
> received opinion concerning it. So that the former inducement prevailing
> somewhat with us before, doth now much more prevaile...[127]

Chillingworth, however, went on to say in the footnote that Hooker implied that there
could be just cause to be of a contrary mind and "therefore the authority of the Church is
not the pause whereon we rest: we had need of more assurance...naturall reason then
built on principles common to all men, is the last resolution; unto which the Churches
authority is but the first inducement."[128] Thus, Chillingworth's interpretation of
Hooker's meaning was not what Hooker himself intended, for Chillingworth made
private reason the final authority.

Hooker placed a high value on the authority of the church. The church "hath
authoritie to make canons, lawes, and decrees" touching church discipline and polity as
was done during the Apostles' times.[129] Moreover, Hooker believed that

> men of wisdome and judgement wil grant, that the Church, *in this point
> especially, is furnished with reason*, to stop the mouthes of hir impious
> adversaries...so likewise that even to our own selves it needeth caution
> and explication how the testimony of the spirit may be discerned, by what
> means it may be knowen, lest men thinke that the spirit of god doth
> testifie those things which the spirit of error suggesteth.[130]

Hooker, unlike Chillingworth, did not trust individual reason to be capable of being the
final authority in religious matters because "the spirit of error" could deceive men so
that they were misguided into taking error for truth.

Chillingworth apparently overlooked many aspects of Hooker's thought, perhaps
because they did not suit his purposes or because he did not see the extent of the
differences between them. Not only had Hooker thought highly of the church Fathers,
especially Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and other scholastics, but he had defended
ecclesiastical customs, especially traditions and ceremonies in the church which were

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[127]Hooker, LEP 3.8.14, FLE I.231.

[128]*Religion of Protestants*, 2.30.65.

[129]Hooker, LEP 3.10.7, FLE I. 245.

[130]Hooker, LEP 3.8.15, FLE I. 232. My italics.

seen as popish but which did not go against scripture.[131] Hooker quoted Augustine, saying that "Of things harmlesse whatsoever there is, which the whole Church doth observe throughout the world; to argue for any mans immunitie from observing the same, it were a point of most insolent madnes."[132] Chillingworth, however, while not believing that these ceremonies were threats to salvation, did think that such practices tended to subvert and suppress the truth, especially when enforced by church authority.[133] Hooker also did not believe that public criticism of ecclesiastical or secular laws was a good practice because he feared disruption of the commonwealth. The authority of the church in regard to ceremonies and polity should be submitted to or else "the utter confusion of [the] Church" would ensue.[134] He argued that "schism and disturbance in the churche" would grow

> if all men mighte think what they liste and speake openly what they thinke. Therfore by a decree agreed upon by the Bishops and confirmed by her majesties aucthority it was ordered that erroneous doctrine if it were taughte publickly should not be publickly refuted but that notice therof should be gyven unto suche as are by her hignes appointed to heare and to determyn suche cawses.[135]

Laws which had been ratified could be appealed, but "not when a part refuseth the lawes which the whole hath orderly agreed upon."[136] Moreover, Hooker argued that dissent

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[131]See Book four of Hooker's *Lawes*. Hooker's references to the church Fathers and his esteem for Augustine and Thomas Aquinas are evident throughout the *Lawes*. See also J. W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1951), 186-189.

[132]Hooker, LEP 4.14.6, FLE I. 340.

[133]*Religion of Protestants*, 5.91.293. See also 2.1.51-52, 6.41.362-363.

[134]Hooker, LEP 5.10.1, FLE 2. 46.

[135]Hooker, LEP Pref.9.3, FLE I.52 and LEP 5. Dedication 4-5, FLE 2.2-3.

[136]Hooker, *Master Hookers Answer to the Supplication that Master Travers made to the Counsell*, in FLE V.247. See also LEP pref.5.2., FLE I.28. Hooker did not think that the puritans should oppose church government: "As for the orders which are established, sith equitie and reason, the law of nature, God and man, do all favour that which is in being, till orderlie judgement of decision be given against it; it is but justice to exact of you, and perversnes in you it should be to denie thereunto your willing obedience. Not that I judge it a thing allowable for men to observe those laws which in

was based upon only probable conjecture, for "even such as readiest to cite for one thing five hundred sentences of holy scripture; what warrant have they, that any one of them doth meane the thing for which it is alleaged?...So that now and then they ground themselves on humaine authoritie, even when they most pretende divine."[137] This is not quite the position that Chillingworth held. Chillingworth himself was more willing to engage in controversy:

> Nothing can be more evidently unjust, then to force weak men by the profession of a religion which they believe not...out of a vain and needlesse feare, least they may possibly disturb their temporall quietnesse. There is no danger to any state from any mans opinion; unlesse it be such an opinion by which disobedience to authority, or impiety is taught or licenc'd, which sort, I confesse may justly be punished as well as other faults, or unlesse this sanguinary doctrine bee joyn'd with it, that it is lawfull for him by humane violence to enforce others to it. Therefore, if Protestants did offer violence to other mens consciences and compell them to embrace their Reformation, I excuse them not: much lesse if they did so to the sacred Persons of Kings, and those that were in authority over them, who ought to be so secur'd from violence, that even their unjust and tyrannous violence, though it may be avoided...yet may it not be resisted by opposing violence against it.[138]

Chillingworth allowed for diverse opinions to be discussed publically, but at times he cautioned submission in order that peace be maintained. He thought that certain decrees, while not binding, should at least be afforded "an outward submission for publique peace-sake."[139] He also did not allow free license for interpreting scripture, as Wilson had argued was the case if the church could not determine controversies:

> If by a *private spirit*, you mean, a particular perswasion that a Doctrine is true, which some men pretend, but cannot prove to come from the spirit

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their hearts they are steadfastly perswaded to be against the law of God: but your perswasion in this case ye are all bound for the time to suspend, and in otherwise doing, ye offend against God by troubling his Church without just or necessary cause." LEP pref. 6.5-6., FLE I..33.

[137]Hooker, LEP 2.7.9., FLE 1.184-5. See Orr, *Reason and Authority*, 156-181, *passim*.

[138]*Religion of Protestants*, 5.96.297-298.

[139]*Ibid.*, 4.18.200.

of God: I say to referre Controversies to Scripture, is not to referre them to this kind of private Spirit. For is there not a manifest difference between saying, *the spirit of God tels me that this is the meaning of such a Text* (which no man can possibly know to be true, it being a secret thing) & between saying, *these & these Reasons I have to shew, that this or that is true doctrine, or that this or that is the meaning of such a Scripture?* Reason being a publique and certain thing and exposed to all mens tryall and examination.[140]

Chillingworth never clearly stated that a control was needed in the interpretation of scripture. This was a close as he came to limiting scriptural exposition, by making clear that any interpretation of the bible had to be founded upon sound reasons, which were open to public critique. He stated: "Neither doe we follow any private men, but only the Scripture, the word of God as our rule, and reason, which is also the gift of God given to direct us in all our actions, in the use of this rule."[141] Thus, Chillingworth did not allow for 'private reason' to be the basis of justification of scriptural interpretation without qualification.

Chillingworth argued that toleration and unity could and must co-exist. This would be achieved by removing the "Wals of separation...Require of Christians only to believe Christ...in a word, take away tyranny...and restore Christians to their just and full liberty of captivating their understanding to Scripture only."[142] Chillingworth's views closely followed those of Hugo Grotius. In Grotius' opinion scripture enabled all people, "even the uneducated, to find out in a straightforward way enough to attain salvation...He [God] has made clear what is necessary to learn so that nobody is excluded from such an obvious truth by slow-wittedness...as long as he is susceptible to reason."[143] Chillingworth was in accord with Grotius:

> If instead of being zealous Papists, earnest Calvinists, rigid Lutherans, they would become themselves, and be content that others should be plain and honest Christians, if all men would believe the Scripture, and freeing themselves from prejudice and passion, would syncerely endeavour to finde the true sense of it...[for] who does not see that...all necessary truths, are plainly and evidently set down in Scripture, there

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[140]*Ibid.*, 2.110.94-95.

[141]*Ibid.*, 6.55.375.

