John Arrowsmith and the Art of Pacific Pugilism

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That John Arrowsmith (1602–1659) was a pleasant person no one seems to have doubted. John Arrowsmith was remembered after his death as a gifted Cambridge theologian but also as a fair man and a kind friend. In the 1640s he was a member of the Westminster Assembly (1643–1653) where he was one of the preachers that assembly members most liked to hear and, perhaps in part because of this, was arguably the most influential theologian involved in the drafting of the assembly's confession of faith. Arrowsmith also served as the master of Cambridge's two most prestigious colleges, enjoyed the post of Regius Professor of divinity, and served a turn as the Vice-Chancellor of the university. In the interregnum England of the 1650s, shorn as it was of all the trappings of cathedral and episcopal privileges, there was no greater height to which a minister or an academic could rise, and everyone seemed happy for him to have risen.

Given this background, this article tries to answer the question, Why did John Arrowsmith, a leading contestant for seventeenth-century England's "Most Pleasant Person Award," wind down his final years by suddenly writing a call for a holy war against heresy? One reason for asking this question is to discover what it may uncover about the priorities of Arrowsmith, an important but under-studied theologian in the early-modern period. The second reason for posing this question is to see what may be learned about mid-century Puritanism in England. But in posing this question it can also be seen that Arrowsmith's book on spiritual warfare is considered in this article not merely as a text but also as an event. This article will proceed by commenting on the conundrum of Arrowsmith and his charming polemics, before reflecting on his possible motivations for writing *Plans for Holy War* and on his polemical style. Before coming to a halt, the article will offer a set of four conclusions.

The centerpiece of this article, an almost 400 page Latin tome, has been translated by Dr. David Noe, and this short article draws on his translation and on my indulgently long introduction which will accompany the publication of Arrowsmith's *magnum opus* in English. This article also ultilizes the work of talented research assistants who have helped to identify the people and books discussed by Arrowsmith, chiefly Adrienne Ora, Zachary Herbster, and Paul Woo. I am grateful to them all, and especially to Dr. Noe, for making this article possible.

1. The Peacemaker

1.1 Life

It seems possible that Arrowsmith's peaceable character was in part a pleasantness inherited from his home. Arrowsmith's father was likely the Thomas Arrowsmith who died and was buried in Gateshead in 1632.[1] If this is correct, it is striking that his father too valued peace, for this is the grace most celebrated on a memorial plaque erected in St. Mary's parish church, where Thomas Arrowsmith was buried. The memorial reads in part,

> Reader in that piece of earth in peace rests
> Thomas ARROWSMITH
> In peace he livd in peace went hence with
> God and man and conscience
> Peace for other men he sought and peace
> with peeces some time bought
> Pacific may others bee but *ex pace factus* hee
> Peace reader then doe not molest he is now possest
> The God of peace for him in store hath joy
> and peace for evermore
> *Pangit plangit et amore dolore*[2]

1. For the elder Thomas Arrowsmith's Sept. 27, 1632 death date see, National Burial Index for England and Wales, in https://www.findmypast.com/transcript?id=BMD%2FNBI%2F02732578; Thomas likely married Mary Place in Cleasby, Yorkshire in 1599: Paver's Marriage Licenses from the Registry of York 1567–1614, p. 72, in findmypast.com/transcript?id=GBPRS%2FCOA%2FMARRLICENCE%2F00001835%2F1 (both accessed June 7, 2021). The current pandemic has not in every case permitted me to view original records.

2. For the memorial inscription at St. Mary's, Gateshead, see Northumberland and Durham Memorial Inscriptions, https://www.findmypast.com/transcript?id=GBPRS%2FNORTHUMDURHAM%2FMIS%2F012342 (accessed June 7, 2021). "He is planted here and mourned with love and sorrow." All translations courtesy of David Noe.

Perhaps too, as is the case with a remarkable number of Christians who have suffered long with physical disabilities, the graces appreciated by others were worked into John Arrowsmith through his personal trials. His thorn in the flesh was partial blindness. He had a glass eye, for which he was mocked, in the place of an eye that had been struck by an arrow at some point in his life.[3] And he probably seized opportunities to hide that eye from view: there is, I believe, one piece of evidence suggesting that in the assembly Arrowsmith sat on the tiered benches or stands to the left of the prolocutor, along with many of the older and best educated divines; more to the point, the available clues also suggest that he sat at the very top left corner of those stands, hinting that his missing eye was his right eye, for it is natural to assume that Arrowsmith would have presented his only good eye to face the room and his fellow divines.[4]

