Divine Rule Maintained

Studies on the Westminster Assembly

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John R. Bower and Chad Van Dixhoorn

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THE WESTMINSTER
ASSEMBLY PROJECT

Divine Rule Maintained

ANTHONY BURGESS, COVENANT THEOLOGY, AND THE PLACE OF THE LAW IN REFORMED SCHOLASTICISM

Stephen J. Casselli

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Contents

Series Preface vii
Foreword ix
Acknowledgments xiii

1. Introduction 1
2. The Life of Anthony Burgess 15
3. Creation and Law 43
4. The Law Given to Moses 81
5. Law and Gospel 99
6. Conclusions 131

Appendix: Index of Sources for *Vindiciae Legis* 147
Bibliography 149
Index 181

SERIES PREFACE

Studies on the Westminster Assembly

The Westminster Assembly (1643–1653) met at a watershed moment in British history, at a time that left its mark on the English state, the Puritan movement, and the churches of England, Scotland, and Ireland. The Assembly also proved to be a powerful force in the methodization and articulation of Reformed theology. Certainly the writings of the gathering created and popularized doctrinal distinctions and definitions that—to an astonishing degree and with surprising rapidity—entered the consciousness and vocabulary of mainstream Protestantism.

The primary aim of this series is to produce accessible scholarly monographs on the Westminster Assembly, its members, and the ideas that the Assembly promoted. Some years ago, Richard Muller challenged post-Reformation historians to focus on identifying "the major figures and… the major issues in debate—and then sufficiently [raise] the profile of the figures or issues in order to bring about an alteration of the broader surveys of the era." This is precisely the remit of these Studies on the Westminster Assembly, and students of post-Reformation history in particular will be treated to a corpus of material on the Westminster Assembly that will enable comparative studies in church practice, creedal formulation, and doctrinal development among Protestants.

This series will also occasionally include editions of classic Assembly studies, works that have enjoyed a shaping influence in Assembly studies, are difficult to obtain at the present time, and pose questions that students of the Assembly need to answer. It is our hope that this series—in both its new and reprinted monographs—will both exemplify and encourage a newly invigorated field of study and create essential reference works for scholars in multiple disciplines.

John R. Bower
Chad Van Dixhoorn

Foreword

It is a privilege to introduce Stephen J. Casselli's outstandingly helpful study of Anthony Burgess and his great work *Vindiciae Legis.* Like others, no doubt, I have often wished that someone would provide a study of Burgess's exposition of the law of God that would bring his series of lectures to London ministers to the attention of students, scholars, and pastors in a way that was both faithful to Burgess and yet at the same time relevant for contemporary church life. Dr. Casselli is admirably equipped to do this, combining, as he does, the mind of a scholar with the extensive experience of a pastor who understands that the question of the role of the law of God in Scripture, theology, and pastoral ministry is of perennial importance.

It should not surprise us that parallel to discussions of the role of the law in Old and New Testament exegesis and theology an equally important discussion has taken place on the role of the law for Christian living. Perhaps what should surprise us, however, is that all too often these discussions have taken place as though they were new and unique and as though the arguments made and the positions taken were creative and novel. As historians of the development of Christian doctrine know, much that is stated today as new is simply a reworking of positions taken in the seventeenth-century debates. There is, in fact, relatively little under the sun that turns out to be really new.

Divine Rule Maintained excels as a guide both to Burgess and to mid-seventeenth-century views of the law for a variety of reasons. As will be obvious from both the text and its footnotes, it represents careful and comprehensive research in which the author has listened in a discerning way to the writings of the seventeenth-century divines.

But, in addition, he comes to his subject matter in a way that is historically sensitive and conscious of both the unity and the diversity of the Reformed theological tradition. To this he adds a further sensitivity to biblical theology and redemptive history.

Given the finely tuned antennae this combination produces, *Divine Rule Maintained* gives the lie to several of the most frequently made (but

false) assumptions about mid-seventeenth-century theology. It thus belongs to an ever-increasing body of careful studies overturning the earlier scholarly consensus that so-called scholastic orthodoxy was a deviant mutation of the work of the early Reformers. This scholarship read classical Reformed orthodoxy through lenses crafted (and sometimes tainted) to a prescription that assumed it was distorted by Aristotelianism and a departure from Calvin and was dependent on a misshapen doctrine of God, deprived of a christocentric ethos, and was driven by a proof-texting mentality. Here, as will become obvious, Stephen Casselli puts another nail in the coffin of this view in the best way possible—by examining the sources.

One further feature may be highlighted here in advance. Many (probably most) biblical scholars continue to assume that the threefold division (or, as I would rather say, threefold dimensions) of the law is a figment of imaginations controlled more by Thomas Aquinas than by sacred Scripture. It was not so, it is claimed, in the beginning—when the law was the law was the law—a seamless garment.

What Dr. Casselli makes crystal clear in the work of Anthony Burgess (and in this he was but one of the finest flowers, and not the entire garden) is that undergirding the Reformed view of the threefold character of the law was a profound awareness of biblical exegesis and theology, redemptive history, and of the christoscopic character of Scripture. While the categorization language of *moral*, *civil*, and *ceremonial*, like the term *Trinity*, is theological rather than strictly biblical, this careful study of Burgess demonstrates that the concepts themselves were rooted in differentiations made in the text of the Old Testament itself. Indeed, many readers will feel when they come to the end of these pages that there are insights and intellectual tools in the work of Burgess that merit application in any biblical theology in the present century.