[142]*Ibid.*, 4.16.198.

[143]Grotius, *Meletius*, sect. 55., 120.

> would of necessity be among all men, *in all things necessary*, Unity of
> Opinion?...By which meanes, all Schisme and Heresy, would be banished
> in the world.[144]

Like Grotius, Chillingworth argued that,

> Christians must be taught to set a higher value upon these high points of
> faith and obedience wherein they agree, then upon these matters of lesse
> moment wherein they differ, and understand that agreement in those,
> ought to be more effectuall to joyne them in one Communion, then their
> difference on other things of lesse moment to divide them. When I say,
> *in one Communion*, I mean, in a common proffession of those articles of
> faith, wherein all consent...For why should men be more rigid then
> God?[145]

The church, then, for Chillingworth, was the agent by which religious peace, and in
consequence political peace, would be achieved. Grotius argued that there should be
only a limited number of articles of faith and these should be restricted "to those few
that are the most self-evident...if people err even on matters of some importance, the
only thing we can do is not to accuse them with hateful incriminations for the results of
their unintended error, but to relieve the misery of their ignorance by a kindly
explanation."[146] Compassion for others and kindness in "instructing those who err in
respect of religion and morals" was of utmost importance.[147] Although Chillingworth
had probably never read the *Meletius*,[148] his own work echos Grotius' thought and desire
for toleration and an abhorrence for the fighting among Christians.

Both Grotius and Chillingworth believed that violence did not bring men to faith
and it could "breed forme without, & Atheisme within."[149] *"Nothing is more against*

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[144]*Religion of Protestants*, 2.81.180. My italics.

[145]*Ibid.*, 4.40.210

[146]Grotius, *Meletius*, sect. 91., 133-134.

[147]*Ibid.*, sect. 70., 127.

[148]G.H.M. Posthumus Meyjes discovered the manuscript in 1984. He believes
that the work "had already passed into oblivion" in Grotius' own time despite
references to it in his correspondence prior to, but not after, 1612, and in an apologetic
treatise. See the introduction to Meyjes' translation of *Meletius*.

[149]*Religion of Protestants*, 5.96.297. On Grotius' desire for peace and an end to
war see Meyjes, "Hugo Grotius as an irenicist" in *The World of Hugo Grotius (1583-*

Religion then to force Religion" and a result of such force was "the immortalizing the greater and more lamentable divisions of Christendome and the world."[150] Force and

> worldly terrour may prevaile so far as to make men professe a religion which they believe not...but to force, either any man to believe what he believes not, or any honest man to dissemble what he does not believe, all the Powers in the World are too weak, with all the powers of Hell, to assist them.[151]

Grotius believed that the "disease" of violence, which had begun "from the moment that the Christian name had become widespread" had "grown to such an extent that it cannot possibly go on any longer."[152] He was horrified that hatred and rivalry had led to wars which "started under no other pretext than that of the very religion whose purpose is peace."[153] Peace was the essence of Christianity for Grotius,[154] and it "was the church which cemented society, visibly and tangibly."[155] "To further peace among Christians", Grotius asserted, people "are obliged to destroy those dogmas which disturb political peace. It is better to be a good citizen than a good Christian."[156] Once peace was achieved among the Christian states, Grotius believed that peace in the church would follow and thus he emphasized the necessity of political peace and good citizenship over

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1645), (Amsterdam-Maarssen: Holland University Press, 1984), 47-48.

[150]*Religion of Protestants*, 5.96.297.

[151]*Ibid.*, 2.18.60.

[152]Grotius, *Meletius*, sect. 2, 103.

[153]Ibid., sect.2, p. 104. Ultimately, Grotius came to the belief that a union of Protestants was impossible unless a reunification with Rome was attempted at the same time. He had originally believed that unity could begin to be achieved if Protestants united among themselves, but he saw that this would never occur because Calvinists were opposed to any peace and protestants would never unite under a single church polity. See Meyjes, "Hugo Grotius as an irenicist," 54-55.

[154]Meyjes, "Hugo Grotius as an irenicist," 48.

[155]*Ibid.*, 62.

[156]Grotius, quoted by Meyjes in "Hugo Grotius as an irenicist", 63.

being a good Christian.[157] Chillingworth himself believed that there were only two ways by which unity would occur. Since there was little hope of ending controversies "till the World be ended" and since "God hath authoriz'd no man to force all men to *Unity of Opinion*" man must be content "to persuade others unto an *Unity of Charity and mutuall toleration.*"[158] This could be achieved "by taking away diversity of opinions touching matters of Religion: The other [way] by shewing that the diversity of opinions, which is among the severall Sects of Christians, ought to be no hindrance to their Unity in Communion."[159]

While Chillingworth's ideas concerning unity and intellectual freedom were not unique amongst his friends at Great Tew, these views were perceived as dangerous to the church by Roman Catholics, Calvinists and radical Puritans who upheld a rigid scripturalism and for whom reason was considered to be corrupted by the fall. The Laudian church, however, which attempted to enforce ceremonies and which pursued ecclesiastical improvement for both the clergy and church buildings, was more lenient with regard to theological diversity. Laud himself was theologically tolerant.[160] That this is the case is clearly evident in Laud's approval of having *The Religion of Protestants* published in full, despite its obvious departure from the Laudian position of the church and tradition. Laud argued that the Church of England was "not such a shrew to her children as to deny her blessing, or denounce an anathema against them, if some peaceably dissent in some particulars remoter from the foundation, as your

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[157]Grotius believed that the church and religion belonged under the authority of the state, a view which stemmed from his interpretation of natural law and scripture. Theology did not contribute much to Grotius' irenicism, rather it was founded upon a "strong juridical nature". See Meyjes, "Hugo Grotius as an irenicist," 50, 53. The state was to ensure that its citizens led a life of virtue and piety and the function of the church was to edify the community. It did not occur to Grotius for "one moment...that the church has been entrusted with a unique secret or that she represents a system of values which transcends rational and moral categories." See 51, 53, 54.

[158]*Religion of Protestants*, 2.85.84.

[159]*Ibid*, 4.39.209.

[160]See Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud, 1573-1645* (MacMillan and Co. Ltd.: London, 1962), 338; *idem*, Anglicans *and Puritans*, 207, and Arthur Middleton, *Fathers and Anglicans: The Limits of Orthodoxy* (Gracewing: Herefordshire, 2001), 140.

[Roman Catholic] Schoolmen differ."[161] Moreover, in Laud's opinion,

> the Church of England never declared, that every one of her articles are fundamental in the faith. For it is one thing to say, No one of them is superstitious or erroneous; and quite another to say, Everyone of them is fundamental, and that in every part of it, to all men's belief. Besides, the Church of England prescribes only to her own children, and by those articles provides but for her peaceable consent in those doctrines of truth. But the Church of Rome severely imposes her doctrine upon the world, upon pain of damnation.[162]

Laud was friends with men whose views differed greatly from his own. Lord Clarendon and John Seldon, both lawyers, were Laud's close friends and Clarendon told Laud to his face criticisms he had heard about Laud and that he was seen as the cause of the country's troubles. Besides Chillingworth, Laud became friends with John Hales.[163] What is clear is that Laud appreciated and respected learning and did not condemn a man "whose convictions were intellectually held and rationally defended."[164] Laud's position on theological liberty suggests that this was why he allowed *The Religion of Protestants* to be published, but also because Chillingworth was adamant that the religion of the Protestant churches was based solely on scripture, an opinion with which Laud was in agreement.[165] As Chillingworth cried, "The Bible. The Bible, I say, The Bible only is the Religion of Protestants!"[166]

Chillingworth's desire for unity meant that he championed charity and the acceptance of differences in religious opinion. His call for toleration and freedom of thought, however, was alarming to his contemporaries because he appeared to destroy organized religion.[167] By arguing that all professing Christians were indeed Christian, he opened the church to everyone and this was appalling to Catholic and Protestant

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[161]Laud, *Conference with Fisher*, 59.

[162]*Ibid.*, 60.

[163]See Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud*, 334-338.

[164]*Ibid.*, 338.

[165]Laud, *Conference with Fisher*, 88.

