

The Affirmation of the Imputation of the Active Obedience of Christ at the Westminster Assembly of Divines

By Alan Strange

Those who affirm the imputation of the active obedience of Christ (hereafter, IAOC) in our justification, and those who deny it, have in recent years vigorously debated the issue.¹ No small part of the debate has been about the role of the Westminster Assembly of Divines and the documents produced by that body. Several sources have historically averred that the Assembly did not affirm the IAOC, and more recent sources have repeated that assertion.²

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1. This writer heartily affirms the IAOC and appreciates the arguments for it adduced by, among others, R. Scott Clark, "Do This and Live: Christ's Active Obedience as the Ground of Justification," in *Covenant, Justification, and Pastoral Ministry: Essays by the Faculty of Westminster Seminary California*, R.S. Clark, ed. (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2007) 229–265; and David VanDrunen, "To Obey is Better than Sacrifice: A Defense of the Active Obedience of Christ in the Light of Recent Criticism," in *By Faith Alone: Answering the Challenges to the Doctrine of Justification*, Gary L. Johnson and Guy P. Waters, eds. (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007) 127–146. Arguing against the IAOC, among others, is Norman Shepherd, "Justification by Works in Reformed Theology," in *Backbone of the Bible: Covenant in Contemporary Perspective*, P. Andrew Sandlin, ed. (Nacogdoches, Tex.: Covenant Media Press, 2004) 103–120 and "The Imputation of Active Obedience," in *A Faith that is Never Alone: A Response to Westminster Seminary California*, P. Andrew Sandlin, ed. (LaGrange, Calif.: Kerygma Press, 2007) 249–278; as well as the articles by Daniel Kirk, "The Sufficiency of the Cross (I): The Crucifixion as Jesus' Act of Obedience," and "The Sufficiency of the Cross (II): The Law, the Cross, and Justification," both in *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* (24:1–2, Spring and Autumn 2006) 36–64 and 133–154, respectively. Both Shepherd and Kirk affirm that Jesus was sinless, but only to qualify him to make atonement, not also *pro nobis* (as our substitute in life as well as death). Both give a tendentious and thin reading of the relevant biblical passages (as well as the historical literature), particularly Kirk, whose claim of disposing of the IAOC through careful exegesis simply rings hollow in his minimalistic, critical approach.

Others, however, have argued that while the Divines, in what they finally adopted, may never have explicitly affirmed the IAOC that, nonetheless, the Westminster documents, taken as a whole, tend to affirm the IAOC.³ It may be thought that little remains to add to this discussion. It is my contention, however, that a few lacunae remain that, when examined, will fill in the picture and permit us to see more clearly that the Westminster Assembly, when it specifically addressed the issue of the IAOC, affirmed it, and though the final language may not have reflected it as do some other formulations (such as the Savoy Declaration of 1658), not only do the documents of the Assembly reflect a two-covenant structure that affirms (indeed, that entails and requires) the IAOC, but also both original intent and *animus imponentis* favor such an affirmation.⁴ Moreover that the Assembly was not a ruling body of the church but was rather constituted to give advice to the Parliament materially affected how it did its work, consideration of which is relevant in a variety of controversies, including the question of whether or not the Assembly affirmed the IAOC.⁵

2. It is outside the scope of this study to make a full court press in the defense of the IAOC, certainly in the broader scope of things and even more narrowly within the Westminster Standards, as this has been ably done elsewhere (see footnotes 1 and 3). This writer's modest aim is simply to fill in a few gaps in the on-going discussion about whether the Westminster Assembly affirmed the IAOC.

3. Jeffrey Jue argues this position well in "The Active Obedience of Christ and the Theology of the Westminster Standards: A Historical Investigation," in *Justified in Christ: God's Plan for Us in Justification*, K. Scott Oliphint, ed. (Great Britain: Mentor, 2007) 99–130. That the Westminster Standards tend to affirm the IAOC is also made in *Justification: Report of the Committee [of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church] to Study the Doctrine of Justification* (Willow Grove, Pa.: The Committee on Christian Education of the OPC, 2007) 144–145 (cited extensively by permission of the OPC Committee on Christian Education).

4. See the discussion of this near the end of this essay and particularly the appendix on *animus imponentis*.

5. Two works are particularly helpful in understanding the nature of

The allegation that the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF), more specifically, or the Westminster Standards (including the Larger and Shorter Catechisms) more broadly, do not teach the IAOC, or that they at least accommodated those who objected to it, is of some ancient lineage. Mitchell and Struthers treat it in their edition of the Assembly's Minutes. They speculate that the alleged omission of explicit language affirming the IAOC in WCF 11 was probably to appease Thomas Gataker and others who objected to it. Mitchell and Struthers acknowledge that though most of the Divines at the Assembly "favoured the views of Ussher and Featley," theologians distinctly and vigorously supportive of the IAOC (and expressive of such originally), those same Divines were later willing to forego a clear affirmation of IAOC and thus to "abstain from further controversy about the matter."⁶ The clear implication is that the Divines were unwilling to make the IAOC a confessional matter and that, in the end, they accommodated those who did not affirm the IAOC.⁷

In his history of the Westminster Assembly, Mitchell argues along similar lines, but more fully.⁸ Relying chiefly on Daniel Featley's speeches in favor of affirming the IAOC, Mitchell correctly notes that on the vote taken on the question of whether Christ's "whole" obedience was imputed to the believer—as a part of the debate on Article 11 of the Divines' revision of the Thirty-Nine Articles in 1643—"far the major part" of the Assembly voted in favor of affirming the IAOC. Why, then, in 1645/6, when debating and adopting WCF 11, did the Divines not explicitly adopt the language of whole obedience?⁹ Mitchell speculates as follows: "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 [of the Thirty-Nine Articles] 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 seem to us to include, still less to favour their view, they were content to accept as less rigid than the other." Mitchell concludes that this was a concession on the part of the Assembly that led to "Gataker and his friends" agreeing to "drop further controversy on the question" (Mitchell, 155–156).

Not only have earlier historians of and commentators on the work of the Assembly argued for some sort of allowance by the Assembly for a denial of IAOC,

but more recent historians have also argued for such. William Barker, in his helpful work on the lives of the Westminster Divines, has denominated the debate over the IAOC at the Assembly as one of the areas in which the Assembly differed among itself and permitted the difference to remain and not be resolved in favor of a single position. It is Barker's view, specifically, that the Assembly, as with other questions (like the millennial question and that of the order of the decrees), did not prescribe IAOC and proscribe every other view. Barker argued that, over against Featley (who championed the IAOC), William Twisse, Thomas Gataker, and Richard Vines (all of whom Barker contends opposed the IAOC) "succeeded in getting the term 'whole obedience' removed from the phrase 'imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them' in Chapter XI of the Westminster Confession." Barker concluded that Westminster, when it came to the IAOC, as in some other controversies, "sought to be clear and faithful to Scriptural language, yet to allow for shades of difference

the Westminster Assembly as a body erected to give doctrinal and ecclesiastical advice to the British Parliament: Robert S. Paul, *The Assembly of the Lord: Politics and Religion in the Westminster Assembly and the 'Grand Debate'* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), esp. Part I; and S.W. Carruthers, *The Everyday Work of the Westminster Assembly*, J. Li-gon Duncan, III, ed. (rpt. Greenville, S.C.: Reformed Academic Press, 1994), esp. chaps. 1–4. See also, for the figures of the Assembly, William Barker, *Puritan Profiles: 54 Puritan Personalities drawn together by the Westminster Assembly* (Great Britain: Mentor, 1996).

6. Alex. F. Mitchell and John Struthers, *Minutes of the Sessions of the Westminster Assembly of Divines* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1874) lxxv–lxxvii. The reference to avoidance of further controversy occurs because Mitchell and Struthers recognize that though early in the Assembly (Sept. 1643), there was controversy over the IAOC, there later appeared to be, at the time of the adoption of WCF 11 (in 1645/6), no further significant debate over the IAOC. This point is developed below.

7. James Ussher did not argue for the affirmation of the IAOC in the debates at Westminster because, as a devoted Episcopalian, he opposed the meeting of the Assembly (Barker, 44–47) and Daniel Featley, though a good source for the 1643 debate on IAOC, and a staunch defender of it, was also an Episcopalian, who was arrested just after the justification debates and died in 1645, before the adoption of the Westminster Confession of Faith (Barker, 47–50). It is remarkable given the strong animus against Episcopalians how much doctrinal influence Ussher and Featley had. This shows that the Divines could strongly disagree on matters ecclesiastical (as with the Erasmians and Independents) but be doctrinally united and give a strong affirmation of the IAOC in the whole of the Standards even after the death of IAOC champion Featley.

8. Alex. F. Mitchell, *The Westminster Assembly: Its History and Standards* (London, 1883; rpt. Edmonton: Still Water Revival Books, 1992) 149–156.

9. The reason that the date of the debate/adoption of Chapter 11 of the WCF will be consistently given throughout this essay as 1645/6 is that, though debate on this chapter took place in 1645, it was not until July 1646 that this chapter was adopted.

within a generic Calvinism.¹⁰ There is no evidence, however, as we shall see below, that there was any debate whatsoever about having the phrase “whole” added in 1645/6 when the Assembly debated Chapter 11 of the WCF. That debate was entirely restricted to the debate held in September 1643 when the Divines were debating revising Article 11 of the Thirty-Nine Articles.