During his lifetime Arrowsmith enjoyed many marks of esteem, from minor privileges to significant honors. His undergraduate college gifted him with a scholarship,[5] and later the fellows of St. Catherine's college, Cambridge, soon under the command of Richard Sibbes and populated with men who would become members of the Westminster assembly, were eager for him to join their number. After a decade of life as a college fellow, he soon found himself vicar of St. Nicholas's Church, in King's Lynn, at that point England's busiest port. As mentioned above, he was also invited to the Westminster assembly and was a favorite preacher among the many preachers gathered. Holding down two or three jobs at once while raising a second family, everyone forgave him for his obvious pluralism, and the assembly repeatedly appointed him to its most important committees.

His interest in peace-making and fence-mending was obvious for all to see. When no longer a college fellow in the 1630s and early 1640s, he was nonetheless the host for some months of a theologian from Elbing, a city at the heart of Europe's ecumenical movement.[6] When in London, he

3. Robert Baillie, *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, D. Laing, ed. (Edinburgh: Robert Ogle, 1841), 2:123–24; for jokes about his eye, see *e.g.*, [John Birkenhead], *The Assembly-man written in the year 1647* (London, 1681), 9.

4. Chad Van Dixhoorn, ed., *The Minutes and Papers of the Westminster Assembly, 1643–1652*, 5 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1:209.

5. J. A. Venn, ed., *Alumni Cantabrigiensis*, 6 vols. (Cambridge, 1922–54), also venn.lib.cam.ac.uk.

6. John Arrowsmith, *Tactica Sacra, sive de milite spirituali pugnante, vincente & triumphant dissertatio* (Cambridge, 1657), I.iii.6; hereafter the translated text forthcoming from Reformation Heritage Books will be cited as *Plans for Holy War*.

preached sermons that warned of the horrors of war or celebrated small steps towards peace.[7] As a Cambridge Master, he convinced soldiers to leave St John's college, where they had been camping during the war.[8] As University Vice-Chancellor, he dined with the city's mayor to try to lessen tensions between town and gown.[9] And as a theological leader in Cambridge, Parliament heard his complaints about the rise of doctrinal error and empowered him to take action. Everyone seemed to like Arrowsmith.[10]

Historians too have left his memory relatively unscathed. R. W. Ketton-Cremer complained in a history of Norfolk that one of Arrowsmith's civil war sermons contained a "rich storehouse of Puritan invective."[11] And J. B. Mullinger, a historian of the University of Cambridge, has argued that Arrowsmith's St. John years were characterized by "incessant strife."[12] But more recent scholarship has offered kinder assessments, and both John Twigg and Victor Morgan have suggested that his St. John years were not as difficult as alleged and that Arrowsmith's two masterships were good ones.[13]

During the English civil wars Arrowsmith was, on occasion, mocked for his infirmity,[14] but in his dying months he was more worried about his growing popularity. He cooperated with the University Press in preparing one more book for publication that would only arrive after his death, even though he no doubt suspected that friends would endorse the book with overly kind words. But Arrowsmith's will, written at the end of 1657, deliberately limited the amount of money that could be spent on his funeral and asked that he be buried "in a more private way" in order to avoid the "many notorious disorders" which he had observed at public funerals, presumably for noted Cambridge men such as himself.[15]

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7. See, John Arrowsmith, *The Covenant-Avenging Sword Brandished: in a Sermon, Before the House of Commons, at their Late Solemne Fast, Jan. 25* (London, 1642).

8. Mark Nicholls, "The Seventeenth Century," in *St John's College Cambridge: A History*, ed. Peter Linhan (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2011), 137, 139, 141.

9. John Twigg, *The University of Cambridge and the English Revolution, 1625–1688* (Woodbridge: Boydell and the Cambridge University Library, 1990), 147.

10. Twigg, *University of Cambridge*, 122 (n. 114), 123, 125–26.

11. R. W. Ketton-Cremer, *Norfolk in the Civil War: A Portrait of a Society in Conflict* (1969; Norwich: Giddon Books, 1985), 260.

12. J. B. Mullinger, *The University of Cambridge*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 475.

13. Twigg, *University of Cambridge*, 123–27; and Victor Morgan, *History of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 480.