Burgess, of course, like the majority of his Puritan associates, was not what we would call an academic theologian. But, as Dr. Casselli's survey of Burgess's education makes clear, most seminary professors (not to mention their students) would envy the rigor as well as the subject matter of his intellectual preparation both as a youngster and then in his studies at St. John's and Emmanuel Colleges in the University of Cambridge. He was a scholarly pastor and thus stood in the honored tradition of Luther and Calvin. He therefore both took from and brought to the task of theological thinking the very questions which biblical theology was originally designed to answer: namely, how can we live well to God and attain our chief end, to "glorify God and enjoy him for ever."

Divine Rule Maintained thus also provides help and stimulus for working pastors who are constantly being driven back in their preaching and

pastoral counseling to analyze the ways in which human hearts respond to the relationship of the law of God, the character of God, and the gospel of God. Each and every minister worth his salt must wrestle both intellectually and experientially, as well as hermeneutically, homiletically, and pastorally, with the issue of the relationship between the law and the gospel. Dr. Casselli shrewdly quotes Luther's maxim that someone who can distinguish law and gospel can congratulate himself for being a theologian. But he can also consider himself well equipped to be a pastor. For as the wise eighteenth-century letter writer John Newton once wrote, "Ignorance of the nature and design of the law is at the bottom of most religious mistakes."[1]

Thus there are many reasons to be enthusiastic about the publication of *Divine Rule Maintained*. And since the task of the author of a foreword is not to create that enthusiasm but encourage the reader to share it, my enthusiasm should not detain you from developing your own. As you do, I believe you will be grateful to Dr. Casselli for sharing the fruits of his research and study.

Sinclair B. Ferguson

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1. *The Works of John Newton*, 3rd ed. (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1824), 1:349.

Acknowledgments

I once heard an elderly preacher say, "When you stand to teach others, you should always remember that there is more of other folk in you than there is of you in other folk." To that end, I wish to express my gratitude to some of the "other folk" in me that made this work possible.

First, there is one without whom I would have quit this project some time ago. My wife, Missy, has endured my absence many early mornings and during more family vacations than we care to remember. Her constant encouragement and enduring commitment to seeing this project through are the only reason it has come to completion. This work is truly ours, not simply mine.

Second, I wish to thank my children—CJ, Daniel, and Katie—who likewise have had to endure through vacations without their father being available for so much of the amusement. Together we continue to learn what it is to live under the blessings of God's law as our guide.

Third, I owe an incalculable debt to my broader family. I will forever be grateful to my parents, Joe and Evelyn Casselli, for the initial and formative educational opportunities given me as an undergraduate as well as their support through many years of continuing education. And to my in-laws, Tom and Lola Riester: thanks for putting the children to work on the farm while I was holed up in the study, and for graciously making a special effort to create a pleasant working environment for me. The farm will forever be a special place to our family as a result of our time there with you.

Fourth, I want to thank the congregation of Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church, and especially the session (Don Bennett, Wink Hall, and Brad Meyers), for making this truly a family project in our church. There is simply no way that I could have completed this without your gracious gift of time away every summer and your generous financial support. You all have been a true band of brothers in gospel ministry, for which I am forever grateful. I also owe an incalculable debt to Dustyn Eudaly (former associate pastor), who bore the pastoral load with grace and wisdom whenever my attention was turned to the present work. As much as any other individual,

your partnership in ministry has left the deepest impressions upon my own life and labors.

Finally, there are those in the Westminster Seminary community who have shaped my life and ministry far beyond the reach of any single academic endeavor. I wish to express special appreciation to Dr. Sinclair B. Ferguson, who first suggested that a dissertation on Anthony Burgess might be a worthy pursuit. Beyond the dissertation, Dr. Ferguson has been a trusted friend, for several years a delightful traveling companion, and a wonderful model to me of the "godly, learned, resident, preaching" minister. I also wish to express my appreciation to Scott Oliphint, with whom I served in administration for four of the most enjoyable years of my life and who helped me come to appreciate the value of friendship in an intellectual community; to Bill and Barbara Edgar and Mike and Shareen Kelly, whose hospitality during my forays back to the campus will always be remembered with great affection; to Richard B. Gaffin, whose teaching simply transformed my understanding of Scripture and, therefore, the framework within which I now "do theology"; and, finally, to Dr. Carl Trueman for his exacting scholarship and for guiding this research to its final conclusion. The years I spent studying and serving on the staff of Westminster Seminary are treasured beyond description.

I also need to thank the exacting editors who have made this work far better than it would have been apart from their input. Shannon Downing pored through an early draft and made a host of suggestions that have made the present version far more readable than it was originally. I am grateful to Paul Brinkerhoff, who combed through endless details in an effort to ensure the accuracy of the many references contained herein, which will make this a more useful tool for others who desire to pursue related studies. I also appreciate Annette Gysen's patience as she quarterbacked the editorial process as a whole. John Bower and Chad VanDixhoorn, series editors for the Studies on the Westminster Assembly series, provided a number of important historical observations and corrections, which have made this a much better work. However, all remaining deficiencies belong to the author alone. Truly, there is as much of "other folk" in this work as there is of me in it, which has made the process deeply satisfying.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

> Mr Walker: Christ shewes that the law reacheth further than ever the pharisyes expressed…. Christ give [*sic*] an example of good that seemes to goe beyond what is required in the law, & therefore…
>
> Dr Hoyle: Seeing love is the fulfilling of the law….