[166]*Religion of Protestants*, 6.56.375.

[167]Jordan, *Development of Religious Toleration*, 394 and Murdoch, *The Sun at Noon*, 117.

alike.[168] Chillingworth, however, did not intend to destroy the church, but only to ensure that the church did not infringe upon the right and requirement of the individual to think freely. The Church of England itself never claimed to bind mens' consciences or beliefs authoritatively,[169] and subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles was not required of all members of the Church of England, only its clergy. The Articles themselves were left ambiguous so that various interpretations could be inferred.[170] As has been made clear, Chillingworth did not believe that the visible church on earth was infallible and therefore it was subject to error, as was the Roman church. Therefore, it was necessary that "every man in the world ought to judge for himselfe, what Religion is truest."[171] For Chillingworth, the church was only "a society of men, whereof every one...hath freewill in believing."[172] He believed that since Christ's ascension there was always, "in some place or other a Visible true Church on earth: *I mean a company of men, that professed at least so much truth as was absolutely necessary for their Salvation. And I believe that there will be somewhere or other such a Church to the Worlds end.*"[173] He did not, however, believe that it was necessary to believe that there would always be a visible church on earth and to believe so was not "a damnable heresy."[174]

The church was not necessary to salvation and it was not the case that "*every man for all affaires of his soule must have recourse to some congregation*" as the Catholics averred.[175] There was a visible church in the world, but this did not mean that there had to be a visible church, although Chillingworth himself believed that "there

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[168]*Ibid.*, 379; McLachlan, *Socinianism*, 55 and Cragg, *Freedom and Authority*, 269.

[169]Orr, *Reason and Authority*, 120.

[170]See the Preface in W. H. Griffith Thomas, *The Principles of Theology, An Introduction to the Thirty-nine Articles* (Baker Book House: Michigan, 1979) and E. J. Bicknell, *A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England* (Robert MacLehose and Co. Ltd., Glasgow, 1960), 7-21.

[171]*Religion of Protestants*, 6.13.333.

[172]*Ibid.*, 3.34.146.

[173]*Answer to the Preface*, sect.18. My italics.

[174]*Ibid.* See also *Religion of Protestants*, 5.20.259.

[175]*Religion of Protestants*, 5.17.258.

ought to be a Church, & this Church ought to be Catholique [universal],"[176] but he reiterated that the only necessity for salvation was "to know the doctrine of Christ, and live according to it."[177] Sacraments and ceremonies he granted were notes of a visible church, but they were not integral to the church and the church could exist without these notes. Christ, he granted, did found *"a visible church, stored with all helps necessary to salvation, particularly with sufficient meanes to beget and conserve faith, to maintain unity, and compose schisms, to discover and condeme heresies, and to determine all controversies in Religion,* which were necessary to be determin'd", but not all controversies were necessary to be determined.[178] The visible church,

> shall alwaies without faile propose so much of Gods revelation, as is sufficient to bring men to Heaven...yet it may sometimes adde to this revelation things superfluous, nay hurtfull, nay in themselves damnable, though not unpardonable...and therefore it is possible, without sinne, to resist in some things the Visible Church.[179]

Only a causeless separation qualified as being schismatical,[180] but there could be "no just cause to forsake the Church absolutely and simply in all things, that is, to cease being a member of the Church."[181] Instead of separating from the church, disputes concerning rites and ceremonies should be discussed *"modestly and respectfully."*[182] Chillingworth regarded the church as a group of people who called themselves Christian and as Christians it was intolerable that they should be divided, particularly over what he considered to be non-fundamentals. He abhorred what happened to his country with the outbreak of civil war and believed that if,

> this hypocrisy, this resting in outward performances, were so odious to God under the law, a religion full of shadows and ceremonies; certainly it will be much more odious to do so under the gospel, *a religion of much more simplicity,* and exacting so much the greater sincerity of the heart,

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[176]*Ibid.,* 5.41.268.

[177]*Ibid.* See also 2.93.86.

[178]*Ibid.,* 1.7.34.

[179]*Ibid.,* 2.164.119.

[180]*Ibid.,* 5.30.264.

[181]*Ibid.,* 5.73.283.

[182]*Ibid.,* 5.104.305.

> even because it disburdens the outward man of the performance of legal
> rites and observances.[183]

The ignorance of men had brought disunity and war to England, as in other parts of the
world and Chillingworth, who did not think that the government could be violently
opposed, decided to take up arms for the side of the Royalists in defence of his beliefs
and died after the siege on Arundel castle about the end of January, 1643/4.

Chillingworth believed that human nature, which was corrupted by the fall, was
not left totally destitute. Reason, a gift from God, could be used in the search for truth
and salvation. On the surface, Chillingworth appears to have had a generous view of
human nature. He believed that every single person was capable of using their reason to
determine truths necessary to salvation because reason and the knowledge of God was
innate in man. This knowledge of God, and the desire to do God's will, was the force
which urged one to seek for the truth. However, he was also aware that human nature
was not perfect and that reason could be affected by what he considered to be wilful
laziness and ignorance. One's reason could also be affected by argument and debate,
and Chillingworth considered this to be the best way in which to influence people who
one believed to hold erroneous opinions.

Chillingworth's belief that reason, as a God-given gift to all men, was capable of
searching the bible for the fundamentals necessary for salvation did not exclude the
necessity of grace and faith. The belief that reason was capable of discovering for itself
the fundamental points of the bible, without which one could not be saved, was the basis
of his appeal for religious unity and intellectual toleration. God's grace to men was
sufficiently given for this task (God gave sufficient, but not always efficient grace),
which enabled a person to chose to search for the truth. Chillingworth also recognized
the different abilities of individual reason, but did not suggest that education or even
church teaching was necessary or even helpful in determining the fundamentals of
scripture necessary to be believed. He was clear that God gave sufficient abilities to
each person to find for themselves the requisites of salvation, and that an honest search
for the truth contained in the bible was all that God required for salvation. He desired
unity in Christendom and believed that by refusing to list the fundamentals of religion
and by leaving this determination to each individual, unity could be achieved. The line
of Chillingworth's thought, however, came close to the conclusion that the established
church as an institution was not needed since he believed that scripture was the only
necessity on earth man needed for salvation. Chillingworth never explicitly argued this,
and in fact argued that there ought to be a church in the world. However, functions of
the church, such as governance, preaching, the sacraments, traditions, ceremonies and
other aspects of church practice were seen as unnecessary. Chillingworth believed that

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[183]Chillingworth, *Sermon I, Works*, vol. 3, 31. My italics.

the Church of England was a superior church, but he had essentially argued against much of what that church stood for. Since God's will could be determined without a church or any authority it appeared to his opponents as if the organized church was made superfluous. It was on these grounds and the emphasis Chillingworth placed on natural reason that his opponents feared and distrusted what he had to say. His call for toleration was not heeded and it was not until the second half of the seventeenth century, when men who had lived through the Civil War saw the desirability for unity and peace, that a strong latitudinarian movement came into prominence.

Chapter 4
The 'fountain-head' of Latitudinarianism? Chillingworth's Legacy to c.1700

The Latitudinarian movement which became prominent in the Church of England after the Civil War had as its precursor the thought of the members of the Tew circle and the Cambridge Platonists. It was this latitudinarian attitude which became more prominent after the restoration in 1660 and which reached its height after 1688. The influence of Chillingworth is clearly evident in their work, although the Latitudinarians moved beyond Chillingworth in particular aspects of their thought. Chillingworth's influence upon the Latitudinarians bears some examination. In the 1630s and 1640s, Chillingworth's message of Christian unity and toleration went unheeded, and he was labelled a heretic by his opponents. Yet by 1660, these fundamental tenets of Chillingworth's thought were picked up by a group of men called the Latitudinarians. This chapter will examine a few key aspects of Latitudinarian thought to c.1690 to show the continuity with the main tenets of Chillingworth's thought, and the contrast.