14. See e.g., [John Birkenhead], *The Assembly-man written in the year 1647* (London, 1681), 9.

15. NA PROB 11/289/161, fol. 179r.

It is hardly unusual for the deceased to be dealt with kindness. But almost no one seemed capable of remembering his faults. The historian Thomas Baker, while no friend of Puritans, reviewed the surviving evidence of Arrowsmith's leadership in Cambridge and concluded that "Allowing for the iniquity of the times and excepting the matter of Korah" (a reference to parliament's war against the King), Arrowsmith "was a good man."[16] John Hackett, later bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, told a correspondent that he was pleased with Arrowsmith's election to the mastership of Trinity College.[17] And even after a falling out over important doctrinal matters, Benjamin Whichcote described Arrowsmith, above all others whom he had met in his course of university life, as "my friend of choice; a companion of my special delight: whom in my former years I have acquainted with all my heart, I have told him all my thoughts; and I have scarcely either spoken or thought better of a man; in respect of the sweetness of his spirit, and amiableness of his conversation."[18]

1.2 Death

I have lingered over these details precisely because a review of Arrowsmith's life does not prepare readers for the polemics that emerged near his death. Nor does anything in his first five surviving works (two other books were lost), prepare the reader for Arrowsmith's greatest work. His Latin *magnum opus* was not the last book to appear in his name, but it was in fact the last book he wrote. Parts of these earlier works do prepare readers for themes in his *magnum opus*. They also help to explain why England was at war, why England should find peace, and why parliament needed documents produced by the Westminster assembly. They do not explain why his dying call was for a holy war against heresy.

There can be no doubt that Arrowsmith was dying when he wrote the book he entitled *Tactica Sacra*, or *Sacred Strategies*, or as Dr. Noe and I have decided to translate it, *Plans for Holy War*. The turning point in Arrowsmith's health, and one from which he would never fully recover, seems to have come about in the mid-1650s. In 1655 Arrowsmith was not able to be present for the annual disputation in divinity during the University's commencement exercises. Arrowsmith's friend, John Lightfoot, explains "that

16. T. Baker, *History of the College of St. John the Evangelist, Cambridge*, ed. John E. B. Mayor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1869), part I, p. 224 ff. (228).

17. BL Sloane MS 1710, fol. 192.

18. Benjamin Whichcote, *Moral and Religious Aphorisms*, ed. Samuel Salter (London: for J. Payne, 1753), 7.

sudden illness overtook…his sick and weakened body" which "turned our prayers to frustration and our hope rang hollow." In 1656 "sometimes" must have become "most of the time," for Arrowsmith felt compelled to resign the regius professorship.[19]

It was around this time that he was desperate enough to consult a doctor.[20] His friends later described him as suffering from "a long and tedious sickness," and it seems that he was increasingly bound to the Master's lodge.[21] Recovering at home might not have been easy, for the lodge would hardly have been a quiet place to convalesce. His eldest son, Thomas, was likely living in college rooms by this point, but the Master's lodge housed as many as seven children between the ages of eleven and one.[22] And yet Arrowsmith was not completely incapacitated even then, for in late September or early October 1657 his wife, Mary, conceived again, giving birth to their last child, Rebecca, eight months before her husband's death.[23]

1.3 The occasion for writing Tactica Sacra

It was his prolonged sickness that gave Arrowsmith occasion to write his greatest work and, as my introduction to Dr. Noe's translation argues, his last.

The existence, ambitiousness, and subject of *Plans for Holy War* are all in their own way remarkable. Anyone who has suffered from the weariness and pain attending chronic illness or the ongoing effects of serious injury will know how difficult it is to accomplish any kind of work at all, let alone the hard work of creative writing and careful thinking. Arrowsmith acknowledges that his health had recently failed,[24] but his self-effacing words mask the challenge he faced in writing a major work of theology and the extraordinary perseverance required for and evidenced in this work.

19. John Twigg, "John Arrowsmith," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 60 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Hereafter *ODNB*.

20. I was unable to consult London, British Library Add.79 f. 105 (Medical treatment of by Dr. Pratt).

21. Thomas Horton and William Dillingham, "To the Reader," in John Arrowsmith, *Armilla catechetica* (Cambridge, 1659), sig. *3v; *ODNB*.

22. Mary, bap. Feb. 24, 1653: England Births and Christenings, 1538–1975, in https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:NTG4-PRS (accessed June 7, 2021); the birth dates of Sarah and Judith, mentioned in Arrowsmith's will, are unknown; the death date of Mary, who is not mentioned in the 1657 will, is also unknown.

23. Rebecca, bap. July 2, 1658: England Births and Christenings, 1538–1975, in https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:V5KT-CTQ (accessed June 7, 2021).

24. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, I.i.2.