It should perhaps be noted here that Mitchell, Struthers, Barker and others who make like observations often do not themselves contest the IAOC. Such observers, while personally affirming the IAOC, only contend that the Divines did not ultimately require the affirmation of the IAOC. Others, however, particularly in more recent times, in arguing that WCF 11 does not require the affirmation of the IAOC have further argued that this is a good thing because they do not believe that the IAOC is taught in Scripture. Norman Shepherd, as one who explicitly denies the IAOC, and who had picked up certain strands from Mitchell’s history, concluded: “even the Westminster Confession as late as 1647 was written as a compromise document to accommodate the views of three prominent members of the Westminster Assembly (William Twisse [Prolocutor of the Assembly], Thomas Gataker, and Richard Vines) who did not subscribe to the imputation of

active obedience.”¹¹ Is this a valid conclusion, however, given several lines of evidence? It is the contention of this essay that the WCF, taken as a whole, did affirm the IAOC and its necessity in the justification of the ungodly. While it is true, as Mitchell, Struthers, and Barker have noted, that the word “whole” as a modifier of obedience is not present in the final form of WCF 11 (in 1645/6), when the debate was fully engaged (in 1643) and involved the men that Shepherd cites (Twisse, Gataker, and Vines), the IAOC was clearly affirmed.

The affirmation of the IAOC at the Assembly in 1643 has only recently come to fuller light in the work of Chad Van Dixhoorn. While Mitchell and others knew of this debate, we did not have all the minutes (or Lightfoot’s Journal) from that debate and do now, thanks to the seminal work done by Dr. Van Dixhoorn as part of his doctoral dissertation at Cambridge University.¹² It is this work to which historians now must look for the fuller picture of the great justification debate that took place at the Assembly in 1643. What we see in these materials, to which even a contemporary historian like Barker did not have access, is that when the Westminster Assembly fully debated the matter of the IAOC, it did so in a way that clearly affirmed the IAOC. Jeffrey Jue has recently done a good job recounting this history, based on the more recent work of Van Dixhoorn, and has concluded that, on the whole, the Assembly affirmed the IAOC.¹³ Jue’s work should be consulted, along with Van Dixhoorn’s, for the fuller argument of this. A few points, however, that fill in, and complement, the work of Jue and Van Dixhoorn might helpfully be made here.

When the Westminster Assembly came into session on 1 July 1643, it did not begin drafting a confession of faith (or a form or government or directory for worship, for that matter). Rather, in its initial attempts to reform the English Church further (the Scottish would come later), the Parliament charged the Assembly with revising the already existing articles of faith that the English Church had employed since the time of their drafting in the reign of Edward VI (1547–1553) and their restoration in Elizabeth’s reign (1558–1603): the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church. The Divines began working methodically through the Thirty-Nine Articles shortly after coming into session in July 1643 and reached the article on justification, Article 11, in September 1643.¹⁴

In the Thirty-Nine Articles only Article 11 treats justification. This is significant because there are so many aspects that the Reformation addressed with regards to the doctrine of justification: the nature and necessity of

10. Barker, 176. Even in acknowledging that the Divines sought to accommodate those who scrupled at the IAOC by allowing the omission of “whole” as a modifier of obedience, Barker notes that the language of the Confession was nonetheless such that the “imputation of Christ’s active obedience was thus included,” being made explicit in the Savoy Declaration.

11. Shepherd, “Justification by Works,” in *Backbone*, 115.

12. Chad Van Dixhoorn, “Reforming the Reformation: Theological Debate at the Westminster Assembly, 1643–1652,” Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Cambridge, 2004. This is a seven volume work, with the first volume containing Dr. Van Dixhoorn’s thesis proper, and volumes 2–7 consisting of appendices containing, *inter alia*, Lightfoot’s *Journal* and the *Minutes of the Westminster Assembly* from 4 September 1643 to 25 March 1652. This is now the most complete printed representation of these records that we have and have been extensively consulted in the preparation of this essay by the present writer.

13. Jue, 121–128, see esp. 126 where Jue addresses the fact that the word “whole” does not appear as a modifier to “obedience” in the final version of what the Assembly adopted: Jue concludes, as does this essay, that though the historical record throws no clear light on the precise reason for “whole” not being finally employed to modify obedience, the overall “two-Adam Christology” of the Westminster Standards clearly militates against the denial of the IAOC.

14. In addition to the background materials on the 1643 revisions to the Thirty-Nine Articles furnished by Mitchell and Struthers in their edition of *The Minutes of the Westminster Assembly*, (see lxxv ff. for Article 11 on justification), see R. M. Norris, “The Thirty-Nine Articles at the Westminster Assembly,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of St. Andrews, 1977, lv–lviii. Van Dixhoorn gives extensive treatment to this in his dissertation, v. 1, 270 ff.

justification (both of the godly and the ungodly), the grounds of justification, the nature of justifying faith, double (and triple) imputation, etc. Article 11, as the only place addressing justification in the Thirty-Nine Articles, had to bear the entire weight of all the major aspects of the doctrine of justification. It was thus in the interest of the Assembly, insofar as its original task doctrinally was restricted to revision of the Thirty-Nine Articles, to be as precise (and concise) as possible in the revision of Article 11 so as to give maximal Reformed expression to the doctrine of justification in the comparatively minimal space of one article. The WCF, on the other hand, enjoyed considerably greater space to develop the doctrine of justification. A whole chapter (with five subsections) was devoted to it. Furthermore, other WCF chapters and a number of Shorter and Larger Catechism questions touched on the doctrine.¹⁵ This original restriction of having to express everything about justification in Article 11 meant that the Assembly was pressed to attempt to say all that it wanted to about justification in a relatively brief space and that every word must tell, and precision was at a premium.

The original Article 11 as earlier adopted by the Anglican Church and before any amendment by the Assembly in 1643 reads as follows: “We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort; as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification.” After other amendments had been made to this article, the proposed revision that occasioned all the debate about the addition of the word “whole” to modify obedience was as follows: “We are justified, that is, we are accounted righteous before God, and have remission of sins, not for nor by our own works or deservings, but freely by his grace, only for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ’s sake, his whole obedience and satisfaction being by God imputed unto us, and Christ with his righteousness, being apprehended and rested on by faith only, is an wholesome Doctrine, and very full of comfort: notwithstanding God doth not forgive them that are impenitent, and go on still in their trespasses.”¹⁶

As noted, there were other revisions made to Article 11 besides the addition of the word “whole” as a modifier to obedience. However, it is agreed by all students of this debate that nothing occasioned greater debate than this modification; all also agree that the addition of the word “whole” was a short-handed way of affirming the IAOC.¹⁷ There may have been, arguably, better ways of affirming the IAOC than this particular wording.

“Some divines, even some advocates of the imputation of the active obedience of Christ, felt the language of whole obedience was itself ambiguous.” IAOC champion Daniel Featley initially urged that the Assembly use the language of the imputation of the ‘perfect satisfaction and righteousness of Christ.’¹⁸ It is perhaps worth noting at this point, particularly in support of Jue’s contentions, that language outside of the specific chapter on justification that would later be adopted at the Assembly (WCF 11), the wording of WCF 8.5 and 11.1–3, for instance, is in these very terms, 11.3 speaking even more fully about a “proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father’s justice in their behalf” and distinguishing between Christ’s “obedience and satisfaction,” with the word “both” signifying that such obedience and satisfaction are “accepted in their stead” (implying that Christ is our substitute in death *and* life so that both the active and passive obedience are imputed to us). It is hard to see how this is any less than Featley, as one of the stalwart defenders of active obedience, would have wanted.¹⁹ This observation supports the contention that even the WCF in its final form, both in Chapter 11 and elsewhere, affirmed the IAOC, regardless of whether the word “whole” modified the word obedience at any place in the Westminster Standards.

In considering the debate over the word “whole” at

15. Jue points out, pp. 126–128, that an affirmation of IAOC is integral to other places in the Westminster Standards, like WCF 7 (on covenant) and 8 (on Christ the mediator), as well as LC 70, 92–93, in addition to WCF 11, which is directly on justification. WCF 8.5 speaks of the “perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself,” and LC 70 affirms the “perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ.” The conjunction “and” in both cases suggests that this “perfect obedience” is in addition to the “sacrifice” and “full satisfaction” of Christ and that both are, as LC 70 affirms, “by God imputed to them.” This is an affirmation that not only the death of Christ (the sacrifice that fully satisfies Adam’s and the elect’s violations of the law) is substitutionary, but also that the life of Christ is substitutionary (*pro nobis*), because both the perfect obedience and the full satisfaction of Christ are imputed to us for our justification. If this is not an affirmation of the IAOC, the import of the words is obscure to this writer.

16. Both the original and revised texts are given in Van Dixhoorn’s “Reforming the Reformation,” v. 1, 270 and 320, respectively.

17. Van Dixhoorn, v. 1, 271. Lightfoot regarded this 1643 justification debate as “our great question,” engendering a “hot debate.” See Lightfoot, MS Journal, fos. 32 v. 30v, 35r, 35v, 26r. Richard Baxter, now widely regarded as a neo-nomian, was quite interested in the Assembly’s debate and had correspondence with several members about his own doctrine of justification which, like this debate, came to be seen as a “hot peppercorn,” for a discussion of which see the fine study by H. Boersma, *A Hot Peppercorn: Richard Baxter’s Doctrine of Justification ...* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 1993).