The name 'Latitudinarian' refers to a specific group of Anglican divines and their teachings, who were a generation younger than the Cambridge Platonists.[1] Many of the Latitudinarians had been taught during the interregnum by the Cambridge Platonists, who, like the members of Great Tew, argued for moderation in the church and who advocated the role of reason in religion. As a movement, Cambridge Platonism came to an end c. 1680, but the students of the Cambridge Platonists shared many of the tenets of their teachers, and so the liberal principles of Great Tew and the Cambridge Platonists lived on.[2]

The Latitudinarians of the second half of the seventeenth century wanted peace

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[1]Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 4, 10. The term Latitudinarian refers to this group of men as a specific entity. A person could be latitudinarian, such as the members of Great Tew or the Cambridge Platonists, but Latitudinarian is used here to denote those men who were roughly a generation younger than the Cambridge Platonists. For the origin of this word see Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 3-13.

[2]Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 4, 15; Cragg, *From Puritanism to the Age of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 63; *idem.*, *The Church and the Age of Reason 1648-1789* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1960), 70, and Margaret C. Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution 1689-1720* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), 34.

and unity and sought a comprehensive church,[3] having been affected by the years of civil war and the interregnum. [4] To this end they argued that the Christian faith consisted of only a few essential moral fundamentals which could be easily apprehended by any searching, rational person.[5] They believed that the Christian faith was fundamentally a rational religion and in matters of church government they esteemed episcopacy because of its antiquity, but did not believe that non-episcopal churches were "heterodox on that count alone."[6] The Latitudinarians accommodated themselves to changes in the church during the Cromwellian period, conformed to the Church of England after the Restoration, and were supporters of William of Orange's takeover of the crown from James II.[7] Clearly, then, the Latitudinarians did hold a rigid view of ecclesiastical governance, and could function in a church which did not uphold episcopacy.

The name 'latitudinarian' first came into use in the 1650s and 1660s as a term of abuse.[8] It was first used to describe the Cambridge Platonists who had a tolerant attitude toward people who held diverse religious views in the church. The Cambridge Platonists "'loved the constitution of the Church, and the liturgy, and could well live under them; but they did not think it unlawful to live under another form...They kept a good correspondence with those who had differed from them in opinion, and allowed a great freedom both in philosophy and divinity.'"[9] As a result of their moderation they were called "men of latitude" and "upon this men of narrower thoughts and fiercer

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[3]Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 36, Cragg, *From Puritanism* 74.

[4]Cragg, *From Puritanism*, 84; Spellman, *The Latitudinarians*, 156; Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 14, and Jacob, *The Newtonians*, 35.

[5]Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: a Study of the Language of religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780* (Vol. 1, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 25, 87.

[6]Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 37, 38.

[7]Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 26 and Spellman, *The Latitudinarians*, 5-6.

[8]Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 25, and Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 3-13.

[9]Gilbert Burnet, quoted by Griffin in *Latitudinarianism*, 4.

tempers fastened upon them the name of Latitudinarians."[10] The name 'Latitudinarian' was then applied to the group of men who had been formed under the Cambridge Platonists. The leading members of the Latitudinarian movement were Edward Stillingfleet (1636-99), John Tillotson (1630-94), Simon Patrick (1626-1707), Joseph Glanvill (1636-80), Edward Fowler (1632-1717), and Gilbert Burnet (1643-1715).

These men had all been born and raised during the upheavals caused by the political and religious strife preceding and during the Civil War. Their formative years were influenced by the political and religious conflicts which had, in great part, been caused by the diverse opinions regarding church worship, government and predestination. The position of the Latitudinarians was developed "in response to the intellectual and theological climate" of the interregnum.[11] Latitudinarianism was a reaction against the restrictions of the Church of England and also against Calvinist theology.[12] John Tillotson, who became archbishop of Canterbury in 1691, Simon Patrick, made bishop of Chichester in 1689 and Ely in 1691, and Edward Fowler, made Bishop of Gloucester in 1691, all had Puritan backgrounds; Tillotson grew up a Congregationalist, Patrick had been a Calvinist in his theology and Fowler had been a Presbyterian. By the Restoration they had all rejected their Puritan upbringing, conformed to the established church and sought orders within it.[13]

By the Restoration many of the Latitudinarians were members of the London clergy and were drawn together by mutual interests. They were linked by academic and ecclesiastical posts, common intellectual interests such as toleration for dissenters, moral living, and they all believed that reason had a place in religion.[14] Many of them were chaplains-in-ordinary to Charles II, a sign of their prominence among the London clergy.[15] London had become the focal point of Latitudinarianism. Tillotson was a well-known preacher and many people came to hear him when he preached every

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[10]*Ibid.*

[11]Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 27.

[12]*Ibid.*

[13]Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 30 and Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 16-18.

[14]Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 32.

[15]Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 25.

Tuesday at St. Lawrence Jewry, the most influential pulpit in London.[16] Other Latitudinarians preached in London as well so that the pulpit became the main source for the exposition of Latitudinarian ideas in Charles II reign.[17] The Latitudinarians supported the revolution against James II because he seemed intent in restoring Catholicism in England.[18] As a result of their support, when William of Orange became king after the revolution of 1688 he appointed these Latitudinarians to several bishoprics.[19] Burnet became bishop of Salisbury (1688), Stillingfleet bishop of Worcester (1690), Patrick bishop of Chichester and Ely (1689 and 1691), Fowler bishop of Gloucester (1691) and Tillotson succeeded Stillingfleet as Dean of St. Paul's. These appointments were crucially important because the Latitudinarians were not a majority in the church, but these appointments made them a predominant force within it.[20]

The tenets of Latitudinarianism were not new. The Latitudinarians saw their predecessors as being those men from Great Tew of whom Chillingworth was viewed as the "fountain-head" of their beliefs.[21] Chillingworth, Hales, Falkland and Hammond were influential upon the Latitudinarians and the similarities between the two groups in religious outlook are evident.[22] In fact, historians view the members of the Great Tew circle as the first latitudinarians, although most of its members had died before the word was invented.[23] Moreover, in studies done since the early 1960s, scholars have examined the connection between Great Tew and the Latitudinarians, a connection

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[16]*Ibid.*, 18 and Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 31.

[17]Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 31.

[18]Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 26.

[19]McAdoo, *Spirit of Anglicanism*, 158

[20]Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 26.

[21]*Ibid.*, 89.

[22]*Ibid.*, 12-13; Jacob, *The Newtonians*, 30 and George Every, *The High Church Party* (London: SPCK, 1956), 2.

[23]Cragg, *From Puritanism*, 190-191; Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 12; Geoffrey F. Nuttall and Owen Chadwick, *From Uniformity to Unity 1662-1962* (London: SPCK, 1962), 26, and Martin Fitzpatrick, "Latitudinarianism at the parting of ways: a suggestion" in *From Toleration to Tractarianism*, edited by John Walsh, Stephen Taylor and Colin Haydon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 210.

which had been largely ignored by historians until the work done by Martin Griffin, Hugh Trevor-Roper, Isabel Rivers and Henry van Leeuwen.[24]

The Latitudinarians themselves traced their heritage back to Great Tew and Cambridge Platonism.[25] Chillingworth specifically is seen by historians as having been of particular influence to the formation of ideas in Tillotson, Stillingfleet, and Fowler. As Isabel Rivers observes,

> the anti-Catholic writings of the Restoration period were a continuation of similar disputes of the 1630s, Chillingworth's *Religion of Protestants* (1638) considerably influencing the arguments employed by Stillingfleet and Tillotson. The importance attached to Chillingworth's book is indicated by the fact that four editions were published between 1664 and 1687, the last being an abridged version made by Patrick, who added a useful analysis of the contents.[26]

Stillingfleet's *Origines Sacrae*, published in 1662, was the first work which gave a "systematic description of Latitudinarian theology of faith and reason."[27] This work and Stillingfleet's first work, the *Irenicum*, published in 1659, "suggest the influence upon Stillingfleet of the circle of Great Tew, particularly of Chillingworth and Hammond."[28] In Edward Fowler's, *The Principles and Practices, of Certain Moderate Divines of the Church of England Abusively called Latitudinarians... In a Modest and Free Discourse between two Intimate Friends*, a defence of the Latitudinarian position, the "influence of

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[24]Griffin argues that "the connection between Chillingworth and Latitudinarianism has seldom been noticed; though sometimes alluded to by modern historians, it has never been systematically explored." Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 89. The studies by van Leeuwen, *The Problem of Certainty*, Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, and Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans*, were published after Griffin's study.

