

## LECTURE V.

THE OPENING OF THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY ; ITS PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES WHILE ENGAGED IN REVISING THE ENGLISH ARTICLES OF RELIGION, AND THE SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT.

IN my last Lecture I continued my sketch of the history of English Puritanism from the meeting of the Long Parliament down to the meeting of the Westminster Assembly. I gave you a succinct account of the lengthened negotiations between the king and the two Houses of Parliament about the calling of the Assembly. I told you that it was finally summoned by an ordinance of the two Houses passed on the 12th and printed on the 13th, and again on the 20th, of June 1643, and that it was appointed to meet on the 1st of July ensuing. On the 24th of June two supplementary ordinances<sup>1</sup> were issued, the one appointing the

<sup>1</sup> 'It is this day ordered by the Lords and Commons in Parliament assembled, that the meeting of the Assembly of Divines with some members of both Houses of Parliament shall be on Saturday, the first of July 1643, at nine of the clock in the morning, in the chapel commonly called King Henry the Seventh his chapel, in the city of Westminster. Whereof all parties concerned are to take notice, and to make their appearance accordingly.' 'It is this

meeting to be at nine o'clock on the morning of the day named, the other ordering prayers to be offered in all churches for the blessing of God on the Assembly.

Two days before this the meeting had been prohibited by a proclamation from the king at Oxford. It has not been my lot to meet with the proclamation itself, but I have seen the very full account given of it in *Mercurius Aulicus*—the Court paper of the day, and I subjoin the more important part of it. After a long and bitter preamble adverting to the many artifices which had been used by some factious persons to alter the whole frame and constitution of the Church, complaining of the unprecedented ordinance for calling an irregular Assembly of Divines, without his authority and against his liking, and speaking unworthily of those to whom a few years later he professed his willingness to submit, with a few additions, the decision of the question of church reform, he proceeds as follows: 'his Majesty considering that according to the laws of this kingdom

day ordered, etc., That all ministers in their several churches on Wednesday next at the public fast, and at all other times afterwards in their prayers before their sermons, shall earnestly and particularly pray for the special assistance and blessing of God upon the Assembly of Divines and others appointed to meet at Westminster on Saturday the first day of July next, to be consulted with by both Houses of Parliament on matters concerning religion. And that this order be forthwith printed and sent to all parish churches.' (E. 62, Nos. 1 and 2.)

no synod or convocation of the clergy ought to be called but by his authority, nor any canons or constitutions made or executed but by his Majesty's licence first obtained to the making of them, and his royal assent granted to put the same in execution, on pain that every one of the clergy doing the contrary and thereof convicted suffer imprisonment and make fine to the king's will, doth strictly inhibit and forbid all and every person named in that pretended Ordinance to assemble and meet together to the end and purpose there set down, declaring further the said Assembly (if they shall convene without his Majesty's authority) to be illegal, the acts thereof not to be binding on his subjects, and that he will proceed severely against all those who, after such a gracious warning, shall presume to meet together by colour of the said pretended Ordinance.' (E. 59, No. 24.) The proclamation was commanded to be published in all churches and chapels in England and Wales. It may be doubted if the command was extensively obeyed, but publicity was at once given to such a glaring breach of repeated professions and promises by the parliamentary paper of the day in the following half regretful, half contemptuous terms: Friday, June 30th: 'The reports from Oxford are, that a proclamation hath been published there to prohibit the Assembly of Divines here upon the 1st of next month, wherein, as it is said, they are

vehemently threatened to have all their ecclesiastical livings and promotions taken from them if they disobey these injunctions. Which if it be true we must not expect to have the Protestant religion either maintained or propagated from thence, since evil counsellors can so soon frustrate good promises for that purpose.' Thus the members named to be of the Assembly knew that it was at the risk of their liberty and livings, and under threat of that terrible penalty of *premunire* that they resolved to obey the Ordinance of the two Houses.

Yet on July 1st, the day appointed for their assembling, a goodly number had the courage to meet together in the appointed place. Conforming to the custom of the English Convocation, in whose room they were virtually surrogated, they first met for divine service in Westminster Abbey, and both Houses of Parliament adjourned early in the forenoon that their members also might be present on the occasion. The following is the quaint notice of this meeting given in No. 25 of the newspaper already referred to: 'On Saturday last the Assembly of Divines began at Westminster according to the Ordinance of both Houses of Parliament, when Dr. Twist of Newbery in the County of Berks, their Prolocutor, preached on John xiv. and 18th, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you,"—a text pertinent to these times of sorrow, anguish, and misery, to raise up the droop-

ing spirits of the people of God who lie under the pressure of Popish wars and combustions.' (E. 59.) The chronicler forbears to relate any of the points of the said sermon, because he supposes it will be published in print for the satisfaction and comfort of all who may desire to read it, but to the annoyance and regret of posterity the sermon had either not been published or has now completely disappeared.<sup>1</sup> The writer then continues: 'The number that met this day were three score and nine, the total number being (including the members of both the Houses of Parliament, which are but thirty) one hundred and fifty-one, whereof if forty meet the first day, it maketh the Assembly valid according to the Ordinance.' Lightfoot, who

<sup>1</sup> The very day the Assembly met, however, a pamphlet was published with the title *The English Pope, etc.*, with an epistle to the reverend divines now convened by authority of Parliament, in which, after reference to the slanders of the royalists, they are addressed thus encouragingly: 'Be of good courage, ye that have the honour to be of this Assembly. Fear not the name of traitors while you give judgment for loyalty, nor the name of Anabaptists while you propugn piety, nor the name of schismatics while you settle unity. If they believed the calumnies they circulate against you, it would have been better they had forwarded your meeting than procured proclamation declaring it treason, but they do not but fear you will disappoint all. Be you therefore the more courageous for this, and if you cannot totally eradicate all those doctrines of division which the prelates have sowed among the good wheat, yet denounce against them and publish your detestation of them; and if you cannot yet erect a perfect form of discipline by reason of the secret wars made upon you and the sinews of authority withheld from you, yet present us with some models of it, that the world may see how far you are from affecting anarchy and confusion.' (E. 53, No. 13.)