18. Van Dixhoorn, “Reforming the Reformation,” v. 1, 328.

19. Much of this paragraph derives from fn. 289 of the *OPC Justification Report*, 144, to which this writer was a primary contributor.

the Assembly and the affirmation of the IAOC, it is important to note that the main theological error among Protestants, at least as far as the Assembly was concerned, and which it determined to oppose, was antinomianism.²⁰ To be sure, Romanism concerned the Divines, especially in regard to the doctrine of justification, and the Assembly sought carefully to refute Rome's errors on this doctrine at every point. The same is true of Arminianism, although there is some dispute as to whether the Assembly took a clear position on Amyraldianism.²¹ A number of factors point to the chief doctrinal concern being antinomianism, perhaps because it was an error closer to the Assembly's view that salvation was entirely by grace and grace alone. In view of earlier confessions having condemned Roman and Arminian error, the Westminster Assembly wanted to make it clear that the gracious character of the salvation that it confessed was in no way opposed to the requirement that Christians pursue holiness and live a godly life.

20. Van Dixhoorn, "Reforming the Reformation," v. 1, 276 ff. A number of more recent works have highlighted the "threat" of antinomianism in Britain at the time of the Westminster Assembly. See, e.g., David R. Como, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in pre-Civil-War England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004) 64 ff, and recent articles by David Parnham, "The Covenantal Quietism of Tobias Crisp," *Church History* 75:3 (September 2006) 511–543, and "Motions of Law and Grace: The Puritan in the Antinomian," *Westminster Theological Journal* 70:1 (Spring, 2008) 73–104.

21. Mitchell and Struthers, *Minutes*, 152 indicate that Edmund Calamy was an Amyraldian. Warfield and others also note Richard Vines, Lazarus Seaman, and Stephen Marshall among that number, although Warfield argued that the statements made in WCF 3.6, 8.5, and 8.8 would militate against any hypothetical universalist position, see Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and its Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1931) 56.

22. Van Dixhoorn, "Reforming the Reformation," 307: "Francis Taylor openly sided . . . with Gataker, Vines, and Woodcock . . . by raising the antinomian issue. As Taylor saw it, if 'Christ hath performed the law for me, then it will follow I am not bound to keepe this lawe myself.'" Then, Van Dixhoorn makes a most telling observation: "Fear of catering to antinomianism was far more real to most divines than the likelihood that they would stumble into one of the heretical pitfalls" associated with antinomianism. Even in view of such, that the Divines gave such a vigorous affirmation of the free grace of God manifested in justification is significant.

23. Carruthers, 125 ff.; Paul, 176–182. See the "Humble Petition of the Assembly to Parliament Concerning Antinomianism," Van Dixhoorn, v. 2, *Lightfoot's Journal*, 26–28.

24. Lightfoot had great disdain for the antinomians and made it clear (Van Dixhoorn, v.2., *Journal*, 31 *passim*) that the Assembly's contempt for such played no little role in the debate, even prompting a few to oppose the IAOC on the grounds that such opposition would militate against antinomianism. Lightfoot, though a strong opponent of antinomianism, was a strong proponent of the affirmation of the IAOC.

Thus the Westminster Assembly condemned the foundational antinomian error of eternal justification, out of which various antinomians of the time developed doctrines teaching not only that Christians are not bound by the third use of the law but also that God sees no sin in his children and that Christians need not pray "forgive us our sins."²² The antinomians of this period tended to collapse everything either into the eternal decrees or into the work of Christ (we could say *factum salutis* and *historia salutis*), giving short shrift to the necessity for the Christian to walk in and strive for holiness (tending to see the Christian as passive in all the parts of the *ordo salutis*). The Assembly was deeply troubled by this corruption of the gospel and, in fact, at the time of the great debate on justification (Fall 1643), also had a committee of some of its members consulting with parliament as to how certain antinomian publications should be handled and antinomianism suppressed.²³

Given, then, that antinomianism posed the kind of threat that it did, at least as far as many of the Westminster Divines perceived it, it is little wonder that the Assembly took great care to give that error no quarter. In fact, the determination to yield no ground to the antinomian or to do nothing to give aid and comfort to antinomianism played no little part in the debate over the affirmation of the IAOC. In the course of the 1643 debate, it became plain that, among the few Divines who opposed the affirmation of the IAOC, all of them opposed antinomianism and many of them took the position that they did in opposition to the IAOC because of their opposition to antinomianism. The Divines were quite aware that certain antinomians were only too glad to hear and would likely misconstrue any affirmation of the IAOC. This makes all the more noteworthy, then, the Assembly's overwhelming affirmation of the IAOC: though they knew that antinomians might misuse the affirmation of the IAOC, because the Assembly believed such to be at the heart of the gospel, they affirmed it anyway as a testimony to the free gospel of Christ.²⁴ Just as the Westminster Assembly did not let fear of antinomianism keep it from affirming the IAOC, neither should we let any such fears keep us from likewise testifying to the truth.

The debate on Article 11 (on justification) involved not only the debate over the addition of the word "whole" as a modifier of obedience but also a number of amendments before and after the debate on "whole," including debate over what title to give to the article (Van Dixhoorn, v. 3, *Minutes*, 12). All observers agree, however, that the real debate was over the addition of "whole," and thus over the question of the

IAOC. Richard Vines, opponent of the affirmation of the IAOC, spoke first in the debate and argued that since justification means “the remission of sins,” he assigns such strictly “to the passive obedience of Christ.” He argues that the passive sufferings of Christ are the proper matter imputed (Van Dixhoorn, v. 3, *Minutes*, 25). Typically throughout this debate, the few opponents of IAOC would argue along these lines, observing also that Christ’s active obedience was that which he was due to yield as a part of his humanity in the Incarnation and that such was necessary to fit Him to be our sin-bearer in the passive obedience of His death on the cross. Thus began the debate, with rejoinders to Vines coming from Hoyle and Walker, who raised issues about whether Christ as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity was bound to keep the law for Himself (as opposed to keeping it for us), claiming also that references to Christ’s obedience are synecdochal and that one cannot separate Christ’s active and passive obedience (Van Dixhoorn, v. 3, *Minutes*, 25).

Not only did Vines respond, but Thomas Gataker as well. Gataker became the chief opponent of the affirmation of the IAOC in the debate at the Assembly. He argued somewhat differently from Vines, however, contending that justification itself is merely legal and does not have in view the remission of sins. Since Gataker tended to separate the remission of sins from the legal declaration and see justification as applying only to the latter, he also tended to refer the grounds of justification to the work of Christ, separating that from the definition of justification, narrowly construed.²⁵

William Twisse, the prolocutor of the Assembly, who is often said to have opposed the affirmation of the IAOC²⁶ (though there is never any clear opposition expressed in the minutes) came at the question of justification from yet another perspective. Twisse believed in eternal justification, as did the antinomians, though there is no evidence that he shared in the errors that the antinomians drew from their affirmation of eternal justification. Twisse, in fact, warned the Assembly about too strenuously opposing the antinomians (Van Dixhoorn, v. 3, *Minutes*, 19). One thing is clear: if Twisse opposed the IAOC, which remains unclear and contested, he did not do so on the grounds that it would lend aid and comfort to the antinomians, given that he himself was concerned about the Assembly over-reaction to antinomianism. It may be that he referred the doctrine of the IAOC to sanctification and not justification. At any rate, Twisse would be no friend to anyone wanting to introduce any element of human merit or works (as a part of our faithfulness) into the equation of our

justification. For Federal Vision partisans, or their allies, to cite Twisse in support of denying the IAOC is like citing Hoeksema in support of their monocoventalism when Hoeksema’s monocovenantalism is of a different stripe altogether (*OPC Justification Report*, 117).²⁷

It ought to be remembered that a good deal of debate does not necessarily mean that there is a good deal of disagreement among the debaters. Heated debate, as was the 1643 debate over the addition of the word “whole,” often indicates that there are some parties participating in the debate who feel very strongly about the issue at hand, not that the body debating is highly divided.²⁸ Those of us who have served in many church judicatories, especially General Assemblies of our respective denominations, can testify that but a few parties who have strong views on an issue can engender significant and heated debate. When it comes time for the vote, however, even after lengthy debate, it is sometimes revealed that, all the debate notwithstanding, the body is not highly divided over the issue and the temperature

25. Van Dixhoorn, v. 2, *Lightfoot’s Journal*, 48ff. for the shape of the great justification debate.

26. Barker, 176, claims that Twisse joined Gataker and Vines in opposing the IAOC. This contention is not substantiated, however. Twisse, as a supralapsarian, was particularly concerned with any teaching that savored of synergism (Roman Catholicism, Arminianism, etc. see Barker, 29). A number of Twisse’s writings bear out his supralapsarian convictions, particularly his work on John Cotton’s *Treatise Concerning Predestination* (London: J. D. for Andrew Crook, 1646) and *The Riches of Gods Love unto the Vessels of Mercy, Consistent with His Absolute Hatred or Reprobation of the Vessels of Wrath ...* (post., Oxford: Printers to the University, 1653). This last work containing a particularly vigorous defense of the supralapsarian order in the decrees. If Twisse for some reason did oppose the IAOC in justification, it was not because he believed salvation to be anything but utterly monergistic. If Twisse was extreme in any direction, he was a hyper-Calvinist, not a neo-nomian like Richard Baxter (Barker, 288–294), and so Twisse’s alleged opposition to IAOC would not threaten the utter graciousness of justification as would the opposition of neo-nomians to IAOC. For more on Twisse, see also Benjamin Brooks, *The Lives of the Puritans*, v. 3 (1813; rpt. Pittsburgh: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1994) 12–17.