[25]John Walsh and Stephen Taylor, "The Church and Anglicanism in the 'long' eighteenth century" in *From Toleration to Tractarianism*, 30, 36.

[26]Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 47, 30; Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 17 and Louis G. Locke, *Tillotson: a Study in Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1954), 19.

[27]Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 23.

[28]*Ibid.*

Chillingworth and of the Cambridge Platonists is both manifest and acknowledged."[29] Thus, the Latitudinarians were indebted to the teachings of the Cambridge Platonists and Great Tew.[30]

The thought of Great Tew in the 1630s was clearly not the prevailing ideology prior to the Civil War among seventeenth-century Englishmen, for Catholics and Puritans were opposed to Chillingworth's ideas concerning religion and the church. Moreover, Chillingworth's thought was a departure from that of the Laudian church, even if Laud himself was sympathetic to Chillingworth's convictions. Two aspects of Chillingworth's thought, and of his followers, to which the Latitudinarians adhered, was the rational basis and the moral aspect of religion. Chillingworth's beliefs, and those of his friends, had been condemned by their opponents in the 1630s, but Chillingworth had had no influence on the Laudian church and was, in the political and religious environment leading toward civil war, of no real consequence. Chillingworth's views, and those of Falkland and Hales, did not, however, disappear during the civil wars and interregnum and Lord Clarendon's writings after the Civil War show that the ideology of Great Tew and Chillingworth did not die out.[31]

To what purpose then, did the Latitudinarians praise Chillingworth, who was considered a heretic by his opponents? The Latitudinarians did not seek to legitimize their position by extolling the virtues of Chillingworth's work. Chillingworth's influence may have had to do with the fact that his ideas on a moral and rational religion, as he expressed them, were some of the first to be developed and printed in England. Moreover, Chillingworth was well-known in the seventeenth century as a defender of Protestantism.[32] Chillingworth's ideas on reason, as chapters two and three made clear, diverged from those of Hooker and other divines of the Laudian church, but the Latitudinarians held a similar view on the abilities of reason. By the second half of the seventeenth century, with the progression of scientific knowledge, 'rational' religion, which meant the same thing to the Latitudinarians as 'natural' religion, became more acceptable. In fact, many of the Latitudinarians were interested in science and

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[29]*Ibid.*, 18.

[30]*Ibid.*, 15.

[31]See Thomas H. Robinson, "Lord Clarendon's Moral Thought," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 43(1979): 37.

[32]See John Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England in the 17th Century* (Vol.1, 2nd edition, 1874, New York: Lennox Hill, 1972), 261.

some were members of the Royal Society.[33]

Many scientists, like Isaac Newton, were Christians and attempted to reconcile their beliefs to their newly acquired knowledge.[34] The effect of the developments in the sciences, astronomy, biology, chemistry, physics and medicine, served to reduce the role of the supernatural elements in religion as revelation was accommodated to natural religion. In fact, the attempt to reconcile science and religion resulted in "firmly grounding Christianity in the rational and unshakeable foundation of natural religion."[35]

Tillotson argued that, "all reasonings about Divine revelations must necessarily be governed by the principles of natural religion...that is, by those apprehensions which men naturally have of the divine perfections, and by the clear notions of good and evil which are imprinted upon our natures."[36] The Latitudinarians wanted to show that science and religion were not mutually exclusive and that revealed religion accorded with natural religion. Thus, they emphasised the importance of natural religion and how it was related to revelation: "Reason is the faculty whereby revelation is to be discerned."[37] The Latitudinarians' interest in a rational faith meant that they read works, like the *Religion of Protestants*, which had argued for the necessity of reason in religion and serves to explain why Chillingworth was viewed as their 'fountain-head'. Chillingworth's influence may have declined after c.1690 because Latitudinarianism itself changed. The Latitudinarians of the seventeenth century were orthodox in their beliefs, but by the end of the century Latitudinarianism began to include those who held heterodox opinions, like the Deists and Unitarians.[38] Chillingworth's influence may also have lessened perhaps because by the end of the seventeenth century there was a wealth of Latitudinarian literature in print which had not been the case when

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[33]Cragg, *The Church and the Age of Reason*, 72; idem., *From Puritanism*, 72, and Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 31.

[34]See Jacob, *The Newtonians, passim*.

[35]Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 51.

[36]Tillotson, quoted by Griffin in *Latitudinarianism*, 51.

[37]Tillotson, quoted by McAdoo in *The Spirit of Anglicanism*, 175.

[38]The Latitudinarian movement changed after c. 1690 and its tenets verged on the heterodox and moved towards Deism, which argued that salvation was placed in the hands of men and that the institutional church was not needed as a guide in the search for salvation. This change can be seen in the writings of Locke. For more on the beginnings of eighteenth-century latitudinarianism see Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, ch. 8.

Latitudinarianism first became prominent in the 1660s and 1670s.

Chillingworth's *Religion of Protestants* was highly influential on the Latitudinarians by their own admission. It was this work which turned Tillotson from Calvinism. Burnet, who preached at Tillotson's funeral, claimed that Tillotson "happily fell on Chillingworth's Book, which gave his mind the ply that it ever held after, and put hin on a true scent."[39] Tillotson praised Chillingworth from the pulpit:

> I know not how it comes to pass, but so it is, that every one that offers a reasonable account of his faith, and to establish religion upon rational principles, is presently branded a Socinian; of which we have a sad instance in that incomparable person Mr. Chillingworth, the glory of this age and nation, who, for no other cause that I know of, but his worthy and successful attempts to make the Christian religion reasonable, and to discover those firm and solid foundations upon which our faith is built, hath been requited with this black and odious character. But if this be Socinianism, for a man to inquire into the grounds and reason of the Christian religion, and to endeavour to give a satisfactory account of why he believes it, I know no way but that all considerate inquisitive men, that are above fancy and enthusiasm, must be either Socinians or atheists.[40]

John Locke, associated with the Latitudinarians, and who held more heterodox beliefs than they did,[41] claimed that "Right reasoning is founded on something else then the predicaments and predicables and does not consist in talkeing in mode and figure itself

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[39]Gilbert Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of the Most Reverend Father in God, John, by the Divine Providence, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury* (Dublin, 1694), 9.

[40]Tillotson, quoted by Locke in *Tillotson*, 106.

[41]As Griffin observes, Locke was atypical of seventeenth-century Latitudinarianism because of his heterodox views on the Trinity. However, "Locke's theology bears most of the hallmarks of Latitudinarian thought; his concept of reason in its relation to revelation has close affinities with Latitudinarianism; moreover, his churchmanship, his ethics, and his minimal theology were characteristically Latutudinarian. Yet he was a Latitudinarian with a difference, and that difference is the chief signal of the breakdown of the Latitudinarian system." Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 47, 108.

But...if you would have your son reason well let him read [Chillingworth]."[42] Edward Meredith, a Protestant who converted to Catholicism, said that before his conversion when he was having doubts concerning his faith, he read

> many of our best Protestant Controvertists...I frequently perused the Writings of those Men, and particularly of Chillingworth whom I looked on as the subtilest of them all, and the Fountain-head from whence Dr. St. [Stillingfleet] and most others of our Modern Controversie-writers had derived their notions.[43]

As Griffin argues, one cannot understand the Latitudinarians without understanding Chillingworth, "since it was with Chillingworth that their [Latitudinarian] system originated" despite the fact that the Latitudinarians were "affiliated" with the rational scholasticism of Aquinas, Hooker, Laud, and of Dutch Arminianism and Cambridge Platonism.[44]

Like Chillingworth, the Latitudinarians were accused of Socinianism because of their rationalism.[45] Latitudinarians were suspected of "Socinianism, for [they] all magnifie reason, and are often telling how rational a thing Christian Religion is."[46] In defence of the Latitudinarians, an anonymous writer, who many historians believe was Simon Patrick,[47] argued that the "Latitude-men" sincerely embraced "all the Articles of Doctrine held forth by the Church" and that these men were "far from being any ways

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[42]John Locke to Edward Clark, in *The Correspondence of John Locke,* edited by E. S. De Beer (vol.2, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 784-785. This letter to Clark was incorrectly copied and the name of Bacon mistakenly inserted for Chillingworth. See Locke, *Correspondence,* vol. 3, 3.