Nor was he in the final stages of writing a work, stuck with the tiring but predictable work of editing. No, Arrowsmith had managed to initiate a major new project, and of all writing projects the most difficult kind: not a series of texts or topics discussed seriatim, as in his previous expositions of biblical books and doctrinal *loci*, but a major study of a single theme, and a theme that had only recently occurred to him as worthy of an entire book,[25] although its central argument had appeared in his earlier studies.

The very existence and the extreme ambition of the project are unusual for a sick man. But perhaps most surprising is its subject, for it is not directly related to his own ever-present experience of suffering. Such a project a reader could perhaps understand: a book on assurance in the face of hard providence, on perseverance in the presence of adversity, or on the subject of eternal life in the months leading up to his death. Instead, the book's "main purpose is to equip the Christian man for spiritual warfare as a soldier for battle, victory, and triumph."[26] *Plans for Holy War* is a lively study on Christian warfare. And strikingly, given Arrowsmith's circumstances, the Christian's main battle is not with the problem of suffering but with the problems of sin and Satan, particularly as they impact orthodox doctrine. He writes not against any particular error; instead, he writes in favor of all truth in the face of Satan's temptation to mangle and sully what is pure.

2. The Polemicist

But what provoked the writing of *Tactica Sacra*? Sickness gave him the time to write, but it does not explain his choice of theme.

a. Exegesis

One reason why the book was written was that Arrowsmith wanted people to know that the whole of the Bible, as he had come to see it, contains an over-arching theme that is not merely eschatological (as he had explained in earlier works) but militaristic. This can be seen especially in the first of the three books that comprise *Tactica Sacra*.

Book One, in six chapters, argues that spiritual warfare is basic to the Christian religion. In these chapters Arrowsmith walks the reader from the "proto-gospel" of Genesis 3:15, with its promise of Satan's defeat by the Seed of Eve, all the way to the Apostle Paul's discussion of the armor of God in Ephesians 6. Varieties of enmity and enemies are noted along the

25. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, I.i.2.
26. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, I.i.1.

way, while Christ is set forth as the coming captain of the Christian soldier. The book is substantially forward-looking.

For Arrowsmith, the "very close connection between Christianity and spiritual military service" is a result of the fall of humanity into sin. This connection is first articulated in the protoevangelium of Genesis 3:15: "I shall place enmity between You and the Woman, between your seed and hers. It shall crush your head, and you shall crush its heel." This, for Arrowsmith, "is the first statement of the Gospel,"[27] and it is his first order of business in Book One to make sure it is not stolen from God's people through impoverished and erroneous treatments of the text, notably those propounded by Socinians (a leading concern to the orthodox in the 1650s). Of course, such impoverished interpretations are to be expected; after all, "it is not at all surprising that the ancient Serpent, gripped as he is by the greatest concern for his own head," has attempted to mislead the world regarding his own destiny and to keep it from seeking rest in Christ.[28]

The connection between the text, Christ, and Christianity is established. But what about Christianity and military metaphors, or rather, military realities? How does Genesis 3:15, properly understood, lead readers to *Plans for Holy War*? The answer is found in the Lord's own declaration of war: his establishment of the fact that there must be enmity, must be two parties, and that this situation must continue "to the end of the age, between Christ and his own on one side, and the Devil on the other side with his followers."[29]

Having identified the official opposition in Chapter One, the author engages in reconnaissance and review in Chapter Two: assessing the enemy, learning to identify the serpent, his seven leading vices, his followers; and then surveying loyal forces: Christians, and more importantly, Christ (not the virgin Mary) as our captain and as the Seed of the woman.[30]

Each topic subsequently receives fuller treatment. In Chapter Three, Satan's "blazing enmity" is seen in the forces loyal to him, including a predictable battery of popes, persecutors, Arminians, demons, practitioners of magical arts, depraved persons of all sorts, and one less predictable group—"men of letters."[31]

27. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, I.i.2.
28. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, I.i.3.
29. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, I.i.5.
30. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, I.ii.
31. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, I.iii.

So who is on the Lord's side? *All* Christians, as stated before; but also ministers and even angels make up the forces of our "Gospel Centurion." Arrowsmith explains in Chapter Five the duties owed to the One who says "to this one, 'go,' and he goes." The reader is told that "Alexander's soldiers were marked with distinction, namely 'they focused not only on their general's standard, but even on his nod.' We watch for the standard of Christ in his word, his nod in the inspiration of the Spirit, and we must obey both eagerly."[32] From this point, until the third book, Arrowsmith expounds the armor of God as detailed in Ephesians 6.