probably was present at the opening of the Assembly, supplies the additional information that, besides the members of the two Houses and the divines named in the Ordinance, there was also a great congregation in the Abbey Church, and that after the service there all the members of Assembly present went into the gorgeous chapel of Henry VII. This place appointed for their meeting was the place where the Convocation of 1640, notorious for its forlorn attempt to carry out the policy of 'thorough' despotism in Church and State, had met. There the Ordinance was read and the names were called over according to the custom long observed in our Assemblies, with the results already indicated. Lightfoot further tells of 'divers speeches being made by divers'—doubtless, *inter alia*, with the view of following up what the Prolocutor had done to encourage the members in the great work to which they had been called notwithstanding the opposition with which they were threatened; and finally he adds that 'the Parliament not having as yet framed or proposed any work for the Assembly suddenly to fall upon, it was adjourned till Thursday following.' To show how intently the movement was watched from Oxford, I may add the notice of this day's proceedings contained in the court newspaper for Friday, July 7th: 'It was advertised this day that the Synod, which by the pretended Ordinance of the

two Houses was to begin on the 1st of July, was put off till the Thursday following, being the sixth of this present month, that matters might be prepared for them whereupon to treat, it being not yet revealed to my Lord Say, Master Pym, and others of their associates in the Committee for religion, what gospel 'tis that must be preached and settled by these new evangelists. Only it is reported that certain of the godly ministers did meet that day in the Abbey Church to a sermon, and had some doctrines and uses, but what else done, and to what purpose that was done, we may hear hereafter.' The day before this was published, the adjournment had been terminated. Certain carefully framed instructions and rules for regulating the procedure of the Assembly having, after consultation with some of the divines, been adopted by the Houses, were brought in and read. All of them indicate that serious business was meant, and freedom of discussion was to be protected to the utmost. They provide, *first*: that two assessors shall be joined to the Prolocutor to supply his place in case of absence or infirmity; *second*: that scribes shall be appointed to set down all proceedings, and these to be divines who are not of the Assembly, viz., Mr. Henry Roborough and Mr. Adoniram Byfield; *third*: that every member, at his first entry into the Assembly, shall make serious and solemn protesta-

tion not to maintain anything but what he believes to be truth in sincerity, when discovered unto him ; *fourth*: that no resolution shall be given upon any question the same day wherein it is first propounded ; *fifth*: that what any man undertakes to prove as necessary, he shall make good out of the Scriptures ; *sixth*: that no man proceed in any dispute, after the Prolocutor has enjoined him silence, unless the Assembly desire he may go on ; *seventh*: that no man shall be denied to enter his dissent from the Assembly and his reasons for it on any point after it has been first debated in the Assembly, and thence (if the dissenting party desire it) the same to be sent to the Houses of Parliament *by the Assembly*, not by any particular man or men in a private way, when either House shall require ; *eighth*: that all things agreed on, and prepared for the Parliament, be openly read and allowed in the Assembly, and then offered as the judgment of the Assembly, if the major part assent ; provided that the opinions of any persons dissenting and the reasons urged for their doing so, be annexed thereunto if the dissenters require it, together with the solutions (*i.e.* answers, as we now designate them), if any were given to the Assembly, of these reasons.<sup>1</sup> Possibly there may have been some talk also at this session of revising the Thirty-nine Articles. At least under date of July 11th the

<sup>1</sup> *Journals of the House of Commons*, vol. iii. p. 157.

London correspondent of *Mercurius Aulicus* reports this, though he mixes it up with the proceedings which took place on Saturday. 'It was this day certified that the ministers of their Assembly being met on Thursday, according to adjournment, fell presently upon the altering of the Thirty-nine Articles so solemnly agreed upon in the beginning of the reformation of this Church. . . . Notice of this being brought to the Lower House, caused it to be diversely spoken of; some wiser than the rest declared that it was not within the power of their commission to alter either the doctrine or the discipline of the church which had been formerly established.' But he errs in supposing that the Assembly anticipated the action of the Parliament. The Journals of the House of Commons distinctly show (vol. iii. p. 156) that directions had been issued by the Houses on *Wednesday* that it should begin consideration of the Articles.

Lightfoot has no entry in his journal in regard to the work of Friday; but from another source we learn that it was observed by the Assembly and the Houses as a fast—a season of humiliation, and prayer for Divine guidance and blessing on the work they were about to begin. As on the opening day there met in Westminster Abbey both Houses and the Assembly, and no doubt a large congregation. The preacher in the forenoon was Oliver Bowles, one of the oldest members of the

Assembly, and the author of a work *De Pastore Evangelico*, which was republished in Holland even after Baxter had put forth his famous treatise 'The Reformed Pastor,' to inflame his brethren in the ministry with something of his own consuming zeal. The sermon of Bowles was published under the title 'Zeal for God's House quickened,' and as a manifesto of the intentions and desires of the Houses and of the divines in their confidence, even its preface is noteworthy. 'Out of your vigilant care,' he says, addressing the members of the Houses, 'you have found out a way . . . to convene an assembly of grave and learned divines with whom you might advise concerning the settlement of doctrine, worship, and church-government. You saw cause which might move you so to do in respect, 1st, of those licentious spirits who took occasion as to vent their own fancies so to attempt anything in matter of doctrine and worship; 2d, in that for want of an established church-government we were, and still are, in danger to fall from a tyranny to an anarchy; 3d, in that evil-minded men, seeing no effectual means provided to suppress such variety of sects as did start up, were ready to censure you as the favourers of such opinions.' Then, after referring briefly and with approbation to their giving way for the admittance of divines of different judgments to be chosen as members of Assembly, and according liberty to them to ex-

press their several views, he proceeds thus to give his estimate of the importance of the work assigned to them: 'Is not your work a counterwork to that great and long-plotted design whereby Popery should have been readvanced,<sup>1</sup> God's saving truth been suppressed, his worship substantially corrupted or utterly destroyed? Is it not a work of the largest extent as that which concerns all other Reformed churches, whose happiness or misery will be involved in ours? Yea, ages to come will either bless or curse you as you shall follow or neglect the opportunity.' His sermon pointed, as the Puritan leaders had done in 1560 and again in 1603, to an earnest preaching ministry as the great want of the times, and enlarged, as became the author of the *De Pastore Evangelico*, on the manner in which such a ministry should strive to preach, almost as was done afterwards by the Assembly itself in its directory for preaching, 'zealously, compassion-

<sup>1</sup> No one could be more persistent than Laud in disclaiming all inclination towards reunion with Rome till it was other than it then was. 'But facts were too strong for him. The revival of "Catholic" principles was the signal for fashionable conversions. The Jesuits smiled approval, for they knew that their day was come. The queen's chapel and the chapels of foreign ambassadors were thronged with high-born ladies, sighing for readmission into the true fold. The stern and sincere Protestant, to whom ritualism was never anything but Popery in disguise, saw the liberties which the Smithfield martyrs had won being silently filched from him. He knew that there was another struggle before him, or the sticks were again growing which would form the fagots of new pyres.'—*Edinburgh Review* for October 1882.

ately, convincingly, feelingly, frequently, gravely.' (E. 63.) The sermon, all in all, is a noble one.