27. See Herman Hoeksema, *The Covenant: God’s Tabernacle with Men* (rpt., Grand Rapids, Mich.: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1973).

28. See Van Dixhoorn, v. 3, *Minutes*, 32 in which something of the debate psychology of the Assembly can be gathered from the remarks of an IAOC defender (Walker) who makes the point to those vigorously debating against the IAOC: [We, advocates of the IAOC] desire [that] they [opponents of the IAOC] would not think we yield the cause because [we do] not answer things answered before.” In other words, because the few opponents of IAOC were vigorously combating it and making many speeches against it does not mean that the “silent majority” did not remain strongly supportive of IAOC, nor does it mean that the speeches against IAOC were ultimately persuasive, evidenced by the final vote.

of the debate stemmed from a handful of men with strong views.²⁹ In the great justification debate of 1643, Gataker spoke twenty-five times and Vines twenty-three times: these two were among the top four speakers in the debate (Van Dixhoorn, “Reforming the Reformation,” 332). Those who opposed the affirmation of the IAOC spoke a lot during the debate, in other words, yet when it came to the vote, of about fifty men voting, only three or four voted against affirming the IAOC (Van Dixhoorn, v. 3, *Minutes*, 77). This means that the vote in favor of affirming the IAOC was in excess of ninety percent, even if there were four voting against it.

Only those inexperienced in church deliberative bodies would wonder how such a vigorous debate might yield such a lopsided vote. Those more familiar with the ways of such bodies know that such is not uncommon. Novitiates may express surprise that vigorous debates can lead to one-sided conclusions, not realizing that most people do not speak in a debate and that the most fervent speeches are often given by a small minority strongly opposed to the motion under consideration and committed to the employment of every reasonable debate tactic to secure its defeat. Gataker, Vines, and a few others ultimately exhausted their say and were

unconvincing to their fellows. When the vote came in Session 52 at the close of the Tuesday morning session on 12 September 1643, only three or four are said to have dissented and even at that none had their negative votes recorded save Gataker, initially at least, and for some reason thereafter apparently changed his mind and asked that his negative vote be stricken.³⁰

This 1643 debate over the addition of the word “whole” to modify obedience is the only record that we have of such a debate over the IAOC.³¹ The other citations in the Assembly Minutes, which includes every reference at the Westminster Assembly to the doctrine of justification, read as follows: “2 Dec. 1645; 23 July 1646; and 4 Feb. 1647 (Minutes 3:113r, 281v or 166v, 303v or 195v). For the debates on the text of the chapters, see 3, 8–11, 16 Dec 1645; for the scriptures see, 10, 11 Feb. 1647 (Minutes 3:113r–115r, 123v–124r).”³² There is no record for any of these dates, when checked in the Minutes concerning the Confession of Faith and catechisms, of any debate on justification, not to mention active obedience, comparable to that held in September 1643 when the Assembly voted to affirm active obedience by retaining the language of “whole obedience.”

Insofar as it is alleged that the dissent of certain figures in this debate points to a lack of agreement on the IAOC, it is the case that no one in this debate availed himself of the mechanism of dissent available to all members of the Westminster Assembly. The Parliament had established a protocol for the Assembly whereby members might express dissent.³³ Let it be thought that such a mechanism was never employed, in the same general timeframe as the 1643 justification debate, Cornelius Burgess objected to a particular action of the Assembly and invoked the established avenues of dissent.³⁴ Gataker did nothing of the sort when it came to the vote of the overwhelming majority affirming the IAOC. While, as noted above, Gataker seems originally to have asked to have his dissenting vote recorded, he had his name as a dissenter stricken from the record. Even this mildest of dissents, recording one’s negative vote, was abandoned by Gataker and none of the stronger forms of dissent available were ever invoked. That Gataker did nothing further than what he did indicates that, at the point in which it was clear that the IAOC had been affirmed, even the most vigorous dissenters, and Gataker was undoubtedly that, seemed willing to live with it.

It is regularly asserted that the Westminster Standards involve compromise, making it possible for all parties to live comfortably with the finished product.³⁵ On certain issues, such compromise is clear, particularly

29. Such a situation occurred at the 2007 PCA General Assembly, at which, following what appeared to be significant debate, the body voted, by more than ninety percent (according to several witnesses), to affirm the committee report that had found certain teachings of the New Perspectives on Paul and Federal Vision to be confessionally deficient. Personal conversations with those in attendance at that assembly as well as on-line comments by those in attendance confirmed this.

30. Van Dixhoorn, v. 3, *Minutes*, 77. It is noted in Van Dixhoorn’s note 7 here (on 77), “dissenting, Mr. Gataker; ‘Mr. Gataker’ erased.”

31. What follows in this paragraph comes from footnote 287 of the *OPC Justification Report*, 143.

32. Van Dixhoorn’s “Reforming the Reformation,” 324, notes 234–235.

33. Van Dixhoorn, v. 2, *Lightfoot’s Journal*, 3–4: On 6 July 1643, both houses of Parliament sent to the Assembly a set of eight “general rules” of procedure, the 7th and 8th being particularly relevant for our purposes. Rule 7 sets forth that “no man [is] to be denied to enter his dissent from the Assembly, and his reasons for it at any point,” and if subsequent debate in the Assembly does not yield satisfaction, the dissenting party may have it sent to Parliament not as the concern of a particular man but as a point not capable of clear resolution by the Westminster Assembly. Rule 8 makes further provisions for dissent. The important point to be made here is that recourse to such rules was never taken by Gataker or others who may have opposed the Assembly’s affirmation of the IAOC in 1643.

34. Van Dixhoorn, v. 2, *Lightfoot’s Journal*, 40 ff. Here Lightfoot begins to report on what he regards as great contentiousness on the part of Burgess in opposing certain features of the Solemn League and Covenant concluded with the Scots. Burgess invoked the rules of dissent set forth in the immediately preceding footnote.

35. Sinclair B. Ferguson, “Westminster Assembly,” in *The Dictionary*

in cases in which the Assembly chose to prescribe less than what a majority of its members might otherwise affirm on an issue.³⁶ On the issue of justification, however, when the Assembly debated the question of the IAOC, it clearly affirmed it, even in the face of strong, albeit few, dissenters. Though the Assembly afterwards did not choose this precise language, it is not to be assumed that it changed its mind on the issue or that it sought to provide a berth wide enough to make all its members, both the many who did and the few who did not affirm the IAOC, comfortable. In regard to the contention that the Westminster Assembly, though clearly affirming the IAOC in 1643, backed off in 1645/6, as a necessary compromise to accommodate Gataker and others, it should be noted that the nature of the Assembly, as a consultative body, never required such compromise since all its members were never asked to subscribe to all the revisions to the Thirty-Nine Articles, or, later, to all the chapters of the WCF, as if the Assembly of Divines were a church court with power to compel compliance, and failing such, to excommunicate. No vote taken, in other words, at the Assembly on any particular issue, meant that all were in agreement with what had been adopted as if they were all subscribing to it. Here's the point: the IAOC was affirmed in the revision of Article 11 in 1643 and there is no reason to suppose that it was not also affirmed in WCF 11 and in the other relevant chapters of the Confession of Faith, even though the specific wording of revised Article 11 never again appears. It is my contention that it did not need to appear in that form because the wording of WCF 11.3 and 8.5, especially, did everything that the revision of Article 11 by the addition of the word "whole" was intended to do, and, arguably, more.

It seems that something like theological exhaustion set in between the first debate on justification (1643) and the treatment given justification in the WCF (1645/6). This supposed exhaustion meant that when it came time to adopt the confessional statement about justification in 1645/6, that the Divines had little heart to engage further in the kind of intense theological debate that they had in 1643. Perhaps, it seems to be supposed, to avoid the kind of intense fight that they underwent in 1643, and particularly to accommodate opponents of the IAOC, like Gataker and Vines, the Assembly decided to forego the issue and not make an issue of "whole obedience." Two considerations, however, need to be taken into account before entertaining this apparently appealing notion of theological exhaustion. First of all, as noted above, in 1643 the entire freight of the argument for the IAOC rested on the one word

"whole." But in 1645/6, as also noted, the Assembly no longer had simply one article with which to work in terms of justification and the IAOC, but rather a whole chapter and more.

Second, the role of those who objected to the IAOC in 1643, though never rising to the level of formal dissent in the immediate aftermath of the affirmation of the IAOC, is somewhat unclear in the years that followed. Scholars seem to assume, in other words, that Gataker, Vines, Twisse, and perhaps others must have agitated for the removal of the word "whole"—i.e., for the effective repeal of the 1643 affirmation of the IAOC—and must, in some measure, have been successful since the IAOC is not clearly delineated in the subsequent Confession or Catechisms. What role did Gataker, Vines and Twisse, play after the 1643 debate? The record simply does not say but there are some clues that Twisse and Gataker, specifically, may have played a very small role. As noted above, whatever Twisse's role was in the justification debate,³⁷ Twisse, having been ill and having missed many sessions, died between Session 676 (July 17, 1646) and 677 (July 22, 1646). It was in Session 678, on July 23, 1646, that "report was made by Mr. Arrowsmith 'of Justification and Adoption.' The Report was debated, and upon debate agreed to; and it is as followeth [in our current WCF, Chapters 11–12]" (Mitchell and Struthers, *Minutes*, 258–59). Thus Twisse was not present at the adoption of WCF 11. Furthermore, it is unclear what role Gataker played, if any, in the 1645/6 debate: his health "after the first two years of the Assembly . . . forced him to curtail his activities" (Barker, *Puritan Profiles*, 159).

of Scottish Church History and Theology (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993) 863–864: "In some matters, we find indications that the Divines were concerned to express a generic Reformed theology in such a way that a certain latitude of interpretation would be possible." This writer heartily concurs with Ferguson but would caution that simply adducing such a notion does not insure that all parties always rightly invoke it. Ferguson, who recognizes the lengthy justification debate, does not here refer to it but to the debate about Amyraldianism. I agree that the original intent of the Assembly appears to have been not to proscribe Amyraldianism, but I cannot speak in the same way about the IAOC, which appears to be affirmed by the Westminster Standards.