But key for the Professor is that the problem of sin manifests itself in sins of understanding and not merely sins of the heart or sins of action. This emphasis on the importance of theological warfare is one of the points that makes Arrowsmith's treatment of Ephesians 6 and his explanation of the subject of spiritual warfare unique. The schemes of Satan have as much to do with the promotion of heterodoxy as they do with keeping sinners in unholy slavery or in inhibiting their spiritual growth. Arrowsmith's treatment of spiritual warfare does not follow the same path as William Gurnall's *The Christian in Complete Armour*, the first edition of which had been printed only two years previously in 1655. *Plans for Holy War* is a sustained plea for Christian people, Christian ministers, and, as we will see, especially Christian magistrates and academics to take seriously the urgent need to fight for truth.

b. Wegelians

Arrowsmith claims that Christian warfare as a unifying theme only "occurred to" him because he was at his "leisure"—by which he really means, he was so sick that he could do almost nothing other than think.[33] Realizing these truths at this point in life, and not having much life left, offers one reason why this peace-making professor would write this book when he did.

But Arrowsmith also says that he was thinking about "Christians' military service" when he came to this discovery—which begs the question why a dying man would have this on his mind and leads us to a second reason why the book needed to be written: because of the Wegelians.

To Arrowsmith's evident sorrow, "England gives birth each year to some new monster,"[34] and Book 2, Chapter Two is entirely dedicated to

32. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, I.v.4.
33. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, I.i.2.
34. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, II.i.7.

explaining why 1650s England is so convulsed with heterodoxy. Bypassing "the Scholastics who have with great effort brought Greek philosophy into the citadel of the church like a Trojan horse," Arrowsmith reaches back into antiquity and points the finger at "Plato and the Platonists" and Aristotle and the Aristotelians. These were the philosophers and philosophies to which promoters of Pelagianism were attracted as they boasted of their "secular knowledge."[35] Similar influences, he believed, along with a "resurgence of skepticism," were behind the persistence of Remonstrant and Socinian thought.[36] He adds to this a dangerous "presumption to prophesy"[37] on the part of these errorists, but strangely, here he does not mention the recently emerging Quakers as one might expect in a chapter on the errors of England in the 1650s. This is especially surprising since Arrowsmith, generally pacific during his mastership of Trinity, had accused Alexander Ackhurst, the Vice-Master of his own college, of Quaker-like error in 1654, and since Quakers were active in the town by 1655.[38] Instead, Arrowsmith cites as negative examples the Dutch Remonstrants, the Anabaptists, and "From Germany…the Weigelians."[39]

Valentine Weigel (1533–1588) was a German Lutheran pastor of no real distinction, and during his own lifetime his orthodoxy was not seriously in question. Only after he died were his manuscript works discovered, admired by some, and then two decades later brought into print. It is because of these delays that a sixteenth-century preacher spawned a seventeenth-century sect.

Weigel held views in common with German mystics like Meister Eckhart and Johannes Tauler. He venerated Caspar Schwenkfeld and attracted interest from followers of Paracelsus (d. 1541) who sought an alternative to the "learned" medicine of the time (and who can blame them!). The publisher of his works in England was Giles Calvert, a publisher of both Quaker works and works in the German mystical tradition.[40]

35. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, II.ii.2.

36. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, II.ii.2, 4, 6.

37. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, II.ii.5.

38. Twigg, *University of Cambridge*, 191–92; see 191–95.

39. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, II.ii.6.

40. For a modern edition of and introduction to Weigel's works, see Valentin Weigel, *Von Betrachtung des Lebens Christi. Vom Leben Christi. De vita Christi*, ed. Horst Pfefferl (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2002).

Twice in *Plans for Holy War*, Arrowsmith had made passing reference to Paracelsus,[41] whom the Weigelians admired. But the Weigelians themselves are a main concern, and it is here that he states his main objection to their teaching. For Arrowsmith, the Weigelians represent "bizarre progressives…who grant the civil magistrate, even though he is Christian and endowed with distinguished piety, no authority even to reform the church, much less to suppress heretics in any way at all."[42]

The old errors of the Weigelians had much in common with the newly emerging Quakers. They shared the same printer in London. They suffered the same pejorative labeling as varieties of "Enthusiasm." They also all relied on unmediated communications with God, opposed university education, and criticized established religion.