Matthew Newcomen, who preached in the afternoon of the same day, adverted, as became a Smectymnuan divine, to the preciousness of every grain of God's truth, every 'selvedge' of Christ's seamless robe, and affirmed 'he must have a heart more ignorant and unbelieving than the apostle's *ιδιώτης* (1 Cor. xiv. 24) that should come in and be an ear-witness of your proceedings, and not worship God and report that God is in you of a truth. Verily I have often from my heart wished that your greatest adversaries and traducers might be witnesses of your learned, grave, and pious debates, which were able to silence, if not convert malignity itself.' (E. 63.) This day of prayer was but the first of many days similarly observed in these earnest anxious years. We may not venture to assert that, with all their care, no human infirmity was allowed to mingle with the simplicity of their waiting upon God to receive indications of His will. For in what crisis of the Church's fate dare we maintain that infirmity did not to some extent mingle with and mar many a holy sacrifice, many an act of true service to Christ? Yet we may without misgiving indignantly repel the theory which would ascribe any part of their conduct to conscious hypocrisy or self-deception. They were true men of God, desiring from their very hearts to do His

work in their generation, and feeling deeply their need of His aid and blessing, that they might do it well. But they were men, after all, of like passions with ourselves, liable to err in judgment and in temper, compassed about with infirmities and having their mental vision obscured by not a few prejudices. To say that of them is to say no more than we should have to say of the best of their opponents.

The same day Mr. Rouse and Mr. Salloway were deputed by the House of Commons 'to return thanks to Dr. Twisse, Mr. Bowles, and Mr. Newcomen, for the great pains they took in the several sermons they preached at the desire of both Houses in Westminster Abbey, before both Houses and Assembly, upon the day of the first meeting of the Assembly, and upon the fast-day for the Assembly,' and to desire them to print their sermons.

On the following day when the Assembly met, the protestation or vow,<sup>1</sup> which was framed according to the third of the regulations already quoted,

<sup>1</sup> The suggestion of this seems to have come from one of the ablest and most active members of the Assembly. In a sermon preached by Palmer before the House of Commons he had said, 'I humbly wish a profession or promise or vow (call it what you will) to be made by all us ministers in the presence of God to this effect: That we shall propound nothing nor consent nor oppose, but what we are persuaded is most agreeable to the Word of God; and will renounce any pre-conceived opinion if we shall be convinced that the Word of God is otherwise. So shall we all seek Christ and not ourselves nor sidings; and God's truth and not victory or glory to ourselves.' (E. 60, No. 3.)

and is still inserted in the preface to most editions of the Confession of Faith,<sup>1</sup>—having been approved of by the Houses of Parliament—was taken by every member present—peers and commoners as well as divines. The vow and the rules of procedure already given were subsequently appointed to be read in the beginning of each week or month, to remind the members of the very solemn obligations under which they acted in the great work they had undertaken. There was then, also, put into the hands of the divines what is termed the new Covenant or Oath, being the second of those vows by which, previous to their alliance with the Scots, the members of the English Parliament, in presence of the dangers which threatened them, thought it incumbent to bind themselves to resist Popery and all innovations in religion. This, however, was soon to be superseded by a newer and more memorable covenant, and it does not appear to have been actually taken by the divines. At the same meeting Mr. White of Dorchester and Dr. Burgess of Watford were nominated assessors to supply the place of the Prolocutor in case of infirmity or absence. It was also arranged

<sup>1</sup> 'I do seriously promise and vow in the presence of Almighty God, that in this Assembly, whereof I am a member, I will maintain nothing in point of doctrine but what I believe to be most agreeable to the Word of God, nor in point of discipline, but what may make most for God's glory and the peace and good of his church.'—*Journals of House of Commons*, vol. iii. p. 157.

with consent of Parliament, that the Assembly should proceed at once to revise the first ten of the Thirty-nine articles of the Church of England, so as to clear them from the false glosses which of late had been put on them by Pelagianising and Romanising divines, and above all by that bold pervert<sup>1</sup> to Romanism, who in 1634 first propounded the theory revived in our own day in Tract No. 90, that subscription of them was not largely inconsistent with acceptance of the decrees of Trent.

To prepare their work, and perhaps to conform to the precedent set by the Synod of Dort, the whole Assembly was 'cast into three equal committees,' according to the order in which the names of the divines stood in the Ordinance of the Houses. All these three, however, were open committees, to which any member interested in their business might come at pleasure. All three were to meet

<sup>1</sup> Davenport or *Franciscus a Sancta Clara* by name. The title of his book was 'Deus, natura, gratia, sive Tractatus de prædestinatione, de meritis et peccatorum remissione, etc., ubi ad trutinam fidei Catholicæ examinatur confessio Anglicana et ad singula puncta quid teneat, qualiter differat, excutitur, doctrina etiam Doctoris subtilis . . . olim Oxoniæ et Cantabrigiæ et solenniter approbata et honorifice prælecta exponitur et propugnatur: Lugd. 1634.' The fact that two editions of the book were issued in two successive years, that it was inscribed to the king, and urged him to complete the work his favourite divines had so well begun, is proof at once whom the Jesuits deemed their true allies, and how confident they were that these allies had prepared the way for them. Earnest Protestants might well feel that in such circumstances their very reverence for the Articles required that they should authoritatively vindicate them from the false glosses put on them.