So begin the records of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. It is notable that the minutes which have been preserved from that remarkable assembly drop us down into the middle of a debate regarding the proper interpretation and application of the law of God.[1] Martin Luther (1493–1586) famously commented, "The person who can rightly divide Law and Gospel has reason to thank God. He is a true theologian."[2] The veracity of Luther's insight is borne out in the reality that from her birth the Christian church has indeed struggled mightily to "rightly divide Law and Gospel." From Jesus' ongoing controversy with the Pharisees (Luke 11:37–12:3, for example), to the debates of the Jerusalem council (Acts 15), to Paul's rebuke of Peter (Gal. 2:11–13), the question of how to articulate the proper place of God's law in the new age of the gospel has vexed the church.

How does the Christian fully embrace the duties commanded in the law and at the same time rest in the promises tendered in the gospel? In what way is the law applicable to believers and unbelievers after the fall? How does one pursue that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14) while simultaneously embracing Christ alone for justification apart from works of the law (Rom. 3:28)? Is it feasible to magnify the free grace

1. Sess. 45, Mon., Sept. 4, 1643, *The Minutes and Papers of the Westminster Assembly, 1643–1652*, ed. Chad B. Van Dixhoorn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2:33. Henceforth cited as *MPWA*. This is the first session of the Assembly for which the minutes have been preserved. It is a debate over article 14 of the Thirty-Nine Articles regarding works of supererogation.

2. Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians (1535)*, trans. Theodore Graebner (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1949), 60.

of God in the gospel and avoid the error of antinomianism?[3] Is it possible to be concerned with precise and careful law keeping without depending upon one's own good works for justification before God? These kinds of questions are as relevant to the church today as they always have been.[4]

There are also certain related problems and questions of biblical interpretation and theological formulation that have proved themselves stubborn. There has been, for example, a resurgence of interest in natural law theory, particularly within the Reformed churches.[5] How does the fall affect one's sense of moral obligation regardless of one's religious commitments? Is it appropriate to appeal to natural law as a basis for public morality in the wider culture? Issues of natural law are inseparable from questions related to the Mosaic economy more broadly. How do we rightly relate the successive covenants in the biblical revelation from Adam to Abraham to Moses? Is the Mosaic covenant a return to the covenant of works in some way? Is it an artificial work of eisegesis to divide the Mosaic law into various aspects in an effort to preserve its moral core? What impact does the dawn of the gospel in the coming of Christ have upon these matters? On the one hand Jesus said, "I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:18). On the other hand, Paul set the law in opposition to faith in the strongest terms: "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them" (Gal. 3:11–12). What does this say to us about the ongoing moral obligation to obey God's law? Why does Paul turn around and appeal to the law itself for his ethical exhortations (Rom. 13:8–10; Eph.

3. The term *antinomian* is admittedly slippery and will be given more careful definition later in the text. For now, it is simply intended to denote those who teach that the law of God is in some form or other no longer binding for the New Testament church.

4. This is evidenced by the recent publication of books such as Tim Keller's *Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith* (New York: Dutton, 2008); and Tullian Tchividjian's *Jesus + Nothing = Everything* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2011); along with moderately critical reviews of each. See the review of Keller by William Schweitzer, "Timothy Keller, *The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith*; Timothy Keller, *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope That Matters*," *Westminster Theological Journal* 72, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 444–47; and of Tchividjian by Jarrod Oliphint, "Tullian Tchividjian, *Jesus + Nothing = Everything*," Reformation 21, January 2012, http://www.reformation21.org/shelf-life/review-of-tullian-tchividjian-jesusnothingeverything.php); see the article by Mark Jones, "Jesus + Nothing = Everything (An Analysis)," Meet the Puritans, December 16, 2011, http://www.meetthepuritans.com/2011/12/16/jesus-nothing-everything-an-analysis.

5. See, for example, Stephen J Grabill, *Rediscovering the Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

6:1–3)? These are truly perennial challenges to any Christians seeking to understand and apply the whole counsel of God to their lives.

The purpose of this work is to consider such questions by way of historical reflection and analysis. We are by no means the first generation to wrestle with such practical-theological matters. As we "listen" to one period in the history of the church when these issues were central, we are aided in our own efforts to "rightly divide Law and Gospel" both in theory and in practice. The period to which we will listen is the middle of the seventeenth century, as the Church of England, through the Assembly at Westminster, debated and then reframed her biblical-theological commitments into a new confession of faith.

As we listen to those debates, which ultimately led to the production of the Westminster Confession of Faith in 1646 as well as the Larger and Shorter Catechisms in 1647, we will give attention to both the results (i.e., the content produced) and the process (i.e., the methods) by which the divines reached their conclusions.[6] Here we find that these men proved by Luther's measure to be "true theologians." One man in particular stood out among his peers as a true theologian, even in a period when true theologians seemed to multiply at an unnatural pace, and it is to his labors that the present work will give focused attention.