For Arrowsmith, the Weigelian unwillingness to fight heresy with every weapon available to Christians, including the Christian magistrates' "sword," was unconscionable. Such an attitude is "against the plain meaning of sacred Scripture, the mind of Augustine, the practice of the church, and the clear dictates of reason," and he appeals to "the reform of the churches during the reigns of David, Solomon, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and the other kings of Judah" to make his point.[43]

But if this was his concern, why point the finger at German "Weigelians" when there were enough problems at home? One answer might be that it seemed more prudent to do so, or at least more politic, than to preach against the toleration of error which characterized Oliver Cromwell's administration, for it had defaulted to defending high levels of religious liberty and thus, by default, toleration of heterodoxy. Another reason to criticize the Weigelians, in addition to everything said thus far, is that in mid-1650s England it may still have been unclear which movement—Weigelianism or Quakerism—would prove to be most corrosive to orthodoxy or attractive to errorists. But in both of these answers, what should really be seen is that Weigelianism is for Arrowsmith not so much a German movement that needs to be feared in England but a German label for an English problem, perhaps a very specific English problem, and which one or ones he does not say.

In registering complaints about Weigelianism, Arrowsmith further helps us understand how three curious orations that he attached to the book were not merely added padding, an additional feature to increase sales.

41. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, I.iii.2, I.vi.7.
42. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, II.ii.11.
43. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, II.ii.12.

The three lectures prefacing the main text of *Plans for Holy War*, discussed more fully in the introduction to the new translation, provide essential context for the larger book, and arguably offer a key to its central thesis.

That thesis is that error needs to be resisted by all Christians, including Christian magistrates. To be sure, this thesis is not advanced to the exclusion of other concerns: Arrowsmith ends his three-chapter exposition of the Belt of Truth with an exhortation to all Christians, English Christians generally, and Academics specifically, and thus not to magistrates exclusively. But it is clear that he wants "Christians generally, and ministers in particular" (at a time when almost all academics were ministers) to own the theologian's task of identifying and refuting error—and then to ask the civil magistrate to back up the word with the "sword," through means such as state-supported censorship, fines, and perhaps imprisonment or even exile.[44] Arrowsmith makes no specific recommendations, but readers would be well aware of the range of available options.

c. The Vice-Master

With a consideration of Arrowsmith's understanding of Scripture and his worries about a Wegelian spirit afflicting 1650s England, this article is drifting toward an answer as to why a figure like Arrowsmith—a figure who cannot shed his pacific tone even while advocating polemics—would focus his remaining energy on writing this as his final book. Both answers thus far might suffice by way of motivation for writing but are perhaps still too general: a conviction about what the whole Bible teaches; and a rising problem in the 1650s.

There seems to be at least one more reason why Arrowsmith might have felt the urgency to write. This third motivation is the sad case of his Vice-Master at Trinity, Alexander Ackhurst, mentioned above in passing.

The Master of Trinity was able to be flexible, at times beyond what others thought proper. Earlier, as Master of St. John's, he had sometimes advocated the removal of royalists but not always. Even after the regicide, and against vocal opposition, where men of exceptional talent could be found, he occasionally advocated the continuance or promotion of known or suspected royalists in the college if they were well-qualified, godly tutors.[45] This same attitude continued into the 1650s at his new post. But Ackhurst worried Arrowsmith.

44. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, II.ii.12, II.v.6.

45. Twigg, *University of Cambridge*, 152.

Arrowsmith travelled to London to bring testimony in Parliament against Ackhurst for dishonoring both God and Holy Scripture. Imprisoned in London and examined by Parliament, the University, and then the College, Ackhurst was shuttled from one trial to another in 1654 and 1655. Arrowsmith, along with Anthony Tuckney and Lazarus Seaman (two other college masters and former Westminster assembly members), examined Ackhurst. He was later released from prison for the purpose of further examination in Cambridge and remained free, but following an examination of his theological views by senior leaders in the university (including Arrowsmith), Ackhurst was ejected from the college and thus the University. In the case of Ackhurst, the civil magistrate failed to do what Arrowsmith thought it should have done.

Ackhurst was later thought to be a Quaker. But these were early years for Quakerism in the Cambridge area, and in writing about Wegelianism, Arrowsmith may have been seeking a good label for his erring colleague. But the more important point is that as Arrowsmith delivered his three anti-Wegelian lectures in 1655 or 1656 and as he wrote *Tactica Sacra* around the same time, Ackhurst's case was in process or had just wound down. Arguably, the Ackhurst affair is the most immediate of the three plausible catalysts for Arrowsmith's production of *Tactica Sacra*.