on Monday at one o'clock. The first was to meet in Henry VII.'s Chapel, taking in hand the first, second, third, and fourth Articles. The second was to meet in the place used heretofore by the Lower House of Convocation (that is, as we are informed by Dean Stanley, St. John's and St. Andrew's Chapel on the north side of the Abbey—a little chapel below stairs). It was to proceed on the fifth, sixth, and seventh Articles. The third was to meet in the Jerusalem Chamber, long the usual meeting-place of the Upper House of Convocation, and was to take up Articles eighth, ninth, and tenth. A sub-committee of six or eight persons, partly divines, and partly members of the House of Commons, was appointed to seek for ancient copies of the Thirty-nine Articles, that the Assembly and its Committees might find their proceedings on the most authentic. The learned Selden, who was probably Convener, made report on 15th July of the proceedings of this sub-committee, and brought in many copies. No doubt one of these was that copy of the Latin Articles of 1563 still preserved in the Bodleian, and said to have been found by him in Archbishop Laud's library. It has been deemed of importance in our own day, from its bearing on the disputes which have been revived as to the authenticity of that clause of the twentieth Article, to which I referred in my first lecture as asserting the power of the Church to decree rites and

ceremonies, and claiming for it authority in controversies of faith.

The Assembly, at the close of this long session, adjourned till Wednesday in the following week, and left Monday and Tuesday free for the important work assigned to the Committees. Lightfoot tells us that at their first meeting Dr. Burgess was chosen chairman of the first Committee, Dr. Stanton of the second, and Mr. Gibbon of the third; but neither he nor any other extant authority has supplied a list of the three Committees as they stood on that day. Three lists are found in the manuscript minutes preserved in Dr. Williams' library, which I take to be lists of these committees as they stood at certain dates. The first of them bears the date of 2d November 1643, and is given by Dr. Briggs in his recent interesting paper on the Westminster Assembly in the January number of the *Presbyterian Review* for 1880. The second bears the date of 15th February 1643-4. The third, of date 12th April 1644, is inserted at page lxxxv of my Introduction to the published volume of the Minutes of the Assembly, and is here subjoined. By the date at which it was drawn up some of the original members had died, Dr. Featley and a few others had withdrawn, and most of the superadded divines had taken their seats in the Assembly. Possibly the last two names on the second Committee should be removed to the third. At least

such a change is needed to make the numbers in each equal.<sup>1</sup>

When the Assembly met on Wednesday, and the report from the first Committee was given in by Dr. Burgess, great debate arose because they had not

<sup>1</sup> [*First Committee.*]      [*Second Committee.*]      [*Third Committee.*]

Mr. Palmer.	Mr. Clayton.	Mr. Salloway.
Mr. Bowles.	Mr. Gipps.	Mr. Simpson.
Mr. Wilkinson, Sen <sup>r</sup> .	Mr. Burroughs.	Mr. Burgess.
Mr. Valentine.	Mr. Calamy.	Mr. Vines.
Mr. Raynor.	Mr. Walker.	Mr. Greenhill.
Dr. Hoyle.	Mr. Caryl.	Dr. Temple.
Mr. Bridge.	Mr. Seaman.	Mr. Ashe.
Mr. Goodwin.	Mr. Reynolds.	Mr. Gataker.
Mr. Ley.	Mr. Hill.	Mr. Spurstow.
Mr. Case.	Mr. Jackson.	Mr. Cheynel.
Dr. Gouge.	Mr. Carter of L[ondon].	Mr. De la March.
Mr. White.	Mr. Thorowgood.	Mr. Newcomen.
Mr. Marshall.	Mr. Arrowsmith.	Mr. Carter of D[ynnton].
Mr. Sedgwick.	Mr. Gibson.	Mr. Hodges.
Mr. Clark.	Mr. Whitaker.	Mr. Perne.
Mr. Bathurst.	Dr. Stanton [Conv <sup>r</sup> .].	Mr. Prophet.
Mr. Nye.	Mr. Lightfoot.	Mr. Sterry.
Dr. Smith.	Mr. Corbet.	Mr. Guibon [Conv <sup>r</sup> .].
Dr. Burges [Convener.]	Mr. Langley.	Mr. Michaelthwaite.
Mr. Green.	Mr. Tisdale.	Dr. Wincop.
Mr. Gower.	Mr. Young.	Mr. Price.
Mr. Taylor.	Mr. Philips.	Mr. Wilkinson, Jun <sup>r</sup> .
Mr. Wilson.	Mr. Couant.	Mr. Woodcock.
Mr. Tuckney.	Mr. Chambers.	Mr. De la Place.
Mr. Coleman.	Mr. Hall.	Mr. Maynard.
Mr. Herle.	Mr. Scudder.	Mr. Paynter.
Mr. Herrick.	Mr. Bayley.	Mr. Good.
Mr. Mew.	Mr. Pickering.	Mr. Hardwick.
Mr. Wrathband.	Mr. Cawdry.	
Mr. Hickes.	Mr. Strickland.	
	Mr. Bond.	
	Mr. Harris.	

adduced any passages of Scripture for the clearing and vindicating of the real sense of those Articles wherewith they were intrusted, and the question was raised whether, in proceeding upon all the Articles, Scripture should be adduced 'for the clearing of them' and fixing of their meaning. This question after long debate was determined affirmatively. From this date onwards to the 12th of October the Assembly was mainly occupied with the revision of the Thirty-nine Articles. The keen and lengthened debates which occurred in the discussions on these Articles could not fail to prepare the way for a more summary mode of procedure in connection with the Confession of Faith. The proceedings then were more summary, or at least more summarily recorded, just because the previous discussions on the more important doctrines of the Protestant system, and especially on that of Justification by Faith, had been thorough and exhaustive, and pretty fully recorded. Lightfoot has preserved no detailed record of these discussions, but in part at least they are fully reported in the first volume of the MS. Minutes of the Assembly. Dr. Featley's two speeches in the debates on the eighth Article and his five speeches on those on the eleventh, as well as his speech in regard to the Solemn League and Covenant, were published shortly after his death. They are learned, acute, and forcible, and as they give more satisfactory insight into the matters

discussed than the desultory notes taken by the scribes, I subjoin a few extracts from them.<sup>1</sup> In regard to the eighth Article on the three creeds to which a persistent party in the Assembly, as afterwards in the House of Commons, objected, it appears that the exceptions taken were partly against the titles of the creeds, and partly against their contents. 'It is objected,' the Doctor says, 'by some of our learned brethren that the Nicene creed is in truth the Constantinopolitan, that the creed which goeth under the name of Athanasius was either made by Anastasius or Eusebius Vercellensis. Certainly Meletius, Patriarch of Constantinople, resolves it negatively, . . . and for that which is called the Apostles' Creed the father, who so christened it, is unknown. Hereunto I answer that though the entire creed which is read in our churches under the name of the Nicene be found *totidem verbis* in the Constantinopolitan, yet it may truly be called the Nicene, because the greatest part of it is taken out of that of Nice, and howsoever some doubt whether Athanasius were the author of that creed which bears his name, yet the greater number of the learned of later ages entitle him to it; and though peradventure he framed it not himself, yet it is most agreeable to his doctrine, and seemeth to be drawn out of his works, and in that regard may be rightly termed HIS creed. For