In the months preceding June 1646, the "President and Fellowes of Sion Colledge London" considered among themselves who might properly articulate their concerns over the renewal of the "Antinomian Errours of these times."[7] The controversy over issues related to the law of God being one of the most celebrated theological disputes of their day, it would take a person of great learning, judicious character, thorough knowledge of

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6. The term *divine* is used throughout this work as the seventeenth-century equivalent of what we would call a *theologian* today.

7. Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis: or, A Vindication of the Morall Law and the Covenants, from the Errours of Papists, Arminians, Socinians, and More Especially, Antinomians* (London: Printed by James Young, for Thomas Underhill, 1647; repr., Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011), preface. All subsequent citations refer to the facsimile of the second edition (1647). Throughout this work I have cited the original page numbers; note that the pagination skips from 140 to 145. Sion College was established to serve English clergy and became a controversial seat of Presbyterianism during the years of the Westminster Assembly. Its teaching became the subject of a pamphlet war between critics and defenders. See, for example, John Price, *The pulpit incendiary: or, The divinity and devotion of Mr. Calamy, Mr. Case, Mr. Cauton, Mr. Cranford, and other Sion-Colledge preachers in their morning-exercises* (London: Printed by C. S., in the yeare 1648); and the anonymous response titled *The pulpit incendiary anatomized: or A vindication of Sion Colledge, and the morning exercises* (London: Printed for Ralph Smith, 1648); as well as the humorous and anonymous *A justification of the Synod of Sion Colledge against those, who say they have sate long, and done nothing* (London: s.n., printed in the yeere 1647).

the relevant issues, keen understanding of Scripture, and a proven ability to communicate with precision the essence of their concerns. It was to Anthony Burgess (d. 1664) that they turned with the hope that "so well as the Kingdome, as this City, may have the benefit of those his learned labours."[8] It is the purpose of this book to understand the historical context in which "his learned labours" took place, and to receive from those labors much needed help in distinguishing law and gospel theoretically and practically for the blessing of the church of Jesus Christ.

The present volume will begin with an examination of the current state of historical studies of seventeenth-century Protestant orthodoxy, as there has been in recent years a wholesale reevaluation of this period in historical theological circles (chap. 1). An attempt will then be made to situate the work of Anthony Burgess in his own day by examining his personal biography, which is critical to an understanding of both the form and substance of his work (chap. 2). After situating his work in its historical context, we can then turn to an in-depth analysis of his teaching on the law of God found primarily in his 1646 work *Vindiciae Legis* (chaps. 3–5). This then leads to an examination of the polemics of the period surrounding the "light of nature" (natural law) and the nature of God's relationship to man as originally created (chap. 3); debates surrounding the essence of the Mosaic covenant and its relationship to previous biblical revelation (chap. 4); and the disputes over how to best articulate the relationship between law and gospel (chap. 5). The study will conclude with some reflections on both the form and the content of Burgess's work with the hope that we might share with his contemporaries in the benefits of "his learned labours" (chap. 6).

Traditional Historiography

Before turning to a consideration of Burgess and his lectures on the law, it will be important to appreciate how this study is situated in the broader context of contemporary scholarship on that era in church history now commonly referred to as the Reformed scholastic period.[9] Until the groundbreaking work of Richard Muller, building on the work of Heiko

8. Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, preface.

9. The time in view here follows the Protestant Reformation and is divided by Richard A. Muller into three periods: early, high, and late orthodoxy. The first period extends from roughly 1565 to 1630–1640. The high period extends throughout most of the seventeenth century and is the period with which the present research is primarily concerned as it includes a significant period of the English Puritans. The period of late orthodoxy then extends onward after 1700. For a detailed analysis of this periodization, see Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, Ca. 1520 to Ca. 1725*,

Oberman and David Steinmetz, this period in church history was largely interpreted by historians as a seedbed of rationalistic theology (in contrast to robust biblical theology). Scholastic theologians were thought to hold human reason to be an equal source for truth alongside the revelation of Scripture, and among historians and systematic theologians, the field of Reformed scholastic theology was characterized by "a profound lack of interest."[10] That characterization has changed dramatically in recent years as studies have sought to reevaluate the true nature of Protestant scholastic thought.[11] What follows is a brief sketch of the negative assessments of scholasticism leading up to Muller's seminal studies, followed by an outline of a new perspective on medieval studies that Muller appropriated for the post-Reformation period.

What Is Reformed Scholasticism?

The term *scholastic*, like other labels used in historical studies, is difficult to define. It is an appellation often used, however, as a theological insult. The pedigree of the term lends some credence to its character as a theological slur, for it was used by humanists and sixteenth-century historians to disparage philosophers and theologians of the Middle Ages. For example, in 1517 Martin Luther published a work titled "Disputation against Scholastic Theology," in which he leveled his criticism of the overly speculative nature

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vol. 1, *Prolegomena to Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 27–84 (hereafter the multivolume is cited as *PRRD*).

10. Willem J. van Asselt and Eef Dekker, eds., *Reformation and Scholasticism: An Ecumenical Enterprise* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 11.