Fittingly, the work ends with a "modest sketch of the heavenly triumph." In one deeply moving line after another the writer leaves his readers on the edge of their pews, waiting for Christ's return. He confesses for himself, "I can now see the land, or rather Heaven, where my long argument must come to an end," and adds, "Christians dwell in enemy territory so long as they fulfill their military service in the world… so Christians are led triumphant after they say goodbye to the world through death, are wreathed with their crowns, and decorated with songs of praise. They come to the 'city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, ten thousands of angels.'"[46]

That this heaven contains multitudes heartens Arrowsmith, although it does not lead him down the garden path toward universal redemption.[47] Instead what follows, still maintaining an emphasis on warfare and now victory, is a reflection on the joys of the blessed in seeing God and loving God[48] and the various ways in which the blessed are described in Scripture, reflecting their exalted dignity, purity, and joy, all of which is owed "to

46. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, III.iv.1.
47. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, III.iv.2.
48. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, III.iv.3.

our most blessed Mediator Jesus Christ."[49] And here *Tactica Sacra's* subtitle comes into its own, for this is a book explaining "How the Spiritual Soldier Fights, Conquers, *and* Triumphs."

Conclusions

But what of this article's title, and its reference to the "art of pacific pugilism"? I set out to demonstrate why peace-making Arrowsmith ended his life with a pugilistic or combative book. But the most striking feature of the book itself, and the first of my four concluding observations, is that Arrowsmith managed to pull off a writing style that was at once pacific and pugilistic. For the fact is, Arrowsmith's sustained polemic rarely wanders from the winning tone that characterized the rest of his life and writing. His content is warlike, but his tone remains earnestly friendly.

Arrowsmith was conscious of what he was doing in the book and describes his style as scholastic-pastoral.[50] His term is useful. The professor's book is scholastic in the sense that it addresses and then answers questions that academically trained Christians might ask, and it meets objections that have been and could be raised.

But the book is also pastoral. The whole book is written in the first person, for the book is a conversation between Arrowsmith and his readers, who are frequently and directly addressed in a pastoral tone, "whoever you are—Christian, Englishman, academic."[51] In turns, his audience is advised to pay attention, excused for their "rising boredom," encouraged to admire good theologians, or urged to grieve the bad.[52] Throughout the book the professor is a pastor.

The book is also both scholastic and pastoral in the sense that it is both scholarly and accessible. Potential rough edges in the work are softened with both anecdotes and choice citations and quotations. Arrowsmith not only cites around 300 distinct authors; he also tells stories or relates anecdotes mentioning another 350 historical and literary figures, from Protagoras and Pericles to Pope Paul V and the legendary King Pirgandicus.[53] His stories

49. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, III.iv.4–5.

50. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, I.i.1.

51. Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, II.iii.6.

52. e.g., Arrowsmith, *Plans for Holy War*, II.ii.5, III.iii.15, II.iii.6, II.ii.11.

53. Of these about seventy were medieval theologians, exegetes, and churchmen. Arrowsmith mentions or cites almost twice as many pagan classical figures (roughly 130), about three dozen pagan literary figures and deities, and perhaps four dozen early Jewish and Christian exegetes, theologians, historians, and heretics, including some prominent

are almost always entertaining, even if not always plausible. His interest in telling stories seems more focused on adding color to his book than light.

This pleasant tone is sometimes on display even in describing particular errorists. While the main point of the work is the need to defend true theology, false theology is discussed right out of the gate. Among the errorists mentioned, papists and Jesuits lead the way, but while many references to Roman Catholics are predictably negative, there are a surprising number of moments where a good point made by an obvious opponent is acknowledged by the author.

This is not an angry man-biting-dog kind of book. Rather, Arrowsmith seems to have operated according to the maxim that one must hate the Catholicism but could love the Catholic. Arminians are the second-most mentioned problem, and they receive less praise for their rare insights. Socinians find themselves in third place, but they are clearly marked out as the most dangerous heretics of Arrowsmith's own day (the Cartesians are on his radar, but not in his sights).

All of this is part of the art of pacific pugilism and is strikingly different—more confident and calmer, than much of the near-hysterical heresiography of the day, not least that which was produced by Thomas Edwards. There appears, then, in Arrowsmith a contrast with other Puritan literature of the day and raises the question, which this article is not able to answer, as to when this tone began to change among the godly. It seems that most works discussing error with a relaxed tone were more closely associated with the cool culture of royalism and not the hot culture of Puritanism. A systematic study of polemical works is needed to see if this impression reflects reality and tells of a trend.