[43]Edward Meredith, *Some Further Remarks on the Late Account Given by Dr. Tenison of his Conference with Mr. Pulton* (London, 1688), 40-41.

[44]Griffin, *Latitudinarianism,* 89.

[45]*Ibid.,* 7, Cragg, *From Puritanism,* 76-77.

[46]Burnet, *A Modest and Free Conference Betwixt a Conformist and a Non-Conformist, about the present distempers of Scotland* (1669), 84.

[47]See Jacob, *The Newtonians,* 40, Richard Ashcroft, "Latitudinarianism and toleration: historical myth versus political history," in *Philosophy, science, and religion in England 1640-1700,* p. 157, and Spellman, *The Latitudinarians,* 11. See Griffin, *Latitudinarianism,* 170-71, note 1, for a view which argues Patrick is not the author.

dangerous to the Church, or fit to be disowned by her."⁴⁸ Burnet strongly opposed the Socinian label and argued that:

> Indeed if to call Religion a rational worship, or reasonable service make a *Socinian*, we are such, and so was St. *Paul*: but as for the horrid errours of *Socinus* his School, touching the Trinity, Christs satisfaction, Gods prescience...these we condeme and Anathematize...we will be very loath to deny that Christian Religion both in its Articles of Belief, and Precepts of Practice, is hightly congruous, to the dictates of right reason...and certainly, God having created man rational, the highest accomplishment of his nature, which is Religion, must not be contrary, but suitable to his supreme faculty.⁴⁹

The emphasis on the abilities of reason is referred to in Burnet's defence of the Latitudinarians and this was cause for concern to those Protestants and Catholics who questioned the use of reason in religion. The Latitudinarians were perceived as a threat because they appeared to make religion too reasonable. They were considered to be too permissive in their views concerning liturgy and church government and they appeared to grant too much authority to reason and nature and not enough to grace and revelation.⁵⁰ But reason was viewed by the Latitudinarians as being "very serviceable to *Religion*; and Religion very friendly to *Reason*."⁵¹ For Fowler, he was "so far from imagining that *Reason* hath nothing to do in Religion, that [he was] most assured, that it is no-where to so good purpose employed as it is there."⁵² According to John Wilkins, made bishop of Chester in 1668 and whose step-daughter married Tillotson, it was the faculty of reason which made a man "capable of religion, of apprehending a Deity" and,

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⁴⁸S. P. of Cambridge, *A Brief Account of the new Sect of Latitude-Men Together with some reflections upon the New Philosophy* (London, 1662), 11, 12.

⁴⁹Burnet, *A Modest and Free Conference*, 84-85.

⁵⁰Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 8-9. See also McAdoo, *Spirit of Anglicanism*, 158.

⁵¹Joseph Glanvill, "The Agreement of Reason and Religion," in *Essays on Several Important Subjects in Philosophy and Religion* (London, 1675), 2.

⁵²Edward Fowler, *The Principles and Practices, of Certain Moderate Divines of the Church of England, Abusively called Latitudinarians (Greatly Mis-understood) Truly Represented and Defended. Wherein (by the way) Some Controversies, of no mean Importance, are succinctly Discussed: In a Modest and Free Discourse between two Intimate Friends* (London. 1671), 43.

in his opinion, "the happiness of man doth consist in the perfecting of this faculty, that is, in such a state or condition as is most agreeable to reason, and as may entitle him to the Divine favour, and afford him the best assurance of a blessed estate after this life."[53] The Christian religion was considered a rational religion. Edward Stillingfleet thought that "true *Religion*" contained "nothing in it but what is truly *Noble* and *Generous*, most *rational* and *pleasing* to the *spirits* of all *good men*" and because of this it suffered in the world.[54]

A rational religion was important to the Latitudinarians and reason was integral to judge of anything:

> For Reason is that faculty whereby a man must judge of every thing, nor can a man beleeve any thing except he have some reason for it, whether that reason be a deduction from the light of nature, and those principles which are the candle of the Lord, set up in the soul of every man that hath not willingly extinguished it; or a branch of Divine revelation in the oracles of holy scripture; or the general interpretation of genuine antiquity; or the proposal of our own Church consentaneous thereto, or lastly the result of some or all of these: for he that will rightly make use of his reason, must take all that is reasonable into consideration.[55]

Reason was a critical faculty used as an analytical tool. Reason was "a sober examining [of] things, by the dictates of Nature; see that you condemn not that, which is indeed the voice of God in us, and therefore is to be received."[56] God had given man sufficient means to distinguish truth from falsehood, in the form of reason, and anyone who used his reason could secure "himself from all *impostures* and *deceits*."[57] Joseph Glanvill was appalled that reason should be denigrated by Catholics and other Protestants: "There is not anything that I know, which hath done more mischief to *Religion*, than the disparaging of *Reason*."[58] He could think of nothing worse than "to deny and renounce

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[53]John Wilkins, *Of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion* (London, 1675), 19.

[54]Edward Stillingfleet, *Origines Sacrae*, "The Epistle Dedicatory" (London, 1666).

[55]S. P. of Cambridge, *A Brief Account*, 10.

[56]Burnet, *A Modest and Free Discourse*, 43.

[57]Stillingfleet, *Origines Sacrae*, 2.

[58]Glanvill, "Reason and Religion," 1.

all Principles of Reason in Affairs of Faith" as the Catholics desired because this left a person without means to question any point of the Roman creed.[59] Patrick argued that Catholic arguments demanding the submission of reason to the church could not be done "without some reason for it. And to be persuaded by reason, as hath been long ago said, that to their Authority we ought to submit our Reason, is still to follow Reason, and not to quit it, and blindly resign it."[60] The belief in God's moral goodness was related to reason. Reason could be used in religious matters because it was given as a gift to man from God in his infinite goodness, and so could be trusted: "We believe our Reasons; because we have them from God, who cannot mistake, and will not deceive" and such a belief was "an exercise of faith."[61] God was benevolent and did not mislead men. Since he was a God of truth, "we may be assured, that the frame of our understanding is not a cheat, but that our faculties are true."[62]

That God was morally good is clear from the writings of the Latitudinarians. Belief in God and the acceptance of scripture was "grounded upon a principle of *Reason* also, than which none is more evident, *viz. That God cannot lye.*"[63] The doctrine of the whole Christian religion was founded upon moral principles. According to Fowler, "the grand designe of the Gospel is to make men good: not to intoxicate their brains with notions, or furnish their heads with a systeme of opinions; but to reform mens lives; and purifie their natures."[64] The Latitudinarians argued against those who claimed that Christ's perfection meant that man did not have to strive to live righteously because God would be willing to grant pardon to anyone and against those who claimed that one's actions did not deserve divine notice because perfection was impossible.[65] This rejection of the moral duties of man disturbed the Latitudinarians and the misconceptions about the nature and purpose of Christian revelation was, in their opinion, the main origin of enthusiasts and fanatics and the cause of religious

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[59]*Ibid.*, 26, 27.

[60]Simon Patrick, *A Sermon Preached on St. Mark's Day* (London, 1686), 26.

[61]*Ibid.*, 21.

[62]John Tillotson, quoted by Griffin in *Latitudinarianism*, 68.

[63]Fowler, *A Free Discourse*, 46.

[64]*Ibid.*, 18.

[65]See Glanvill, "Anti-fanatical Religion", in *Essays*, 24.

factionalism.[66] Glanvill called these people "Fanaticks," those "that talk'd so much of *Imputed Righteousness*, in the false sense" and whose "conceited *Orthodoxy*, and *Systems* of Opinion" led to "the dissetlement of Religion, and [was a] great hindrance of real Godliness."[67] He argued that "the *simplicity* of the Gospel hath been destroy'd, the minds of Men infatuated, sober Christians despis'd, the peace of the Church disturb'd...the practice of holiness and vertue neglected, and the World dispos'd to *Infidelity*, and *Atheism* it self."[68] In response to this the Latitudinarians stressed the necessity of moral virtue, and God's mercy, but they also limited the fundamentals of religion, and urged reservation of judgement on matters which were not clear.