<sup>1</sup> Speeches in the Assembly, generally bound with his *Dippers Dipt.*

the third creed, although I believe not that the Apostles either jointly or severally dictated it, yet I subscribe to Calvin's judgment, who saith that it was a summary of the Christian faith extant in the Apostles' days, and approved of by them. Howsoever, according to the rule of Aristotle, we must use the language of the vulgar though we vote with wise men and think as they do.' The things in the contents of the creeds most objected to are, he then proceeds to say, (1) the too peremptory way in which the Athanasian affirms the damnation of those who do not believe its doctrine. To this he answers with Vossius that it is to be applied to such only as have capacity to understand it, and whose consciences are convinced of its truth; (2) that in the Nicene creed Christ is spoken of as 'God of God;' to which he replies that 'though Christ is God of God it doth not therefore follow that the deity of the Son is from the deity of the Father, as it does not follow *quia Deus passus est, ergo Deitas passa est* or *quia Maria est mater Dei, ergo est Maria mater deitatis*;' (3) that it is said in the Apostles' Creed Christ descended into hell; to which objection he deems it sufficient to reply that all Christians acknowledge that Christ in some way descended into hell either locally, as many of the ancient fathers, and some of the moderns, or virtually, as Durandus, or metaphorically as Calvin, or metonymically as Tilenus,

Perkins, and this Assembly, and therefore no man need to make scruple of subscribing to this Article as it stands in the Creed, seeing it is capable of so many orthodoxal explications.'

Notwithstanding Dr. Featley's advice to them to be content to use the language of the vulgar, though thinking as wise men do, the Assembly deemed it better to alter the wording of Article VIII. so as to make it clear that they did not regard these ancient symbols as, strictly speaking, the work of the Apostles or of the Council of Nicea or of Athanasius, but only as being commonly so called, or going under their names, an instance of wondrous caution, which should be admired all the more by those who do not credit them with the highest scholarship or critical research, as some in our day still refuse to do.

The main question on which the long debates on the Article of Justification turned was whether the merit of the obedience of Christ as well as the merit of his sufferings was imputed to the believer for his justification. Several of the most distinguished members of the Assembly, including Twisse the Prolocutor, Mr. Gataker, and Mr. Vines, maintained, as had been formerly done by Rollock in Scotland, Piscator in Germany, and Tilenus in France, that it was the sufferings or the passive obedience only of Christ which was imputed to the believer. The Prolocutor spoke at least twice

in the course of the discussion ; Gataker oftener and at greater length, and with greater keenness. Dr. Featley, who was the chief disputant on the other side, and who was a thorough Protestant and Calvinist, though a decided royalist and Episcopalian, spoke at least five times, maintaining, as Ussher had formulated it in his Irish Articles, and the great majority of English Puritans had accepted it, that Christ's active obedience or fulfilling of the law, as well as his passive obedience or suffering of its penalty, was imputed to the believer, and was necessary to constitute him righteous in the sight of God and entitle him to eternal life. I can only find room for a few brief extracts from Dr. Featley's fifth speech, which bears the title, 'Concerning the resolve of the Assembly that the whole obedience of Christ is imputed to every believer.' He first notices and states not unfairly the three objections taken to the proposition by Gataker that it was redundant, yet deficient, and novel; redundant in that the word *whole* obedience of Christ must include his obedience to the ceremonial law as well as to the moral; deficient in that the word obedience could not be held to include Christ's original righteousness; novel in so far as the imputation of Christ's active as well as passive obedience was never defined for dogma before the French Protestant Synods of Gap and Privas.<sup>1</sup> To the objec-

<sup>1</sup> Quick's *Synodicon*, vol. i. pp. 227, 348.

tion of redundancy Featley replied that though *we* were not bound by the ceremonial law, yet the *Jews* were, and that this was part of the meaning of the Apostle when, in Galatians iv. 4, he speaks of Christ as being made under the law to redeem them that were under the law. To the charge of deficiency he rejoins that though Christ's original righteousness was requisite in him both as high priest and sacrifice, yet it was not properly the work of Christ but of the Holy Ghost, and so not to be imputed to us as any act of our Mediator. To the objection of novelty he replied that the doctrine itself was much more ancient than the French Synods in question, adducing testimonies in its favour from Chrysostom, Augustine, Bernard, Luther, Calvin, Peter Martyr, and others. He then proceeds as follows:—'Here methinks I hear those who are most active in the Assembly for the imputation of the mere passive obedience of Christ, like the tribunes among the Romans, *obnunciare et intercedere*, that they may hinder and stop the decree of the Assembly, alledging that though some of the ancient fathers, and not a few of the reformed doctors, cast in their white stone among ours, yet that we want the suffrage of Him who alone hath the turning voice in all debates of this kind, and that according to our protestation made at our first meeting we ought to resolve upon nothing in matter of faith, but what

we are persuaded hath firm and sure ground in Scripture, and howsoever some texts have been alledged for the imputation of both active and passive obedience, yet that at our last sitting they were wrested from us, and all inferences from thence cut off; all the redoubts and forts built upon that holy ground were sleighted. It will import, therefore, very much those who stand for the affirmative to recruit the forces of truth and repair the breaches in our forts made by the adversaries' batteries.' He then takes up in detail the several texts which had been adduced, and replies with considerable pertinency to Gataker's arguments respecting each. The latter had said that by obedience in Rom. v. 18-19, the apostle meant the special obedience which Christ gave to His Father's commandment to lay down His life for the sheep, just as in Philippians he spake of Christ becoming obedient unto death. To this Dr. Featley replies that the word in the former passage was not *ὑπακοή* but *δικαίωμα*, which was never taken in Scripture for suffering or mere passive obedience; further, that no man is said to have justification of life or abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness by suffering only; and finally that the obedience here mentioned, being set in opposition to Adam's disobedience, must be active as Adam's was. From the life of Lightfoot prefixed to the Latin edition of his works