36. J.V. Fesko, "The Westminster Confession and Lapsarianism: Calvin and the Divines," in *The Westminster Confession into the 21st Century*, v. 2 (Scotland: Mentor, 2004) 477–525. Fesko treats here an area about which the Divines exercised genuine theological latitude: the Assembly dealt with the lapsarian question so as to affirm infralapsarianism without decidedly ruling out supralapsarianism. Warfield puts it a bit differently: "the Supralapsarians . . . and the Infralapsarians . . . set down in the Confession only what was a common ground to both, leaving the whole region which was in dispute between them entirely untouched," in *The Westminster Assembly and its Work*, 56.

37. The rest of this paragraph is from fn. 284 of the *OPC Justification Report*, 141

Speculation abounds as to why, as some see it, the Assembly affirmed the IAOC in 1643 but left it ambiguous in 1645/6.³⁸ It is Mitchell's opinion that, though "far the major part [of the Westminster Assembly] voted for the affirmative, that Christ's whole obedience was imputed to the believer," Daniel Featley, a major advocate for affirming the whole obedience, yielded to the dissenters because the question of active obedience was new and not disputed in previous centuries; "probably," Mitchell continues, "it was on this account [of several factors, including the newer nature of the question] that when the Assembly came to the treat of the subject of Justification in their Confession of Faith [in Chapter 11] they left out the word *whole* to which Gataker and his friends had most persistently objected . . ." so that the dissenters were content to accept Chapter 11 as less rigid than the earlier revised Article 11. Mitchell cites Simon Ashe's funeral sermon for Gataker as maintaining that "Gataker and his friends agreed to drop further controversy, the matter having been conceded" (Mitchell, *Westminster Assembly*, 155–156).

38. The rest of this paragraph is from ftn. 288 of the *OPC Justification Report*, 143.

39. "Reforming the Reformation," 324–330. See especially 326: Van Dixhoorn does note that the Assembly, in drafting its 1646 catechism that was eventually abandoned in favor of the larger and shorter catechisms, may have considered adding there something explicit about the IAOC. Because they did not then or thereafter in either the WCF or the catechisms explicitly affirm the IAOC (as Savoy clearly did in 1658), Van Dixhoorn concludes that the Assembly's decision "not to use the language of the active obedience of Christ" was "deliberate," and thus it "appears that the Assembly chose not to make its statement as clear as possible." He further says, on 328, that it is possible in the two to three years between the two main debates over justification, "a critical number of divines may have changed their minds over the necessity of the doctrine in a national confession." Two observations: there was no real debate to speak of in 1645/6 regarding the IAOC, and there is counter-evidence that in other places and in other words the Divines manifested that they still affirmed the IAOC. This writer thinks it more likely that, to make for as much peace as possible (and adopting a wise debate strategy), the Divines chose not to re-introduce the word "whole" as it was not needed, being rendered unnecessary by other words that did the same, if not a better job, and enjoying more space to express affirmation of the IAOC. This writer appreciates Dr. Van Dixhoorn's pacific approach here, but points out that he himself admits that there is no clear evidence that the Divines changed their minds over the necessity of the doctrine in a national confession. The only supposed evidence is that "whole" no longer modifies "obedience" at any point. This essay attempts to provide an answer for such an "omission," noting that the greater space given to issues relating to the IAOC in the Confession and catechisms more than makes up for any alleged lack because of the absence of the word "whole."

40. This paragraph is also from ftn. 288 of the *OPC Justification Report*, 143–144.

41. See, for much of this history, W.D.J. McKay, "Scotland and the Westminster Assembly," in *The Westminster Confession into the 21st Century*, v. 1 (Scotland: Mentor, 2003) 213–245.

Van Dixhoorn tends also to read all the evidence, on balance, as indicating that the Assembly ultimately adopted a consensual position (that would accommodate those scrupling at affirming the IAOC),³⁹ though he cites possibly counter-indicatory evidence as well, such as how Ashe's funeral sermon for Gataker is to be interpreted: "Other comment on the conclusion of the debate is provided by Simeon Ashe, where he cites Gataker's silence at the end of the debate as an example of his peace-loving spirit. Ashe also brings up Gataker's 'resolutions' not to publish his discourses on Romans 3:28, 'that he might not publicly discover his dissent from the Votes of that Reverend Assembly'" (Van Dixhoorn, "Reforming the Reformation," 329). The clear implication is that the Assembly codified a doctrine of justification with which Gataker could not agree. Unfortunately Ashe and Gataker do not say if he is referring to Gataker's silent opposition to votes on the eleventh article (which would tell us nothing new) or votes on the eleventh chapter of the Confession, which would suggest that Gataker understood the Assembly's final text, even with its increased ambiguity, to be teaching a view opposite to his own. Gataker's own comment on the matter is also ambiguous: he states that Twisse and "one of the Independent partie" agreed with his views, but the majority of the Assembly did not.⁴⁰

The debate in which the IAOC was hotly disputed occurred in September 1643, before the English Parliament had concluded the Solemn League and Covenant with its northern neighbors, the Scots. This covenant, which changed the entire character of the Assembly and the documents that it would produce, was not ratified by both houses of the English Parliament until October 1643.⁴¹ But the Assembly had earlier been established by an act of the English Parliament, absent any agreement with the Scots, and had begun meeting on 1 July 1643. Thus the Westminster Assembly, as it was originally constituted and purposed, was not for the Reforming of the church in the two kingdoms of England and Scotland, as it became after the adoption of the covenant, but was for the reform of the English Church. It was while the Assembly was still working strictly for the reform of the English Church, then, that this great battle over the IAOC in justification occurred, not as a part of ratifying the Westminster Standards, but as a part of that original task of the Assembly, revising the Thirty-Nine Articles.

Given that the original task of the Assembly was not to propose a new confession of faith but to revise the already existing articles of religion (the Thirty-nine Articles), along with suggesting revisions for the government,

discipline, and worship of the church, it might prove helpful to reflect on the circumstances surrounding Parliament's calling of the Assembly.⁴² The majority in Parliament, the House of Commons more specifically, after the calling of the Long Parliament of 1640, was clearly Puritan in its sympathies. As such the Commons tended to oppose both the high-church innovations referred to as Laudianism, more particularly, and episcopacy, more broadly, many in the Commons preferring some form of established Presbyterianism or Congregationalism. The Assembly was largely of this mind as well.

Where the Assembly diverged from Parliament, however, was on the question of the relationship between the church and the state. While there were a few Erastians in the Assembly, who tended to view the church as under the state and its creature, the Assembly generally, certainly urged on by the Scots after they came, opposed Erastianism.⁴³ While many in the Assembly would be quick to counsel, and be eloquent in doing so, that the church should be able to maintain a province distinct from, and in no way inferior to, that of the state's, few in the Commons would agree, as they wanted to retain Erastian control over the church. Thus while Laudianism tended to be opposed by all in Parliament and in the Assembly, the same could not be said for Erastianism, with some few in the Assembly supporting it while many in Parliament did. While all students of this history know that the Parliament called the Westminster Assembly into session, the implications of Parliamentary Erastianism, particularly its effect on the relative power that the Assembly thus enjoyed, or failed to enjoy, as a result of a dominating Parliament, seems often overlooked.

Too little is made, when it comes to questions of what the Westminster Assembly intended doctrinally to proscribe and to prescribe, of the reality that the Assembly was called to meet by the state and was not a court of the church (it was not a synod; it had none of the powers of the General Assembly). Provoked by certain Laudian and divine right Episcopal claims, the Parliament, in reaction against that, and in response to the "Root and Branch Petition" in late 1640, moved to abolish the episcopacy and to call an assembly of Divines that could serve to advise Parliament as to the further reform of the church. Accordingly, Parliament established and named an Assembly that was its, "and no other[s]," creature (Carruthers, 21). This assembly was not a convocation, as ordinarily conceived, "or in any sense 'a court of the church'" (Ibid, 21). In terms of the perennial question of church over state (as Rome taught) or state over church (as Caesaropapism had it

in the Middle Ages and Erastianism in the Reformation), England, since the time of the Reformation under Henry VIII (r. 1509–1547), had largely, at least in the monarchy and her governing bodies, embraced the state over church model. And it was this Laudian model that prevailed at the time even of the Assembly and that rendered that body purely advisory to the Parliament, impacting something of the way that it did its work and of how we should view the products of that Assembly.