The Latitudinarians, in the spirit of charity and a desire for a comprehensive church, argued for a limited number of fundamentals necessary to believed. The essentials were clearly expounded in the bible and no man who searched for the truth could miss them.[69] Glanvill argued that the essentials were contained in the decalogue and the creed, and that unclear parts of the bible were not fundamental.[70] Other Latitudinarians did not give a firm list of necessary points of belief, but made clear that difficult or ambiguous passages of scripture were not fundamental and God would not condemn a man for lack of understanding.[71] Those passages which concerned a man's salvation were "delivered with the greatest evidence and perspicuity" and only willful ignorance would keep a man from understanding them.[72] The scriptures themselves were considered to be sufficient in themselves for salvation, although reason was

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[66]Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 115.

[67]Glanvill, "Anti-fantatical Religion," 24, 25. See also Cragg, *From Puritanism*, 65.

[68]*Ibid.*, 30.

[69]Glanvill, "Reason and Religion," 23. See Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 39-41 for a discussion of the Latitudinarians' conception of fundamentals.

[70]*Ibid.*, 24.

[71]Stillingfleet, *Origines Sacrae*, 612. See also Fowler, *A Free Discourse*, 316-17.

[72]Stillingfleet, *Origines Sacrae*, 12. See also Fowler, *A Free Discourse*, 109 and Patrick, *A Sermon Preached*, 30-1.

needed to understand it,[73] since there was no infallible guide to scriptural interpretation.[74]

Reason was clearly of great import to the Latitudinarians who believed that rational Christianity would heal the disputes and schism in the church, but reason did not function without grace.[75] Simon Patrick argued that reason must be used to determine by "examination and proof...[what was] agreeable to *the faith once delivered to the Saints*" but, Patrick did "not mean bare natural Reason, without the guidance of God's Grace."[76] Patrick's idea of a moral God is clear:

> It is infidelity to think that he will not guide us by his Grace, to understand his mind and will, in all things necessary to our salvation...He is as little sparing of his Grace, as the visible Sun is of its Beams...He hath given us the use of Reason...He never intended that we should let others judge for us; but requires us to examine and judge our selves whether there be reason to receive that which is propounded to us by others.[77]

Reason was sufficient to determine the truth of evidences in arguments, but, as Stillingfleet argued, he "would not be so *understood*, that [he] thereby *resolve* all *Religion* into a meer act of *reason* and *knowledge*...For the *sufficiency* which [he] *attribute*[s] to *rational evidence*, is not *absolute* and *simple*."[78] Natural religion must be supplemented with revelation and the Latitudinarians were anxious to show that revealed religion had a place in their theological framework.[79] Reason supported revelation, but reason did not prove it, and so reason and faith were thus closely intertwined. Faith, according to Stillingfleet, was "a rational and discursive act of the mind" and Tillotson claimed that faith was "a persuasion of the mind concerning any

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[73]Glanvill, "Reason and Religion," 23.

[74]Patrick, *A Sermon Preached*, 15.

[75]Spellman, *The Latitudinarians*, 88.

[76]Patrick, *A Sermon Preached*, 23, 24.

[77]*Ibid.*, 24-25.

[78]Stillingfleet, *Origines Sacrae*, 250.

[79]Cragg, *From Puritanism*, 66, 68-70.

thing."[80] Faith was seen as an act of reason in accepting the existence of God and believing scripture to be God's word because these were considered rational principles engraved upon human nature.[81]

The Latitudinarians differed from Chillingworth in their conception of reason and grace. They had more confidence in the ability of reason than did Chillingworth because they had an unfailing trust in God' s goodness,[82] and they believed reason to be a kind of grace. Griffin argues that the use of the word 'grace' by the Latitudinarians must be read with caution since they did not mean divine assistance.[83] Glanvill argued that grace could be the bible alone, the special gift to Christians, and apart from that there was a general grace given to all men, which was reason.[84] The Latitudinarians argued that the evidence from physical and absolute certainty was equally trustworthy,[85] and they disregarded Chillingworth's distinction between certainty of evidence and level of adherence. The difference is that for Chillingworth, one's certainty of adherence could exceed the certainty of evidence by means of supernatural grace, but this was not the case for everyone and not necessary to salvation. The Latitudinarians ignored the concept of certainty of adherence because their belief in the power of reason made this kind of certainty irrelevant.[86]

Like Chillingworth, the Latitudinarians believed that the certainty of the Christian religion was only morally certain. 'Reason', for the Latitudinarians, was the means by which certainty could be attained by assent of the mind to 'evidences' presented to it.[87] Because the certainty of Christianity could not be proven above sense or mathematical certainty, its truth was only highly probable. Tillotson argued that

> we believe the doctrine of Christian religion, because it was revealed by God; we believe it to be revealed by God, because it was confirmed by

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[80]Stillingfleet and Tillotson, quoted by Griffin in *Latitudinarianism*, 72.

[81]Glanvill, "Anti-fanatical Religion," 17.

[82]See above, 10. See also Spellman, *The Latitudinarians*, 87-8.

[83]Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 83.

[84]Glanvill, "Anti-fanatical Religion," 37-38.

[85]Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 70-1.

[86]*Ibid.*, 102-03.

[87]Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 61.

> unquestionable miracles; we believe such miracles were wrought because we have as great assurance of this, as any matter of fact, at such a distance from the time it was done, is capable of.[88]

Thus, the truth of the Christian religion had a divine authority, but the existence of God could only be morally certain since it could not be proven above sense or science.[89] The Latitudinarians, however, argued that the distinction between moral, physical and mathematical certainties should not be made because if the grounds for moral assent were unquestionable then "the case is all one as to the nature of assent."[90] This is clearly contrary to what Chillingworth had argued in his *Religion of Protestants*. For him, moral certainty could not be equal to mathematical or absolute certainty because the mind could not grant absolute assent to a proposition which was only based upon probable conjecture. Thus the Christian religion was in all likelihood certain, but Chillingworth would never have said that this moral certainty was equal to a higher level of certainty as did the Latitudinarians.

One final aspect of Latitudinarian thought must be considered in relation to that of Chillingworth. The theory of toleration for which Chillingworth had argued in his *Religion of Protestants* was not the same toleration or comprehension for which the Latitudinarians argued later in the century. Chillingworth was interested in more than just toleration or leniency towards people of various theological opinion. He desired complete integration into the Church of England, or any other church, of those people who held diverse beliefs, but who adhered to the central tenets of the 'true' faith, in the spirit of charity. He wanted acceptance for these people unconditionally, which meant that there would be no need for any laws relating to unity, conformity or toleration in religion. The Latitudinarians did not follow Chillingworth's lead in this respect, although they wanted a comprehensive church which would include as many dissenters as possible by reworking the requirements for conformity. They worked with an intense irenic spirit to make some concessions to tender consciences and in this way they can be seen to be heirs of Great Tew.[91] They were, however, not tolerant of dissenters who refused to make concessions to the conformity acts.

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[88]Tillotson, quoted by Griffin in *Latitudinarianism*, 82.

[89]For the Latitudinarians concept of evidences and corresponding levels of certainty see Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 60-71 and Wilkins, *Of the Principles and Duties*, 3-11.

[90]Stillingfleet, quoted by Griffin in *Latitudinarianism*, 63.

[91]Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 139.