we learn that the same view was ably maintained by that eminent scholar, and extended to ὑπακοή as well as δικαίωμα.<sup>1</sup> On the text I Cor. i. 30, Christ is made to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, etc., Gataker had argued that Christ is made to us righteousness as he is made wisdom, but he is not made to us wisdom by imputing his wisdom to us, but by instructing us; so neither is he said to be made righteousness because his righteousness is imputed to us, but because by his grace he makes us actually righteous. To this Featley replies (1) that whatever Christ is made to us he is made perfectly, but he is not made perfectly wisdom or righteousness save by imputing his own righteousness and wisdom to us which are most perfect; (2) Christ is made righteousness to us in the same sense as he is made redemption, but he is made redemption unto us by imputing his passive obedience; therefore in like manner he is made righteousness to us by imputing his active obedience. In the same manner he replies to the arguments founded on 2 Cor. v. 21 and Col. ii. 10, and then concludes as follows: 'No man who standeth *rectus in curia* as Adam did in his innocence or the angels before they were confirmed in grace, is bound both to fulfil the law, and to satisfy for the violation thereof; but to the one or to the other, to fulfil only the law primarily, and to satisfy

<sup>1</sup> *Lightfootii Opera*, vol. i. Vita, § 3.

for not fulfilling it in case he should transgress; but that is not our present case, for we are all born and conceived in sin, and by nature are the children of wrath, guilty as well of Adam's actual transgression as our own corruption of nature drawn from his loins. Therefore, first, we must satisfy for our sin and then by our obedience lay claim to life according as it is offered to us by God in his law.' 'We grant freely that Christ's death is sufficient for the satisfactory part, but unless his active obedience be imputed to us we have no plea or title at all to eternal life. I may illustrate this by a lively similitude such as that to which the apostle elsewhere alludes. In the Olympian games he that overcame received a crown of gold or silver, or a garland of flowers, or some other badge of honour; but he that was overcome, besides the loss of the prize, forfeited something to the keeper of the games. Suppose some friend of his should pay his forfeit, would that entitle him to his garland? Certainly no; unless . . . in another race he outstrip his adversary he must go away crownless. This is our case by Adam's transgression and our own; we have incurred a forfeiture or penalty; this is satisfied by the imputation of Christ's passive obedience; but unless his active be also imputed to us we could have no plea or claim to our crown of glory, for we have not in our own persons so run that we might obtain.'

After this speech the divines called for a vote on the question, and though some of eminent parts in the Assembly dissented, yet far the major part voted for the affirmative, that Christ's *whole* obedience was imputed to the believer. Before the close of the session, however, Dr. Featley seems himself to have been disposed to yield somewhat to the great divines opposed to him. Perhaps he had got a quiet hint from his correspondent at Oxford to do so. He produced a copy of the letter referred to by the Prolocutor in the course of the discussion, which had been written by King James to the Synod of the French Protestant Church which met at Privas in 1612. In this letter the king counselled them to let this question and those depending on it 'be altogether buried and left in the grave with the napkin and linen clothes wherein the body of Christ was wrapped . . . lest peradventure by too much wrangling they seem to cut in two the living child which the tender-hearted mother would not endure, or divide the seamless coat of Christ which the cruel soldier would not suffer.' The reason he assigned for this counsel was that the question was altogether new, and not necessary to be determined, unheard of in former ages, not decided by any council, nor handled in the fathers, nor disputed by the schoolmen. Probably it was on this account that when the Assembly came to treat of the subject of

Justification in their Confession of Faith they left out the word *whole* to which Gataker and his friends had most persistently objected, so that the clause, which in their revised version of Article XI. had stood in the form 'his *whole* obedience and satisfaction being by God imputed to us,' was in the confession changed into 'imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ,' which though it hardly seems to us to include, still less to favour their view, they were content to accept as less rigid than the other. At least on its being conceded Gataker and his friends agreed to drop further controversy on the question, as has been distinctly recorded by Simeon Ashe in his funeral sermon for his old friend Gataker.

Before the 12th of October, the Assembly had revised fifteen of the Articles, and were proceeding with the sixteenth,<sup>1</sup> when, by order of the Houses, they laid aside this work and proceeded to take in hand the government and liturgy of the Church. What they had accomplished previously they regarded as superseded by a later order to draw up a Confession of Faith. It was only after repeated peremptory messages from the House of Commons that they consented to send it up to them, and they accompanied it by an explanatory preface in which they stated that they regarded

<sup>1</sup> They had resolved to change 'may depart from grace given' into 'may fail of the grace of God attained.'

the work as in several ways imperfect, and as having relation only to the Church of England, and therefore as superseded by the more recent order sent to them to prepare a Confession of Faith for the churches of the three kingdoms. The Articles, as far as revised by the Assembly, have been often reprinted, not, however, in the exact form in which they were sent up by the Assembly to the Houses, but in the form in which they were passed by them, and were included among the documents submitted for the acceptance of the king in the negotiations of 1648. The full form, together with the preface of the Assembly, is to be found in a rare volume of tracts contained in the library of the British Museum (King's Pamphlets, E. 516). The only material difference between the two forms is that while Article VIII. is omitted from the former, it is retained in the latter, and in a revised version slightly different from that given in Lightfoot's Journal. 'The creeds that go under the name of the Nicene Creed, Athanasius' Creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, are thoroughly to be received and believed, for that they may be proved by most certain warrant of Holy Scripture.'<sup>1</sup>

While the revision of the Articles was being carried forward at Westminster, the cause of the

<sup>1</sup> The Preface as well as the ultimate revision of this Article are given in the appendix to the printed *Minutes of the Assembly*.