The second conclusion drawn from this brief study is that there is apparent value in tracing the multiple possible motivations involved in the writing of a work, including immediate personal circumstances as well as obvious ministerial motives (such as a faithful exposition of an over-arching biblical theme). There are two worlds that study Puritanism. One seems to look for pure, enduring, pastoral motives behind printed works. The other questions such idealism, sticking to personal and more immediate motives for religious writing. In Arrowsmith's case we see a bit of both, and there is reason to suspect that additional studies of works by other divines would

Christian churchmen. In distinction from his reformation and post-Reformation citations, most mentions of earlier sources are provided for color or oxygen—devices to ease the reader's way through the book.

often yield complex and compound motivations, including some unimpressive motivations that card-carrying "Calvinists" ought to expect.

Third, the fact that the Ackhurst case was punted between London and Cambridge, and ultimately resulted only in his ejection from a college fellowship, offers one more data point regarding the difficulty in enforcing blasphemy law in Cromwellian England. The weakness of the civil law, and even of a Puritan-controlled trial in a Puritan-dominated university, points to the limits of coercion. Big sticks having proved useless for correcting the increasingly chaotic environment of the 1650s, it may be that Arrowsmith decided to offer a carrot—a book on truth and heresy without (or at least with much less) of the unpleasantness that often accompanied earnest polemic against error.

Finally, it seems inevitable that the sheer volume of the errorists and errors discussed by Arrowsmith will lead historians at some point to compare it to the notorious work of heresiography of the 1640s, Thomas Edwards's *Gangraena*. Both seek to expose present errors, both call for an urgent response, and both name names, although Arrowsmith focuses on errors on the continent to an extent that Edwards does not. Although it would be unfair to liken Arrowsmith's largely irenic work to Edwards's angry diatribe, it is Arrowsmith's work that will better help historians see why, shortly after Arrowsmith's death, Presbyterians not sharing Edwards's judgmental spirit would nonetheless welcome a Restoration of the monarchy even with all the risks that would entail.

It remains to be said—by way of reflection rather than conclusion—that Arrowsmith's concerns and conduct seem strikingly relevant for today. One does not have to be a credential cultural pundit to notice that we have moved from an anti-judgmental modern culture to a hyper-judgmental cancel culture, and from a culture that paid at least lip-service to human dignity to one that now finds value in a hierarchy of victimhood. Arrowsmith's interest in addressing sin more than suffering (in spite of his own suffering), and in his own sin and not simply that of others (in spite of his concern about rising doctrinal indifference) might almost make Puritanism seem attractive to modern scholars looking for an antidote to our current malaise.

As well, Arrowsmith's concern about doctrinal sin, rather than ethical sin, reminds us that many Puritans were convinced that growing in grace entailed growing in a knowledge of God as He has revealed Himself—and that in conscious contrast from how the church or culture might imagine Him to be. Doctrinal controversy was and is in many contexts seen to be a problem, or if not a problem, still something to be subordinated to greater

concerns. How far this timidity or indifferentism is from Arrowsmith's own understanding of the Christian life!

Third, *Plans for Holy War* and the three Orations that accompany the book describe a problem in the author's day that serves as a reminder that the Weigelian spirit is alive and well in our own day. Arrowsmith's concerns about magistrates who refuse to support ministerial education, church reform, and oppose doctrinal error, will find few sympathizers. But the Weigelian spirit evidences itself in the academy too. There are those who devalue the study of languages and literature for ministers, or who minimize the need for wide reading in theology and philosophy, thus depriving ministers and their congregations from the good that a thorough education can do. Even those who argue for some kind of sustained study for gospel ministry are continually "dumbing down" their programs, requiring fewer and fewer hours of study in residential and hybrid programs and now online programs designed not only to reach those who cannot access in-person ministerial training, but those who find it inconvenient. Arrowsmith understood the value of education for Christians, not least Christian pastors. It will take a backbone like his to stand against these trends and call people to do what is best, even if it is hard.

Finally, Arrowsmith himself is an impressive example of a generous spirit. He extends considerable effort to voice his complaints and concerns in a winsome and attractive way. The hard work of writing well, rather than the easier task of writing much, is something that administrators need to encourage and academics need to pursue. But it is also impressive that Arrowsmith wrote the book not expecting to live to see it published. He was wrong, for it was for sale in the bookstalls before his death. But that Arrowsmith could labor in so much weakness, with so little likelihood that he would personally hear praise from those who would read his book, is a true commendation of a Christian soldier who spent his life in service to his Captain and had the faith to see that he would live another day.