Perhaps a bit of historical perspective would be helpful in comparing the Westminster Assembly to other bodies that addressed matters of Christian doctrine.⁴⁴ It is the case that after the conversion of Constantine (312), civil authorities fairly commonly convened ecclesiastical assemblies. But the nature of such convocations was usually for the purpose of addressing particular errors and/or condemning certain heresies, unlike Westminster which was called to address the further reformation of the church in England broadly. Constantine himself, for instance, called the Council of Nicea (325) to secure the purity, peace, and unity of the church with regards to the Arian controversy. That council ended with all those present, but two, signing off on the condemnation of Arianism (with the two dissenters also being condemned). Councils in the ancient and medieval church, whether called by civil rulers or not, typically on their own authority, together with papal approval as that became an issue, condemned various views and defined the faith in authoritative ways. Westminster, however, was not a body that had the authority of itself to condemn views and then compel those who held such condemned views either to recant or to suffer excommunication.

The Westminster Assembly, in other words, did not have the power that General Assemblies, or even lower judicatories of the church, have. As far as Reformed synods were concerned, following the ecumenical councils of the earlier church, Dort (1618–1619) was the Reformed body back to which Westminster looked in the execution of its work. Dort was an assembly called by the state to deal with the crisis in the Reformed churches precipitated by the Remonstrants, followers

42. As noted above, Carruthers and Paul are helpful for this as is Van Dixhoorn, "Reforming the Reformation," 12–54, on the "calling and constitution of the Westminster Assembly," all of which were consulted especially for the following paragraphs.

43. Hugh M. Cartwright, "Westminster and Establishment: A Scottish Perspective," in *The Westminster Confession into the 21st Century*, v. 2 (Scotland: Mentor, 2004) 181–221.

44. Helpful here, broadly, and from which some of this generally derives, is the article by this writer, "Church and State in Historical Perspective," in *Ordained Servant* 16 (2007) 93–100.

of Arminius, who challenged Reformed orthodoxy at that point. Dort condemned Arminianism, dismissing the Remonstrants from its meetings and gave the state warrant to deal with the Arminians as those whom the church acting in solemn synodical council had determined to censure. Westminster had no such power of church censure, much less to order the state to treat those whose teachings it might have proscribed in a certain way.

At Westminster, no one was on trial nor could that body, acting solely on its own authority, enact church discipline. While the civil magistrate in Scotland did promulgate the various documents produced by the Assembly, such never happened in England, due especially to the triumph of Oliver Cromwell, including the execution of Charles I, which led to the defeat of all those who opposed Cromwell and the regicide (most of the Presbyterians in England and Scotland, with many Presbyterian parliamentarians removed by Pride's Purge). All the advice given by the Assembly to the Parliament, in other words, was never officially taken (though it was among the Scots).

To assume that if Westminster decided something in a certain way this must have meant that it was a compromise position in the case in which it is known that members of the Assembly held different positions on the given issue is not necessarily the case. The Assembly might choose to affirm less than what a majority of its members believed in order to accommodate a minority; on the other hand, the mere presence of a minority position at the Assembly does not mean that whatever was finally adopted was a clear accommodation to that minority. A minority of brethren favored independency but this does not mean that the Assembly accommodated that position. Because they chose not to prescribe certain positions does not mean that they chose to prescribe no positions. The fact is that we know that the Assembly, when it had before it a distinct vote on the question of the IAOC (in 1643) clearly affirmed it. There is no evidence of any kind whatsoever that anything that the Westminster Assembly did amounted to a repeal of that affirmation. And the absence of another

debate about justification in 1645/6 does not count as evidence in favor of the Assembly backing off on the affirmation of the IAOC.

In regard to the contention that the Confession reflects an accommodation to those who denied the IAOC, or what is often referred to as a consensual expression in WCF 11 (comprising both the supporters and the deniers of the IAOC), Van Dixhoorn has noted that "perhaps the strongest evidence in favour of reading the Assembly's *Confession* in a consensual fashion, is the fact that when the Independents revised and then reissued the Assembly's *Confession of faith* in 1658, they inserted the language of the 'active and passive obedience' of Christ into their version of the *Confession*."⁴⁵ The addition made to the Savoy Declaration in its chapter 11 is arguably stronger than what was adopted by the Westminster Assembly. That this addition represents a significant one to Westminster must not be simply assumed but needs to be demonstrated from primary sources. It is noteworthy that Philip Schaff did not regard Savoy's addition to WCF 11 as one worth mentioning in the changes that Savoy made to the WCF.⁴⁶ One might argue, then, that what Savoy did to modify chapter 11 in its revision of the WCF was not regarded as something clearly different from Westminster but served only to clarify the WCF on the specific point of the IAOC, making explicit what was implicit in it.

As noted above, Norman Shepherd distinctly appeals to the lack of explicit affirmation of the IAOC in the WCF as an accommodation to the views of Gataker, Vines, and Twisse. We have seen that such a claim is speculative at best. At worse, it is suspect, with Shepherd seeking to shore up his position by appealing to something for which we have no clear evidence. It may be worth noting, in the larger scheme of things, that even if the documents produced by Westminster could be shown to support Shepherd, i.e., the lack of the word "whole" in WCF Chapter 11, in contradistinction to its adoption as part of the revision of Article 11 in 1643, means that the Assembly did not require the affirmation of the IAOC, such a position would not necessarily amount to what Shepherd and others contend. Wes White has shown that even in the case of those for whom we have evidence as deniers of IAOC—Ursinus (who may have denied the IAOC after 1566) and Piscator (who inarguably denied the IAOC)—Shepherd's citation of those denials is to little effect since Shepherd differs from all of these men in his broader theological construction. Shepherd's view of the nature of justifying faith, as a prime example, is not the same as Piscator's or Westminster's.⁴⁷ On that score alone, even

45. "Reforming the Reformation," 330. For the full text of the 1658 Savoy Declaration, see Jaroslav Pelikan, ed. *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, vol. 3 (New Haven: Yale UP, 2003) 104–135.

46. Philip Schaff, ed. *The Creeds of Christendom*, v. 3 (rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985) 718. This paragraph derives from the *OPC Justification Report*, fn. 290, p. 144.

47. J. Wesley White, "The Denial of the Imputation of the Active of Christ: Piscator on Justification," in *The Confessional Presbyterian* 3 (2007) 147–154. This article demonstrates conclusively that Shepherd's

if Westminster did not explicitly affirm the IAOC, its theology as a whole tracks quite differently from Shepherd and company's and cannot be appealed to for any support for them.⁴⁸

Shepherd, in fine, denies the two-covenant approach that has Christ doing for us in the covenant of grace what Adam failed to do in the covenant of works. Shepherd's denial of Christ's keeping the law for us—which supporters of the IAOC contend he did *not* simply for himself, to qualify as our spotless sacrifice—together with his denial of the two-covenant framework (to which IAOC is foundational), means that Shepherd's system of doctrine is different than the one contained in the Westminster Standards. Shepherd, not unlike some others in the history of the Reformed church, has both affirmed the Westminster Confession (and claimed its support in its alleged refusal to affirm the IAOC) and, at the same time, called for its revision, particularly in terms of it teaching what he calls a works-merit paradigm.⁴⁹ But if the Westminster Standards present us with such a paradigm, one would not think them worthy of affirmation (even as we view Tridentine doctrine), but foundationally flawed. Since these Standards, together with the other Reformed Standards, shape and define what is properly called the Reformed faith, to disagree with them at such a fundamental level is not to think them in need of minor revision but to think them unworthy of subscription. Whatever such a departure from the Standards entails, it certainly means that those departing are not Reformed, whatever it is that they may be.

In addition to all the foregoing considerations, it might here be helpful to pay some attention to questions of constitutional interpretation as pertains to the affirmation of the IAOC. It is a commonplace in interpreting and applying constitutional law—whether the Westminster Confession as part of the constitution of the Presbyterian Church or the U.S. Constitution as part of American jurisprudence—that the interpretive process involves attention to the original intent of the bodies that drafted and adopted the particular laws at issue as well as the words themselves contained in the laws. As noted in the OPC Report of the Committee on Creation Views: “In ecclesiastical law, as in all constitutional law, judicatories that interpret the constitution should pay the most careful attention to the words of the constitution itself. The words drafted and adopted by the framers serve as the form of unity and bind the church together in its doctrine. The interpretation that the church as a whole has of the constitution has come to be referred to by the technical term *animus imponentis*

(which term is more fully defined below). The *animus* of the church, however, is shaped not only by the words of the constitution itself but also by the church studying and giving heed to what the original intent of those who framed the confession or its amendments was. Original intent, like *animus imponentis*, is also a technical term and refers to what the framers of a document, whether it is a civil or ecclesiastical constitution, had in mind when they wrote and adopted the constitution.”⁵⁰

In short, original intent means what the body that drafted the constitutional document(s) in question meant in adopting the particular language that it did. This is the term to be preferred over authorial intent since most constitutional documents are drafted and adopted by deliberative assemblies of some sort. The Westminster Assembly of Divines was certainly a deliberative body. The question then becomes, “How is the original intent of the Westminster Divines on any given issue to be ascertained?” Of course, in reading the Confession and Catechisms, a primary emphasis must always be placed on the words themselves: what do these particular words mean? But the words are not to be read out of context and the concern for original intent always involves a concern that whatever reading is given to any particular part of the Confession or Catechisms should be a reading in keeping with the intention of those who wrote the words in the first place. There are a number of ways that one might go about seeking to ascertain

redefining of faith as faithfulness means that works has been imported into it and thus his system is not even the same as other deniers of the IAOC, like Piscator, who retained traditional Reformed definitions of faith alone. See also White's key article in this regard, “Saying ‘Justification by Faith Alone’ Isn't Enough,” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 17 (2006) 256–266.