11. Van Asselt and Dekker provide one of the most helpful concise summaries of this reappraisal in the introduction to their *Reformation and Scholasticism*, 11–43. See also the works of Richard A. Muller, in particular his *PRRD*, 1:27–84; Richard A. Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 1–13; Richard A. Muller, "Calvin and the 'Calvinists': Assessing Continuities and Discontinuities between the Reformation and Orthodoxy (Part 1 of 2)," *Calvin Theological Journal* 30 (1995): 345–75; Richard A. Muller, "Calvin and the 'Calvinists': Assessing Continuities and Discontinuities between the Reformation and Orthodoxy (Part 2 of 2)," *Calvin Theological Journal* 31 (1996): 125–60; Richard A. Muller, *Scholasticism and Orthodoxy in the Reformed Tradition: An Attempt at Definition* (Grand Rapids: Calvin Theological Seminary), 1–29; Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 63–102; Richard A. Muller, "Scholasticism in Calvin: A Question of Relation and Disjunction," in *Calvinus Sincerioris Religionis Vindex: Calvin as Protector of the Purer Religion*, ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser and Brian G. Armstrong (Kirksville, Mo.: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1997), 247–65; Carl R. Trueman and R. S. Clark, eds., *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment* (Carlisle, Pa.: Paternoster Press, 1999), ix–xix; and Carl R. Trueman, *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology* (Carlisle, Pa.: Paternoster Press, 1998), 1–46.

of the medieval Schoolmen.[12] The term *scholasticism* was "meant to indicate a tradition-bound, logic-chopping mentality, involving a slavish adherence to Aristotle,"[13] and is "laden with ideological baggage."[14]

Part of the difficulty with the definition is that scholasticism is not a tightly defined intellectual movement, but a term used to describe a theological method. Alister McGrath, for example, mentions two important characteristics of medieval scholasticism. First, it was "concerned with the rational justification of Christian belief and, in particular, with demonstrating the inherent rationality of theology."[15] Scholasticism of the medieval period, it is suggested by various sources, was self-consciously indebted to the philosophy of Aristotle and reached its zenith in the synthesis of philosophy and theology in the work of Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274).[16]

A second characteristic of medieval scholasticism was its concern for the systematization of Christian theology. This tightly logical approach, which was characterized by careful definition of terms and then followed by arguments, questions, and answers to objections, was stimulated in large measure by the publication of Peter Lombard's (c. 1095–1160) *Sententiarum*. Lombard's *Sentences* (c. 1155–1158) became *the* textbook for the study of theology throughout the Middle Ages and in a fundamental way framed theological method for all subsequent study of theology.[17] Thus, the Middle

12. Martin Luther, "Disputation against Scholastic Theology," in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy F. Lull, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 34–39.

13. A. Vos, "Scholasticism," in *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright, and J. I. Packer (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 621.

14. Alister E. McGrath, "Scholasticism," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 17.

15. McGrath, "Scholasticism," 18. See also Brian G. Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth-Century France* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 32.

16. F. L. Cross's entry on Aquinas calls his *Summa Theologica* "the highest achievement of medieval theological systematization" ("Thomas Aquinas," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, 2nd ed. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974], 1371). Another complicating factor in this traditional understanding of Reformed scholasticism is that *Aristotelian* as a designation is also loose and undefined. Aristotelian logic and philosophy are wide and diverse phenomena, and various strains influenced Reformation thinkers in a variety of ways. See Joseph S. Freedman, "Aristotle and the Content of Philosophy Instruction at Central European Schools and Universities during the Reformation Era (1500–1650)," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 137, no. 2 (1993): 213–53; and Donald Sinnema, "Aristotle and Early Reformed Orthodoxy: Moments of Accommodation and Antithesis," in *Christianity and the Classics: The Acceptance of a Heritage*, ed. Wendy E. Helleman (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1990), 119–48.

17. Lombard's *Sentences* was arranged in four books: (1) the Trinity, (2) Creation and Sin, (3) Incarnation and the Virtues, and (4) Sacraments and the Four Last Things (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2007). This basic outline for systematizing theology

Ages has often been stereotyped as a period when reason won out over revelation, when church tradition won out over biblical interpretation, and when precise definition won out over mystery.

Application to Post-Reformation Developments

It then became customary in historical theological studies to apply these same stereotyped perspectives to the development of Protestant scholasticism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Developments in Protestant orthodoxy beginning in the middle of the sixteenth century have historically been defined by varying degrees of contrast to the theology and methodology of the early Reformation. Reformed scholasticism in the seventeenth century in particular has traditionally been conceived as "not much more than a rigid and inflexible complex of dogmas involving a regression to outdated medieval patterns of thought."[18] For example, in what became a work which set the course for much scholarship that followed, Brian Armstrong set out four "more or less identifiable tendencies" of Reformed scholasticism:

> (1) Primarily it will have reference to that theological approach which asserts religious truth on the basis of deductive ratiocination from given assumptions or principles, thus producing a logically coherent and defensible system of belief. Generally this takes the form of syllogistic reasoning. It is an orientation, it seems, invariably based upon an Aristotelian philosophical commitment and so relates to medieval scholasticism. (2) The term will refer to the employment of reason in religious matters, so that reason assumes at least equal standing with faith in theology, thus jettisoning some of the authority of revelation. (3) It will comprehend the sentiment that the scriptural record contains a unified, rationally comprehensible account and thus may be formed into definitive statements which may be used as a measuring stick to determine one's orthodoxy. (4) It will comprehend a pronounced interest in metaphysical matters, in abstract, speculative thought, particularly with reference to the doctrine of God. The distinctive scholastic Protestant position is made to rest on a speculative formulation of the will of God.[19]

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has been essentially preserved down to the present (cf., e.g., Robert L. Reymond's *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998], vii–xviii, which follows this basic pattern, the doctrine of Scripture excepted).