Like Chillingworth, the rhetoric employed was one of a desire to be charitable to dissenters and not to "magisterially impose upon one another, and be so charitable as to believe well of Dissenters from us that live good lives, are of modest and peaceable deportment, and hold no Opinions, that directly oppose the design of the Christian Religion."[92] They agreed that rites and ceremonies were "alterable, and in their own nature indifferent," although if they were not imposed as "necessary in themselves" it was the duty of one to obey the church authority.[93] The Thirty-nine Articles could also be accepted with a "liberty in the interpretation" so that subscription to them was as "an Instrument of Peace onely."[94] The Latitudinarians were irenic, but clearly there was a limit to their irenicism. They believed that reason showed every person that church government and ceremonies were not in themselves fundamental and so could be accepted for the sake of unity. However, dissenters and non-conformists did not agree, and therein was the problem. The Latitudinarians believed that such dissent was a willful rejection of reason and so invectives were hurled against the fanatics and enthusiasts, and dissenters were attacked.[95] In fact, stricter penal laws against dissenters were sought by the Church of England regardless of Latitudinarian pleas for moderation because they were viewed as enemies to the church.[96] The Latitudinarians argued that such legislation did not touch one's conscience, only one's actions, and that such legislation was needed for the good of the church.[97] Despite their dislike of dissenters, the Latitudinarians enjoined a spirit of free inquiry and tolerance "within limits of orthodoxy."[98] In fact, they sought to change the Act of Uniformity of 1662 so that it would be acceptable to more people and thus achieve a comprehensive church, but they

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[92]Fowler, *A Free Discourse*, 308-309.

[93]*Ibid.*, 328.

[94]*Ibid.*, 91.

[95]Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 150.

[96]Ashcroft, "Latitudinarianism and toleration," 158-60. See also Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 150-159.

[97]Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 151.

[98]Walsh and Taylor, "The Church and Anglicanism," p. 37.

failed in this because of opposition from Convocation.[99] In the end only the Toleration Act was passed in 1689. The difference between the two was that a revised uniformity act would have granted civil liberties to dissenters who did not conform because they refused to use the Book of Common Prayer or to receive communion which was required to hold a civil or military post, as the Test Act of 1673 required. The Toleration Act did not grant these concessions, but it did allow dissenters and non-conformists to exist within the framework of society, although the Test Acts were still in force.[100] So the Latitudinarians failed in their attempt at a comprehensive church, but limited toleration was granted instead to everyone but non-Trinitarian heretics and Catholics.[101]

The Latitudinarians came to ascendancy in the Church of England after 1668 and Latitudinarian thought remained prominent into the eighteenth century. With the first generation of Latitudinarians, the similarities with William Chillingworth are obvious. Reason was of the utmost importance in the search for religious truth and reason could apprehend the fundamentals of faith found in the bible. The idea of a moral God and the duty of man to use his reason and search for truth is also an important aspect of their thought. The Latitudinarians did move beyond Chillingworth in their perception of the abilities of reason, and their views of tolerance were not exactly what Chillingworth was advocating. However, despite these differences, the Latitudinarians were followers of Chillingworth, who himself had moved beyond the position of Hooker. William Chillingworth's thought survived the Civil Wars and manifested itself in the beliefs of the Latitudinarians.

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[99]The struggle to make these changes took place from 1668-1689. For these events and the failure of the Latitudinarians to make these changes see Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 155-159 and Nuttall and Chadwick, *From Uniformity*, 191-253.

[100]Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, 158.

[101]*Ibid.*

Conclusion

Chillingworth was well-known in the seventeenth century as a defender of Protestantism and an advocate of a rational religion. Since then, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Chillingworth has been forgotten,[1] and his thought neglected as reason in religion and religious toleration became acceptable and no longer a cause for conflict. Chillingworth is worthy of study, however, because he represents the shift from Thomism and medieval philosophy to the Age of Reason; Chillingworth is a transitional figure between the medieval scholasticism of Hooker and the rationalism of the Enlightenment, evident in the fact that his conception of reason is more like that of Locke than of Hooker. This change in the conception of reason and the political and religious conflicts which influenced Chillingworth's beliefs are interesting and worthy of study because this transformation in thinking is clearly captured in the thought of one man responding to events in his own time. In his thought there can be also seen the beginnings of the movement toward religious toleration which have culminated in the latitude of the present-day church. Therefore, an examination of Chillingworth encompasses not only a crucial time in the development of the history of ideas, but it examines the foundation of modern religious liberalism, the effect of Chillingworth's belief that no one can be told what is fundamental to salvation.

Chillingworth was grappling with the problems of his day, the breakdown of the Elizabethan Settlement and the political and religious conflicts which were leading to civil war in England and which had already led to war in Europe. He saw the Christian world being destroyed by dissension and war because of the dogmatic position of Protestants and Catholics who argued over what Chillingworth believed were non-fundamentals. It was this uncompromising attitude which was shattering Christendom by the refusal to recognize any common ground between religious groups. Chillingworth, therefore, argued for charity towards one's neighbours and for unity based on the acceptance of fundamentals which were universally agreed to be so. All else should be considered non-fundamental to salvation.

Chillingworth had an intense desire for peace, but he encountered a problem in reconciling the belief that there were fundamentals necessary to be believed for salvation and his refusal to name them. This was a difficulty because he also argued that no one could be forced to believe anything. He had given a list of fundamentals which he believed were necessary to salvation, but he undermined his argument by giving this list. He could not say that what he believed to be fundamental was necessary

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[1]Tulloch, *Rational Theology*, 261 and van Leeuwen, *The Problem of Certainty*, preface.

for everyone else to accept after having argued that no one could be told what to believe for salvation. Thus, "the door is opened to all controversies...*De facto* agreement between Christians becomes the yardstick for measuring which controversies are decidable and which are not, just as it is the intellectual basis of a truly comprehensive Church."[2] Chillingworth argued that some fundamentals were so clear in scripture that one had to be perverse to reject them, but also that not all necessary doctrine was always clearly presented without falsehood: "God hath neither decreed nor foretold, that his true Doctrine should *de facto* be alwaies visibly prfessed."[3] The trouble with this was that there could be no way of determining who held the truth and who did not, and this was a difficulty that Chillingworth could not solve. This was another element to Chillingworth's thought, that while the truth could be discovered by searching actively for it, there was no way that this truth could certainly be known to have been understood. Therefore, if people believed themselves to have the truth they should not be excluded from the church when their beliefs were not acceptable to others.

The *Religion of Protestants* is Chillingworth's reaction against Catholic infallibility, the authority of any church to force acceptance of its doctrines and the folly of both Catholics and Protestants who rejected the role reason had to play in religion. Chillingworth rejected infallibility, tradition and the Fathers, emphasized the centrality of scripture and placed authority in religion upon individual reason. This was the basis for his theory of unity since reason discovered for itself the fundamentals of religion evident in scripture. Thus all who considered themselves true believers could be members of one church because there was no authority which could say that what one believed was wrong because it was impossible to know for certain if one had correctly apprehended the truth. Therefore, it was necessary, according to Chillingworth, for people to act with charity to those they believed to have misapprehended the truth and to try to inform them of their mistake through debate and discussion. This was the only acceptable method for Chillingworth and was the process by which he himself had decided to convert.

Chillingworth argued that he believed that there should be a church in the world, but this seems to be a half-hearted attempt on his part to appease others. In reality, what Chillingworth seemed to have argued for was the collapse of the church into individual reason. This was never stated explicitly by him, but it is implicit in his whole argument concerning the sufficiency of scripture and the ability of reason to determine the fundamentals of religion. The church is made superfluous since it has no role except in the sense that it is a community of believers. The church is stripped of its discipline and

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[2] Orr, *Reason and Authority*, p. 181.

[3] *Preface to the Author*, sect. 43.

its authority, and this authority is given to reason. Reason is the ultimate authority. Chillingworth's emphasis on reason was his reaction to the political and religious conflict of his time. He believed that an appeal to reason, which should not be neglected as it was a God-given gift, would overcome the fanaticism and irrationality of his countrymen. Religious unity, he argued, could be achieved if charity was exercised and if beliefs were not dogmatically forced on others. Thus rationality, charity and tolerance of other's beliefs were the key aspects to his theory of religious unity.

It was these fundamental elements of Chillingworth's thought which he had hoped would put an end to hostilities, but his appeal was not heard by his countrymen. The Civil War and Chillingworth's death did not mean a loss of the tenets of his beliefs and after the war the appeal to peace and unity acquired a powerful voice. These components of his thought were picked up by the Latitudinarians who exalted reason and who desired a comprehensive church. It was in the latter portion the seventeenth century that Chillingworth's desire for toleration was achieved, in part, in the Act of Toleration of 1689, but his desire for a unified Christendom and one comprehensive church was never fulfilled.

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