Parliament had been going backward in the country. One and another defeat had been sustained by their forces, and their supporters in various parts were becoming so disheartened, that at the request of the House of Commons divers of the members of the Assembly were sent away from their duties there, and instructed to go to various parts of the kingdom, and stir up the people to greater zeal in their cause. It might have been well for the Assembly itself had such a policy been followed more frequently when it became apparent that the work for which it was called was not to be rapidly completed. The immuring of so many of the ablest ministers for so long a time in London, if it strengthened their hold on that great city, tended to weaken their hold on their parishioners in the country and in the provincial towns, and so to separate the metropolis and the provinces as to make the revolution ultimately effected by the leaders of the army a far easier matter than it would have been had the *élite* of their ministers been able to be more in their parishes, and to guide opinion at so many important centres in harmony with what it was in London. It was at the same crisis in their fortunes that the Parliament finally made up their minds to outbid the king for the Scotch alliance, and despatched commissioners to Scotland to arrange terms with the Convention of Estates and General Assembly there, and in the

name of the Houses and the Assembly more formally to invite the assistance of Scottish commissioners in the deliberations of the Assembly.

All the Scottish leaders looked favourably on the cause which the English Parliament was defending, but all were not at first agreed that they ought to take a side in the contest between it and the king. Henderson and several other trusted counsellors had previously urged that the true position for them to assume, in the first instance, was that of mediators between the parties. But the coldness of their reception at Oxford had discouraged even these, while the concessions of the Parliament on the subject of episcopacy 'flattered the ambition of the nation,' and in the end the fervid eloquence of Johnstone of Warriston, advocating active participation in the contest, carried all before it.<sup>1</sup> It was unanimously agreed that common cause should be made with their English brethren, and that every possible aid should be given them in the war into which they had been driven in defence of their religion and liberties. Yet all were determined not to draw their swords about mere civil grievances, however insupportable these were deemed to be, but to place the cause of the true Reformed religion and the government of Christ's Church according to His Word in the forefront, if not to bring the Ark of God itself into the battle. They would

<sup>1</sup> Baillie's *Letters*, vol. ii. p. 90.

not have the civil league which the English commissioners offered them, but pressed for a solemn religious bond like that into which in times of trial they and their fathers had entered, and which in their recent Vow or Covenant the English Houses had actually indorsed. The English commissioners were obliged at last so far to yield to the wishes of the Scotch as to make the proposed treaty a solemn League *and* Covenant 'for the defence and preservation of the Reformed religion in the Church of Scotland in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, and for the reformation of religion in the kingdoms of England and Ireland according to the Word of God and practice of the best Reformed Churches, and for bringing the Church of God in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, Confession of Faith, form of church-government, directories for worship and for catechising,' and then, only subordinately or conjunctly, 'for the defence and preservation of the rights and privileges of the Parliament, the liberties of the kingdoms, and of the king's Majesty's person and authority in the preservation and defence of the true religion and liberties of the kingdoms.'

This Covenant, drafted by Henderson and accepted by the English commissioners, was forthwith transmitted to England, where after some very slight changes it was approved by the Assembly

and accepted by the Houses, and finally was directed to be subscribed throughout the kingdom, as it also was in Scotland. It was subscribed there with singular unanimity and enthusiasm, and if with less general spontaneity in England yet certainly more extensively than is sometimes represented. Neale, who is by no means a blind admirer of the Scots, informs us that 'most of the religious part of the nation who apprehended the Protestant religion to be in danger, and were desirous of reducing the hierarchy, were zealous for the Covenant,' that others who were on the side of the Parliament took it in obedience to their authority, being sensible that on no other conditions could the assistance of the Scots be secured, and that a number of the episcopal divines who made the greatest figure in the Church after the Restoration did not refuse it, as Cudworth, Wallis, Reynolds, Lightfoot, and many others. Lightfoot was so keen for it that he does not hesitate to speak of Dr. Burgess, who opposed it and petitioned the House of Commons to be heard against it, 'as a wretch to be branded to all posterity, seeking for some devilish ends, either of his own or others, or both, to hinder so great a good of the two nations,' 'to put in a bar against a matter of so infinite weight, and asperse such an Assembly with so much mire and dirt.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lightfoot's *Journal*, pp. 12, 13, 14. Dr. M'Crie seems to have doubted whether Lightfoot had not exaggerated both as to Dr.

Dr. Burgess, however, was not the only objector in the Assembly when the Houses referred the Covenant to them for their judgment and counsel as to whether it might be lawfully sworn. Dr. Price seems to have joined him in his opposition and petition, though he gave in sooner, and was let off more easily. In addition to them Dr. Featley and one or two royalists, who still remained in attendance, opposed it out-and-out, and if Mr. Lance did not join them he slunk away from the Assembly about the time they had to leave it, and had great difficulty some years after in securing its approbation to his appointment to a London charge. Twisse, Gouge, and Gataker had joined in objecting to the 2d Article as originally drafted for the extirpation of prelacy without any limitation,—affirming, that while opposed to such episcopacy as had hitherto been in the Church of England, they were not opposed to, and could not be expected to swear to endeavour the extirpation of, all prelacy or stated presidency over the ministers of the Church. To satisfy their scruples it was agreed to insert after the word ‘prelacy’ the explanatory clause already inserted in the Ordinance calling

Burgess’s offence and punishment. But the Journals of the House of Commons (vol. iii. pp. 225, 242) confirm his account, and show that ‘the turbulent doctor’ was suspended from the Assembly, and had to make a humble apology to the House ere he was restored. Baillie had not yet come up, and so has not reported the matter with his usual accuracy.

the Westminster Assembly (that is, Church-government by Archbishops, Bishops, their Chancellors and Commissaries, Deans, Deans and Chapters, Archdeacons, and all other ecclesiastical officers depending on that hierarchy).<sup>1</sup> There can be no doubt that it was with this distinct limitation that the Covenant was taken by many, both laymen and divines, in England, and perhaps as little doubt that it was understood by most in Scotland in a more absolute sense ; and if there is no great foundation for the remark of Neale that ‘the wise men on both sides endeavoured to outwit each other in wording the Articles,’ there is foundation for the remark that with much in it that was noble and good and thoroughly justifiable at such a crisis in