18. Van Asselt and Dekker, *Reformation and Scholasticism*, 11.

19. Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, 32.

Armstrong did not stand alone. Richard Muller demonstrated convincingly that a long tradition of historical theology has interpreted Protestant orthodoxy in a way largely consistent with Armstrong's interpretation.[20] Beginning with German historians such as Paul Althaus, Hans Emil Weber, and especially Heinrich Heppe, Protestant scholasticism has been viewed as the great fall from the pristine theology of Calvin (1509–1564). Armstrong lamented that "the strongly biblically and experientially based theology of Calvin and Luther had…been overcome by the metaphysics and deductive logic of a restored Aristotelianism."[21] Basil Hall agreed that "Calvin's successors nevertheless distorted the balance of doctrines which he had tried to maintain."[22] He explained further:

> The biblical exegesis became subordinated to a restored Aristotelianism, for Protestantism was not recoiling before the victories of the Counter Reformation, and it was beginning to use the weapons of its adversary.… The polemic period of Protestant scholasticism now appearing showed less interest in both the classical humanism and the biblical humanism of the earlier period.[23]

James B. Torrance promoted the same basic position, arguing that in the Westminster Confession "the pattern is no longer the Trinitarian one of the Creeds or Calvin's *Institutio* of 1559, but is dominated by the eternal decrees and the scheme of Federal Theology." He went on to argue that the entire system is framed deductively from the doctrine of election. "Thus the doctrine of the decrees of God," he reasoned, "in the tradition of Theodore Beza and William Perkins becomes the major premise of the whole scheme of creation and redemption."[24]

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20. Muller, "Calvin and the 'Calvinists' (Part 1 of 2)," 345–75; Muller, "Calvin and the 'Calvinists' (Part 2 of 2)," 125–60.

21. Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, 32.

22. Basil Hall, "Calvin against the Calvinists," in *John Calvin: A Collection of Distinguished Essays*, ed. G. E. Duffield, trans. G. S. R. Cox and P. G. Rix (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 23. See also Muller's critique of this approach in "Calvin and the 'Calvinists' (Part 1 of 2)," 345–75; and "Calvin and the 'Calvinists' (Part 2 of 2)," 125–60.

23. Hall, "Calvin against the Calvinists," 25–26.

24. James B. Torrance, "Strengths and Weaknesses of the Westminster Theology," in *The Westminster Confession in the Church Today: Papers Prepared for the Church of Scotland Panel on Doctrine*, ed. Alasdair I. C. Heron (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1982), 45–46. See also the dissertation by John Stanley Bray, "Theodore Beza's Doctrine of Predestination" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1971), 1–13; Holmes Rolston III, "Responsible Man in Reformed Theology: Calvin versus the Westminster Confession," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23 (May 1970): 129–56; and Alister E. McGrath, "Reformation to Enlightenment," in Gillian R. Evans, Alister E. McGrath, and Allan D. Galloway, *The Science of Theology*, ed. Paul Avis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 158–60; all of whom work within this same basic framework. For

All of these historical evaluations share in the common understanding that the predominantly biblical, experiential, and Christ-centered theology of Calvin and the first-generation Reformers had been replaced by a predominantly Aristotelian, rationalistic, deductive system in later Protestant orthodoxy. John Bray summarized well this position in his claim that

> a giant leap has been taken to move from the theological world of John Calvin to the mind-set of the Protestant scholastics.... The key to understanding Calvin's theology is to view him as one who desired to be a theologian of the Word; his concern was with Scripture, rather than with dogmatics. For this reason Calvin refused to distort and to twist the obvious meaning of Scripture in order to harmonize it or to bring it into accord with reason.[25]

In this way, the birth of the so-called Enlightenment with its autonomous-rational epistemology is presumed to have been conceived in the womb of Protestant orthodoxy.

Contemporary Reassessment

Beginning in the 1960s, however, there has been a sea change in our understanding of the nature of Protestant orthodoxy in the post-Reformation period. This reevaluation began with the work of Heiko Oberman and David Steinmetz, whose groundbreaking work on Reformation theology began to recognize more continuity between the Reformation and the scholasticism of the Middle Ages than had been acknowledged in the past.[26] Under the initiative of Richard Muller in particular, there is a growing consensus that the same observations made by Oberman, Steinmetz, and others regarding the late medieval period and the Reformation

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an alternative reading of Beza, see Richard A. Muller, "The Myth of 'Decretal Theology,'" *Calvin Theological Journal* 30 (1995): 159–67; Richard A. Muller, "Found (No Thanks to Theodore Beza): One 'Decretal' Theology," *Calvin Theological Journal* 32 (1997): 145–53; Michael Jinkins, "Theodore Beza: Continuity and Regression in the Reformed Tradition," *Evangelical Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (1992): 131–54; and Robert Letham, "Theodore Beza: A Reassessment," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 40 (1987): 25–40.