48. An interesting further piece of evidence is that, unlike Norman Shepherd, prime IAOC opponent Thomas Gataker argued that while “faith justifies a man, works justify faith” (*fides justificat hominem, opera justificant fidem*), clearly distinguishing faith from that which demonstrates it and shows it to be true, namely works. Further that Gataker (and Vines), though denying the IAOC, take different approaches from Shepherd and Federal Vision allies in their treatment of justification can be seen in all the recorded remarks that they made in debate (as in Van Dixhoorn, vs. 2–3, *Lightfoot's Journal*, 46–87, and *Minutes*, 11–77) and in a work like Gataker's on justification, *An Antidote Against Error, concerning Justification* (London: Henry Brome, 1670).

49. Both in his article, “Justification by Works in Reformed Theology,” in *Backbone of the Bible* (esp. pp. 115–17) and in his on-line critique of the *OPC Justification Report*, Shepherd has argued against the idea of the covenant of works (as confessed in WCF 7), regarding it as part of the “works-merit paradigm” and thus calling for revision of the Confession of Faith.

50. *Minutes of the Seventy-First General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (Willow Grove, Pa.: OPC, 2004) 257–258.

the original intent of the members of the Westminster Assembly: through writings of the Divines (sermons, treatises, letters, etc.),⁵¹ through the minutes of the Assembly, through journals (like Lightfoot's), and through observations of contemporaries about the Assembly's work. Original intent and a reading of the words as to their *prima facie* meaning is never opposed to one another in sound constitutional interpretation. Rather, original intent simply helps provide the proper *Sitz-im-Leben* in which to read the text in a fashion that is not de-contextualized but faithful to the meaning of those who wrote and adopted it.

Original intent, however, is not the only matter of concern in constitutional interpretation: *animus imponentis* is also at issue. Given the importance of *animus imponentis* as a whole for ecclesiastical law, an appendix to this essay sets forth and treats the concept more fully. Perhaps it will suffice for now to note that *animus imponentis* (meaning, "the intention of the imposing body") means that not only the original intent of the framers of the Westminster Assembly (or of the framers of any subsequent amendments) is to be considered in our ecclesiastical assemblies, but also the way in which those assemblies themselves understood the constitution. This is particularly relevant when dealing with the Westminster Confession and Catechisms since they were not the product of an ecclesiastical judicatory but were instead the product of a body that was advisory to the English Parliament. As such, the intention of the

Scottish Church in adopting the Westminster Standards (in 1645–1648)⁵² is, for that church, as important (if not more so) than the intention of the Westminster Divines. Similarly, then, the *animus imponentis* is significant for the Presbyterian Church in the colonies when it passed the Adopting Act of 1729 or when the OPC adopted the form of the Westminster Standards that it did at the Second GA of the OPC in November 1936. Some might even regard such adopting acts by ecclesiastical judicatories as savoring more of an original intent situation than an *animus imponentis* one. Regardless of which is correct, the point remains that in confessional hermeneutics significant consideration must be given to acts of church judicatories subsequent to the adoption of the Westminster Standards.

What was the original intent of Westminster in regard to the question of affirming the IAOC? This has been the main focus of this essay. One might argue (as this writer has in this essay) that, when the question was directly engaged, the Assembly affirmed the IAOC (in 1643) and it never subsequently modified its position but reaffirmed it in several important places throughout the Confession and Catechisms. Even if, however, as some speculate, the Assembly "pulled its punches" in 1645/6 by not using the word "whole" in chapter 11 (on justification) in the WCF, such a position takes only original intent into account. But *animus imponentis* must also be taken into account, particularly when we consider the Westminster Standards are to operate as constitutional documents within our judicatories, serving as the doctrinal standards to which Presbyterian churches bind themselves and to which they hold their office-bearers doctrinally accountable. How have the churches that have adopted the Westminster Standards as part of their own constitutions understood the issue of the affirmation of the IAOC? Does the Scottish Church, or the OPC, or the PCA, read the Standards to affirm the IAOC? How is such to be gathered? How are we, in other words, to ascertain what the mind of the imposing body—the Presbyterian churches of which we are a part and in which many of us serve as office-bearers—is regarding the IAOC?

Part of what may go into the formation of the church's *animus imponentis* is the work of her leading theologians. It is the case that the theological works that have been perhaps the most formative in the Presbyterian Church (such as the systematic theologies of Francis Turretin in the 17th century and Charles Hodge in the 19th century)⁵³ have strongly affirmed the IAOC, as did James Buchanan in his lectures in 19th century Scotland⁵⁴ and a dying J. Gresham Machen (helping shape

51. See for instance David Hall's analysis why one work not by the Assembly may serve as commentary on the Assembly's intent. David W. Hall, "The Original Intent of Westminster," in *Jus Divinum Regiminis Ecclesiastici: or The Divine Right of Church Government originally asserted by the Ministers of Sion College, London, December 1646* (Dallas, Tex.: Naphtali Press, 1995) x–xxxviii.

52. McKay, 240–241, notes that the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland found the Confession to be "most agreeable to the Word of God, and in nothing contrary to the received doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of this Kirk." The Scottish General Assembly did make two qualifications (having to do with ecclesiastical officers and assemblies and the power of civil magistrates to call such), the point here being that the Confession bore authority in the Scottish church only when and as that church adopted it as her confession. So too with the American Church in 1729 and 1788/89 (at the first GA) and following, as particular Presbyterian denominations had occasion to come into being (for which, see D.G. Hart and John R. Muether, *Seeking a Better Country: 300 Years of American Presbyterianism* [Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2007]).

53. Francis Turretin, *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae* (3 parts, Geneva, 1679–1685), *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. George Musgrave Giger, and James T. Dennison (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Pub, 1992–1997); Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (New York: Scribner's, 1871).

54. James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification: an Outline of Its*

the *animus* of the OPC).⁵⁵ By itself, this is not decisive, of course. These theologians are not the Standards. It is not until recent times, however, that any noted confessional theologians have departed from an affirmation of the IAOC. More decisive would be testimonies (as in the Scottish tradition) or study committee reports about the matter. The latter have not been produced until recently and it is widely known that both the PCA and OPC committees that addressed the broader question of justification affirmed the IAOC. A judicial case would be a helpful part of gathering the church's *animus* on the matter but this writer is aware of no judicial cases in the history of Presbyterianism that have had directly at issue whether or not the accused affirmed the IAOC.

A parallel case might help us with this IAOC case. It has become evident to careful students of the Assembly in recent years that there was some sympathy on the part of a few Divines at Westminster for Amyraldianism (See fn. 21, above), which is to say that a few Divines might have been "four-point Calvinists," unwilling to affirm definite, or limited atonement, preferring a hypothetical universalism instead. Several scholars have reflected on how this might have impacted some of the debates and have noted that, unlike the Synod of Dort, the Westminster Assembly did not affirm limited atonement in explicit terms. This is not to suggest that the Assembly adopted any expressions that would in any way mitigate against limited atonement or that the work of the Assembly, taken in the integrity of its whole expression, failed to affirm the essentials of the doctrine of limited atonement. It is simply to say that the Westminster Standards can be argued to lack an explicit statement affirming limited atonement. Though the Assembly may, arguably, have slightly pulled its punches on the issue of limited atonement, few if any presbyters in our confessional Presbyterian churches would permit someone who denied limited atonement to be an office-bearer, and certainly not a minister, in our churches. Here is a clear case in which not simply original intent is at issue but also *animus imponentis*.⁵⁶ To be concrete, judicatories in both the PCA and OPC read the Westminster Standards in a way that requires the affirmation of limited atonement even though the original intent may not be perfectly clear on the matter. Similarly, the recent reports of committees erected by such bodies also testify that, in addition simply to considering the original intent of the Westminster Assembly or of our churches in adopting the Standards, an *animus* has developed in the church that reads our standards to require the affirmation of the IAOC, even as our churches, particularly through their presbyteries,

routinely require the affirmation of the doctrine of limited atonement.

Three things, in summary (in addition to the observations immediately above on original intent and *animus imponentis*), seemed to be missed by those who contend that since the Westminster Assembly did not in 1645/6 affirm the IAOC the way that it did in 1643 the church cannot, without amending those symbols, require her office-bearers to affirm the IAOC. First, as we have sought to show above, simply because the specific language used early in the Assembly to affirm the IAOC does not appear later in the Assembly (in the final form of what we now call the Westminster Standards) does not mean that one should infer that the Assembly did not affirm (in a host of ways) the IAOC. Second, Westminster was not a court of the church and did not have the power to exclude any of her members who differed from her as do our church courts (witness the debate about church government which did not lead to the exclusion of the Independents). This is how a Gataker could have his position ruled out but still continue in the Assembly, which was not a body that could act on its own authority but was consultative with Parliament. And thirdly, even if the Westminster Standards could be shown to allow for a denial of the IAOC, it is not the case that present-day deniers would stop at a mere denial of the IAOC but would have problems with the whole theological scheme of Westminster of which the IAOC is merely an important plank.

As to this third point, it needs to be noted that one cannot simply pluck a position from a sound writer and do something entirely different with it. Shepherd and James Jordan, for example, both deny the covenant of works and cite John Murray in defense of such a denial (*OPC Justification Report*, 117–118).⁵⁷ While Murray did deny the covenant of works as such, the Adamic

History in the Church, and of Its Exposition from Scripture. With Special Reference to Recent Attacks on the Theology of the Reformation. The Second Series of the 'Cunningham Lectures' (Edinburgh: T&T Clark..., 1867).