<sup>1</sup> The Assembly reported to the House of Commons that they had received the Covenant with great joy and contentment, and had fully debated and considered of it, and ‘that they do approve of the said Covenant, and judge it to be lawful in point of conscience to be taken, and that they do humbly advise that these explanations following should be subjoined to the Covenant, viz., 1. By the clause in the first article of the Covenant, “according to the Word of God,” we understand “so far as we do or shall in our consciences conceive the same to be according to the Word of God ;” 2. By “Prelacy” in the second article of the Covenant we understand “the church-government by Archbishops, Bishops, their Chancellors, Commissaries, Deans and Chapters, Archdeacons, and other ecclesiastical officers depending upon the hierarchy.”’ The House approved of both explanations, and recommended the insertion of the clause relating to Ireland in the preamble. They hesitated most over the fifth article, which pledged them in their station to endeavour that the kingdoms should remain conjoined in firm peace and union to all posterity, and that justice may be done on the wilful opposers thereof.

the history of the three kingdoms, it was not free from the seeds of future misunderstanding and dissension. Dr. Stoughton has spoken far more to the point, and according to actual facts, than Neale when he says, 'The English Commissioners, by accepting the Covenant, pledged themselves to the cause of which the Scotch Presbyterians regarded it as the symbol, and looking to the ecclesiastical opinions of the English Commissioners Vane and Nye, we cannot defend their conduct on this occasion against the charge of inconsistency.' Nor was this the full extent of Mr. Nye's fault. He must not only bear the blame of having committed himself by tacit acquiescence, but also by explicit words. In his speech at the taking of the Covenant by the House of Commons and the Assembly of Divines in St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, to which I shall have occasion to refer in my next lecture, he gave utterance to words which could not but lead the Scotch to believe that he thought favourably even of their ecclesiastical order: 'If England,' he says,<sup>1</sup> 'hath attained to any greater perfection in so handling the word of righteousness . . . as to make men more godly, . . . if in the churches of Scotland any more *light and beauty in matters of order* and discipline be in their assemblies, or more orderly, . . . we shall humbly bow

<sup>1</sup> Speeches delivered before the subscribing of the Covenant, the 25th of September, at St. Margaret's, Westminster.

and kiss their lips that can speak right words to us in these matters.' . . . These kindly sentiments seem still to have animated him when he penned or put his name to the Apologetical Narration of the five dissenting members of the Assembly. And so the Scottish Commissioners had some right to feel both surprised and indignant when on the 20th February 1644, there being very fair appearances of agreement in the matters disputed between the two parties, after long and keen debates, Mr. Nye interfered to 'spoil all their play,'<sup>1</sup> and offered to prove their favourite church-government 'inconsistent with a civil state ;' and again on the following day when seeing the Assembly full of the prime nobles and chief members of both Houses, he did fall on that argument again and offered to demonstrate that their way of drawing a whole kingdom under one national Assembly was formidable, yea, thrice over pernicious to civil states and kingdoms.' It was hardly to be wondered at that he should have been cried down and voted to have spoken against the order, or that the *præfervidum ingenium Scotorum* should have been roused, and even the calm and judicious Henderson should for the moment have so far given way to his exasperation as to compare him with Sanballat, Tobias, and Symmachus, who sought to stir up their heathen rulers against the Jews, or to Pagan

<sup>1</sup> Baillie's *Letters and Journals*, vol. ii. p. 145.

writers who stirred up the Roman Emperors against the Christians.

The Solemn League and Covenant was then, and has often since been fiercely and unjustly denounced, and has at times been advocated with only less fierceness and uncharitableness. But even Presbyterians, who may doubt of its descending obligation, or hesitate with Dr. Hetherington to characterise it as 'the wisest, sublimest, most sacred document ever penned by uninspired men,' will cheerfully grant with Dr. M'Crie that it was 'an unprecedented deed warranted by the unprecedented dangers to which the cause of Christ in Britain was then exposed—an act of heroism which, if like an act of martyrdom it cannot properly be repeated, yet it may be gratefully commemorated. With the exception of that unparalleled scene in the Greyfriars' Churchyard in 1638, of which it was the consequence and completion, the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant was perhaps 'the most remarkable event in Scotland's remarkable history.' 'There are moments,' as Mr. Rawson Gardiner has it, 'when the stern Scottish nature breaks out into enthusiasm less passionate but more enduring than the frenzy of a southern race.' This was one of these supreme moments. Bidding away the suggestions of worldly prudence, they resolved, as with one heart and soul, for the sake of that faith which was dearer to them than life, to

put in jeopardy all they had gained, and make common cause with their southern brethren in the time of their sorest need. If ever nation swore to its own hurt, and changed not, made sacrifices ungrudgingly, bore obloquy and misrepresentation uncomplainingly, and had wrongs heaped on it most cruelly by those for whom its self-sacrifice alone opened a career, it was the Scottish nation at that eventful period of its history. It felt that the faith which was its light and life was really being imperilled, and it was determined, as in the days of Knox, to dare all for its safety and triumph, in England as well as Scotland.

The Covenant in the eyes of all true Scotsmen will ever stand identified with the cause of Protestantism, the cause of civil and religious liberty, in a great crisis of British history ; it will be recognised as a testimony against Popery, sacerdotalism, and all profaneness, which at no small cost our fathers kept up when it was abandoned elsewhere, and which we ought not to let down though we may have to bear it in other forms, or to carry it out in other ways. In the eyes of many patriotic Englishmen at that crisis of their struggle for their religion and liberties, it appeared hardly less glorious. ' This covenant in the midst of our troubles . . . did mightily revive and cheer our drooping spirits, and was as life from the dead.' ' We shall never forget,' say the Lancashire ministers, ' how solemnly it was

sworn, many rejoicing at the oath, and sundry weeping for joy. We thought within ourselves that surely now the crown is set on England's head ; we judged the day of entering into this Covenant to be England's coronation-day, as it was the day of the gladness of our hearts.' 'The day when this Covenant was subscribed,' says the Erastian Coleman, 'was a day of contentment and joy. The honourable gentry accounted it their freedom to be bound to God, the men of war accounted it their honour to be pressed for this service, our brethren of Scotland esteemed it a happiness and a further act of pacification. Our reverend divines deserve not to be last either in praise or performance.' Nor were thoughts of its influence on posterity absent from the minds of pious Independents. 'Heartily beseeching God,' says Caryl, 'our God, the great and mighty and terrible God, who keepeth covenant for ever, to strengthen us all in performing the duties which we have promised in this Covenant, . . . that the children which are yet unborn may bless us and bless God for us.'