25. Bray, "Theodore Beza's Doctrine of Predestination," 12.

26. Heiko A. Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 39–120, 234–58; Heiko A. Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963), 423–28; Heiko A. Oberman, "The Shape of Late Medieval Thought: The Birthpangs of the Modern Era," in *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion*, ed. Charles Trinkaus with Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 3–25; David C. Steinmetz, *Luther in Context* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995).

have application to later Protestant orthodoxy as well.[27] In many cases, scholasticism was defined too vaguely, and many of the supposed historical definitions related to it were driven by theological prejudice or faulty historical methodology. Not enough attention has been given to the intellectual contexts in which sixteenth- and seventeenth-century divines were reared and the purposes that shaped their work. This neglect of context in combination with increased access to primary source materials has opened the door to a reconsideration of the evidence.

Some want now to argue for a substantial continuity between the Reformation and the later Reformed scholastic period, while others continue to argue for a sharp discontinuity.[28] Willem van Asselt and Eef Dekker nuance these alternatives by pointing out that some see the continuity between these periods positively, while others view it negatively.[29] There is obviously a continuum here that cannot be sharply differentiated. There is both continuity and discontinuity between these historical periods, and the struggle for the historian is to understand the nature and source of the changes and to offer some explanation for them.

The present work generally supports the so-called positive continuity theory proposed by van Asselt and Dekker, as applied to the Reformation and post-Reformation periods. In other words, it seeks to demonstrate that there is a basic continuity of teaching between Reformation and post-Reformation divines regarding their understanding of the place of the law in the life of the church, though there are some nuanced differences accounted for by the changing contexts in which that theology must be expressed.

Muller argues that after the first generation of Reformers the needs of the movement shifted from polemic to systematization. Luther, Zwingli, Bucer, and other early Reformers sketched many of the basic commitments of the Reformation; however, "where the Reformers painted with a broad brush," he explains, "their orthodox and scholastic successors strove to fill

27. Muller, *PRRD*, vols. 1–2; Muller, *Christ and the Decree*; Richard A. Muller, "Arminius and the Scholastic Tradition," *Calvin Theological Journal* 24 (1989): 263–77; Muller, "Calvin and the 'Calvinists' (Part 1 of 2)," 345–75; Muller, "Calvin and the 'Calvinists' (Part 2 of 2)," 125–60; and Muller, *Scholasticism and Orthodoxy in the Reformed Tradition*. See also Martin I. Klauber, "Continuity and Discontinuity in Post-Reformation Reformed Theology: An Evaluation of the Muller Thesis," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 33, no. 4 (1990): 467–75; and Trueman and Clark, *Protestant Scholasticism*, xi–xix, 1–30.

28. See van Asselt and Dekker, *Reformation and Scholasticism*, 28–34, for a detailed discussion of these alternatives.

29. Van Asselt and Dekker, *Reformation and Scholasticism*, 28.

in the details of the picture."[30] It was left to the next generation to sharpen definitions, clarify boundaries, and, most importantly, to develop institutions where this new theology would be taught and defended for subsequent generations. Scholasticism rightly understood, therefore, is bound up with the institutionalization of Protestantism. Muller explains, "Orthodoxy and institutionalization are but two aspects of one development—indeed, they are corollaries of one another."[31] If Protestantism were to survive, it was necessary for its doctrine to be systematized and reproduced in and through its schools. Hence, "the term *scholasticism* well describes the technical and academic side of this process of the institutionalization of Protestant doctrine." It is "preeminently a school-theology."[32] Muller's full description of scholasticism bears repeating here: "It is a theology designed to develop system on a highly technical level and in an extremely precise manner by means of the careful identification of topics, division of these topics into their basic parts, definition of the parts, and doctrinal or logical argumentation concerning the divisions and definitions."[33] The term *scholastic* is, therefore, applicable particularly to the large-scale, systematic development of seventeenth-century Protestant theology. Muller elaborates further that this approach to Protestant scholasticism is

> based directly on the definitions and the methods evidenced in the seventeenth-century systems, explicitly opposes the view of several recent scholars according to which "scholasticism" can be identified specifically with a use of Aristotelian philosophy, a pronounced metaphysical interest, and the use of predestination as an organizing principle in theological system.… Scholasticism, then, indicates the technical and logical approach to theology as a discipline characteristic of theological system from the late twelfth through the seventeenth century.[34]

Carl Trueman and R. S. Clark concur with Muller's assessment, stating that "scholasticism was the attempt to adapt the Reformation to the demands of the academy in terms of a precritical world-view."[35]

Here we will seek to illustrate what has just been described through a careful analysis of the work of one Westminster divine, Anthony Burgess. Van Asselt and Dekker's description of other post-Reformation divines

30. Muller, *PRRD*, 1:37.

31. Muller, *PRRD*, 1:33.

32. Muller, *PRRD*, 1:34.

33. Muller, *PRRD*, 1:34.

34. Muller, *PRRD*, 1:36–37. Muller is taking up definitions of scholasticism that have been current among medievalists for some time.

35. Trueman and Clark, *Protestant Scholasticism*, xvii.

applies with equal aptness to Burgess: he "drew inspiration not only from the theology of the reformers, but (like the reformers themselves) also from patristic and medieval sources."[36] Burgess was, of course, shaped by his education, personal experience, and particular social and intellectual context. His theology in no way yields to any simplistic reduction to a single source or influence. On one key locus of theology (the law of God) he will be found to be in large measure consistent with much that preceded him in the broader Continental Reformation, but in service to the needs of a new and different social, political, and ecclesiastical context.

Why Anthony Burgess?