55. Ned B. Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir* (Banner of Truth, 1977) 508; cf. Iain H. Murray, "Life of John Murray," in *Collected Writings of John Murray*, volume 3, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982) 64.

56. J.V. Fesko, in "The Days of Creation and Confession Subscription in the OPC," *Westminster Theological Journal* 63 (2001) 235–249, argues along similar lines, contending that we must take proper account of the *animus imponentis* at a number of key points in our constitutional interpretation, though he can tend to pit it against original intent at times, which this writer does not find the most careful use of the concept (see the appendix of this essay).

57. "The Adamic Administration," in *The Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977) 47–59.

Administration that he affirmed instead, together with his view on covenant not being in play until the covenant of grace was inaugurated, his denial does not amount to the same thing as a mono-covenantalism that fails properly to distinguish the dynamics of the pre-fall and post-fall world and thus mixes law and gospel in a confused and unhelpful way. All this is to say that even if one remains convinced that the Westminster Assembly failed, even implicitly, to affirm the IAOC, the schema put forward by Shepherd, Jordan, and others does not track with the Westminster Standards. Shepherd and company are doing theology on a different trajectory than the classic covenantal theology found in the Westminster Standards and which, for confessional Presbyterians, continues to embody the fullest and clearest expression of the faith once for all delivered to the saints. It is the church, after all, in ascertaining the original intent of the drafters and/or the adopters of her doctrinal standards and in expressing her *animus* thereupon, who polices her own standards and has properly concluded that those who deny the IAOC are wanting as Reformed theologians.⁵⁸ The church, this essay would urge, is warranted in such a conclusion, as no case can effectively be made that the Westminster Standards were crafted in such a way as to allow men to deny the IAOC and still be regarded as confessional.

APPENDIX:

ANIMUS IMponentis FROM THE OPC REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CREATION VIEWS⁵⁹

The Latin phrase *animus imponentis* is employed in constitutional law. According to *Black's Law Dictionary*,⁶⁰ "*animus*" (Latin for "soul" or "mind"⁶¹) when

58. With the recent meeting of the RPCNA Synod (2008), this means that the Covenanters have now joined the OPC, PCA, RCUS, OCRC, and the URCNA either in condemning Federal Vision and New Perspectives on Paul errors or in adopting statements that reaffirm and highlight confessional statements that militate against positions of at least some supporters of Federal Vision and the New Perspectives. In addition several seminaries have adopted statements opposing these errors, the fullest being that of Mid-America Reformed Seminary, *Doctrinal Testimony Regarding Recent Errors* (Dyer, Ind.: Mid-America, 2007).

59. *Minutes of the Seventy-First General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, 259–261. Reproduced with permission of the Office of the Stated Clerk of the OPC.

60. *Black's Law Dictionary*, Sixth edition (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing, 1990) 87.

61. *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1997) 134.

62. *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 849.

used at law, particularly constitutional law, often indicates "intention," and is best translated as such. Inasmuch as "*imponentis*" means "the imposers,"⁶² or, in this case, "the imposing body," the *animus imponentis* would refer to the intention of the imposing body. We employ the term *animus imponentis* in ecclesiastical law then as a way of highlighting that in church law, as in civil law, attention must be paid not only to the actual words of the constitution itself but also to the intention of the body that would interpret that constitution.

The concept of *animus imponentis* finds further significance in that the church is not only the authoritative interpreter of its constitution but that it imposes on its members the oaths and vows that they take to maintain and defend that constitution. *Animus imponentis* means, in this respect, that when an officer in the church subscribes to the constitution of the church, he does so with the explicit understanding that the valid intention as to its meaning is that of the church as a whole and not merely his own private opinion.

So how is the intention of the church to be gathered? Most obviously, the meaning of the constitution resides in the words themselves. The intention of the church, then, is to be gathered by a careful reading of precisely what she has stated in her Standards. The Standards of the church are already themselves an interpretation of the Scriptures, a "saying together" what the Bible itself teaches in the various loci of the theological encyclopedia. To be sure the Standards themselves must be interpreted but not in the same way that the Scriptures must be interpreted. The Scriptures, for instance, do not employ technical theological language in the same way that the Standards do. This is because the constitution of the church, containing, as it does, the secondary (in the Confession and Catechisms) and tertiary (in the Book of Church Order) standards, are the church's agreed-upon interpretation of the Scriptures. They must clearly set forth what the church believes.

The Standards are by their very nature a theological formulation, laid out in a logical, orderly fashion amenable to quick reference, summarizing the Bible's major teachings. This is to say that, presumably, wherever the Standards address an issue they do so with maximal clarity. While there may be things in Paul, as well as other places in Scripture, that are "hard to understand" (2 Peter 3:16), it is assumed that the Standards do not, in the main, contain such obscurities. It is particularly the province, if not to say the burden, of the Standards to teach doctrine with clarity and precision, since they serve as the church's interpretation of the Word of God on certain key issues.

We must not imagine, though, that we only interpret the Scriptures and not the Standards. While it is true that the Standards ought always to serve to clarify what we confess together the Bible teaches, we still have to interpret the Standards. That this interpretation should not be purely private but take into account how the church as a whole reads its Standards is the concern of *animus imponentis*. That having been said, it is important as well to assert that the church ought to interpret her Standards consonant with the meaning intended at its adoption (or the adoption/modification of any part of it), as best as that can be ascertained. It is inimical to constitutional government for the church to interpret her constitution in any way that is clearly at variance with its own words and the original intention of the framers/adopters. To disregard the Standards' clear statement about a particular doctrine and to believe otherwise in spite of what is confessed is the mark of a declining, if not to say, an apostatizing church.

When the church comes to believe that the Scriptures teach something other than what she has confessed the Scriptures to teach, integrity demands she amend her constitution in the manner that the constitution itself prescribes for its own amendment. For the church to refuse to amend her constitution to reflect her current understanding but instead to read it clearly at variance with its plain meaning is to render the concept of the church as a confessing church meaningless. All this is to say that the concept of *animus imponentis* may not be employed so as to make a wax nose of the Standards and to pit the church's interpretation of the Standards against the plain words of the Standards itself, particularly inasmuch as the Standards generally are thought to contain but few obscurities. Rather, *animus imponentis*, rightly understood and employed, means simply that the church as a whole in its integrity interprets its own constitution and that such interpretation, and not those of private individuals or lesser judicatories, is decisive.

The concept, then, of *animus imponentis*, is significant because it insures confessional integrity. It means that the church can read and understand its own confession and it is that shared corporate meaning that binds the church together. Thus when one subscribes to the Standards, or takes his ordination vows to uphold the Constitution of the OPC, he does so explicitly affirming the constitution as understood by the church as a whole. It is not one's own interpretation or even that of a particular presbytery that is to prevail but the *animus imponentis*, the intention of the church as a whole, which church as a whole imposes the oaths and vows through its particular representatives. So the *animus imponentis* means that

one is to understand the Standards in the sense of the words as commonly understood in the church.

The Standards are not then to be understood in some wooden literal fashion that a punctilious reading by a particular candidate or judicatory might yield. Similarly, the Standards are not to be given an overly elastic loose reading that a particular candidate or presbytery might hold. In the former instance, a novitiate, for instance, might not understand the texture that a particular passage in the Standards has assumed as the church has read them and might read them in an idiosyncratic, and rather wooden, fashion. In the latter instance, a candidate might believe that he can subscribe to the Standards taking the words thereof to mean whatever he chooses to mean by them in his own private counsels. The concept of *animus imponentis* would stand over against both approaches and would indicate that the Standards are to be subscribed to in the manner in which the church understands them, as best as that can be grasped.

Another way of putting it is that the Standards are to be subscribed *ex animo*⁶³ and not with equivocation or mental reservation.⁶⁴ To do otherwise, as Hodge rightly observes in his discussion of *animus imponentis*, "shocks the common sense and the common honesty of men."⁶⁵ One might well argue, then, that inasmuch as *animus imponentis* serves as a check for making the Standards mean whatever the individual candidate or judicatory

Continued on Page 311.

63. "From the soul, or heart." Ecclesiastical oaths have sometimes been explicitly administered with the requirement of an *ex animo* affirmation for the very purpose of making it clear that the oath is to be taken in full sincerity and with integrity.

64. WCF 22.4: "An oath is to be taken in the plain and common sense of the words, without equivocation, or mental reservation." The concept of *animus imponentis* is adduced in the support and defense of this principle.

65. Charles Hodge, *The Church and its Polity* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1879) 318: "It is no less plain that the candidate has no right to put his own sense upon the words propounded to him. He has no right to select from all possible meanings which the words may bear, that particular sense which suits his purpose, or which, he thinks, will save his conscience. It is well known that this course has been openly advocated, not only by the Jesuits, but by men of this generation, in this country and in Europe. The 'chemistry of thought,' it is said, can make all creeds alike. Men have boasted that they could sign any creed.... Professor Newman, just before his open apostasy, published a tract in which he defended his right to be in the English Church while holding the doctrines of the Church of Rome. He claimed for himself and others the privilege of signing the Thirty-nine articles in a 'non-natural sense;' that is, in the sense which he chose to put upon the words." Hodge's entire argument here is that the notion of *animus imponentis* safeguards the integrity of the Standards and does not allow one to put whatever construction he may choose upon its words.