Muller contends that what is needed to clear the stereotyped fog surrounding Protestant scholasticism is more detailed examinations of the original sources. He laments that too often Protestant scholasticism is typed as "rationalistic, intellectually arid and theologically rigid—without due attention to its own statements concerning the use of reason and the import of dogmatic system for faith."[37] As a result, Muller observes that

> comparatively few works have given consideration to the detail and diversity of Protestant (not to mention Roman Catholic) exegesis in the sixteenth century, and, of the few extant studies, even fewer depart from the examination of doctrinal issues in the exegesis to investigate the sources and resources of sixteenth-century exegesis or the continuity and discontinuity between the Reformers and the older exegetical tradition. There are equally few presentations of the exegetical practices of lesser figures in the sixteenth century, writers whose work of biblical interpretation presumably promises to be less startling and, perhaps, more traditional than that of the great "movers and shakers" of Reformation thought.[38]

Without a doubt the same can be said of the seventeenth century, and this is one significant justification for the present work.

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36. Van Asselt and Dekker, *Reformation and Scholasticism*, 33.

37. Muller, *PRRD*, 1st ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 1:20 (this edition cited here only).

38. Richard A. Muller, "Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation: The View from the Middle Ages," in *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation: Essays Presented to David C. Steinmetz in Honor of His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Richard A. Muller and John L. Thompson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 4. Carl Trueman concurs with this complaint, indicating that most of the studies of the Puritan period have focused almost exclusively on sermon materials, while there remains a desperate need for studies focused on the theological and exegetical work that underlies that material (*Claims of Truth*, 4n6).

The reappraisal of Protestant scholasticism has to date focused attention primarily on the systematic expressions of post-Reformation theology. It is impossible to fully appreciate post-Reformation dogmatic development, however, apart from a careful examination and understanding of the exegetical methods of this period as well, since the two go hand in glove. A good deal of scholarly ink has been expended in the effort of understanding biblical interpretation in the era of the Reformation as well as the resulting formulation of systematic theology, and this work needs to continue to develop into the post-Reformation era.[39]

Just as detailed attention has been given to the exegetical and theological methods of the Reformers, some detailed attention now needs to be given to their post-Reformation heirs. One ideal window through which to view the seventeenth century exegete-theologian at work is through the knotty problem of the Old Testament Mosaic law and its relationship to the New Testament church. The exegetical, theological, and hermeneutical complexities involved in the development of a theology of the law make this an ideal subject for such study. More narrowly, if focused attention is given to one expression of a theology of the law in the post-Reformation period and, even more importantly, the exegetical reasoning underlying such expression, then one may obtain a clearer view of the hermeneutical habits of the age. In chapter 19 of the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646–1647) and in the exposition of the law in Burgess's first edition of *Vindiciae Legis* (1646), one finds just such a window.

Chapter 19 of the Westminster Confession of Faith summarizes one clear statement of a theology of the law of God that is representative of what we might generally call Protestant scholasticism. It is a summary statement that was forged in the fires of theological controversy. On the one hand, it was undoubtedly written with a view to the reemergence of the antinomians.[40] On the other hand, it stood in opposition to the "legalism" of the papacy.[41] And, in addition to these often stereotyped extremes, there were a host of nuanced positions between the margins. Hence, it is a statement wherein every clause, even every word of every clause, was carefully

39. See, for example, Muller and Thompson, *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation*; Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 101–17; and Muller, *After Calvin*, 156–74.

40. A fuller discussion of the antinomian controversy will come in chapter 5, "Law and Gospel."

41. For an important analysis of antipapal traditions of this period, see Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 11–376.

considered. However, the Westminster Confession of Faith and the proof texts appended are simply a brief, though carefully reasoned summary statement. One needs much more than this to understand the theological and exegetical logic that gave rise to such a statement. In Burgess's *Vindiciae Legis* we find preserved for us precisely the biblical-theological exposition needed to understand the theology of the Westminster Confession of Faith more fully.

It will be the goal of this study to describe, understand, and appropriate Burgess's labors in light of the theological traditions within which he lived and worked, the historical influences that impinged upon him, and the polemical contexts in which he found himself. It will be seen that his thought cannot be reduced to one key dogma from which he deduced the rest of his principles; he was not interested in abstract speculation, nor was he a rationalist. He addressed contemporary issues to defend orthodox theology while employing the technical language of medieval and Renaissance scholasticism, always mindful of the entire Western tradition of the church. The period in which Burgess was working was the transitional time between what Muller calls early and high orthodoxy. This period, Muller claims, was generally characterized by continuity with the theological developments of the Reformation and by the application of orthodox insights and methods to broader loci, as well as further nuance and elaboration of those developments.[42] The present study will serve as a test case for this thesis.

In his own preface to the work, Burgess explained that his polemical concerns would be addressed in three successive stages. He would consider the law as it was given to Adam, then the law "as promulgated by *Moses* to the people of Israel," and finally the law in relationship to the gospel of the New Testament.[43] The present work will track with the basic contours of his outline and will consider relevant material along the way. But, first, we turn to the man himself. Who was Anthony Burgess, and why was he selected by his colleagues as uniquely suited to deliver this series of lectures at this critical time in the history of the English Reformation?

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42. Muller, *PRRD*, 1:73–74.

43. Burgess, "To the Reader," in *Vindiciae Legis*.