Vindiciae Legis
A Vindication
of the
Morall Law
and the Covenants

Anthony Burgess
Bibliographical Information

Author: Anthony Burgess (d. 1664).


Imprint: London: printed by James Young, for Thomas Underhill, at the signe of the Bible in Wood-street, 1647.

Date: 1647.


Note: This second edition augments the first edition with “an additionall lecture” inserted as a supplemental signature between Y₁ and Y₂.


Copy source: From the private collection of Chad Van Dixhoorn.
This series is a research tool providing scholars with reproductions of works by the Westminster Assembly and its members.

During the years 1643 to 1648, the Westminster Assembly published over twenty-five documents, most notably the Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and Directories for Public Worship and Church Government. The Westminster Assembly Facsimiles series seeks to provide not only access to early editions of these important texts, but also to the published works of the Assembly members themselves. Their writings tell stories of the Assembly, portray the theological landscape of the time, and reveal the intellectual breadth of the Assembly members.

Viewed collectively, the publishing career of the Assembly men stretched a century, from the 1590s to the 1690s, and encompassed over 1,500 sermons, treatises, commentaries, and other writings. The Westminster Assembly Facsimiles series presents this diverse cross section of published works, with subjects ranging from theology, ecclesiology, and post-Reformation polemics, to the activities of Parliament and the events of the Civil War. The result is a unique view into a complex era, particularly the religiously and politically volatile 1640s, when nearly seven hundred works were published by Assembly members.

Image quality and text legibility may vary, but every reasonable effort is made to provide an accurate and readable reproduction of each original volume. These facsimiles afford an advantage over nineteenth-century and more modern reprints, which often contain unacknowledged textual editing that limits their academic value.

All volumes in the Westminster Assembly Facsimiles series are from private libraries and institutions which have permitted the Westminster Assembly Project to digitize their relevant texts. Continued growth of the series depends on an expanding partnership of individual and institutional libraries permitting digitization of their collections to create an effective library database. Our texts may be downloaded as digital facsimiles or purchased in traditional soft and hardcover bindings for ease of reference.

John Bower
Chad Van Dixhoorn
In the months preceding June 1646, the “President and Fellowes of Sion Colledge London” considered who they might choose to publicize their concerns over the renewal of the “Antinomian Errours of these times.” This being one of the most celebrated and popular theological disputes of their day, it would take a person of great learning, judicious character, a thorough knowledge of the relevant issues, as well as a keen understanding of Scripture and a proven ability to communicate with precision the essence of their concerns. It was to Anthony Burgess that they turned with the hope that “the Kingdome, as [well as] this City, may have the benefit of those his learned labours.”

Although the name of Anthony Burgess is largely lost to modern readers and students of the Westminster Confession of Faith, he was well known among his peers at the Westminster Assembly. His popular respect among the Divines is evidenced by the frequency with which he was called upon to preach at special occasions before Parliament. A further testimony


   - Sept. 27, 1643—Monthly fast, “The difficulty of, and encouragements to a reformation”
   - Nov. 5, 1644—Thanksgiving for Deliverance of Newcastle and Tinmuth Castle
   - Powder Plot Anniversary, “Romes cruelty & apostacie”
   - Aug. 27, 1645—Monthly fast, “The reformation of the Church”
   - Feb. 25, 1646—Monthly fast, “Publick affections, pressed in a sermon”
   - Nov. 24, 1647—Monthly fast
   - May 31, 1648 (?)—Monthly fast
   - Sept. 12, 1648 (?)—Humiliation for Blessing on Treaty with King

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, dates in England are still given in Old Style with the first of the year beginning on March 25, not January 1. Publication dates, as elsewhere in this series, are given as they appear on the printed edition of texts. In the text and notes of this introduction, however, they are given in New Style. For a more detailed explanation of early modern English dates, see Gerald Bray, ed., *Documents of the English Reformation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 14.
to the esteem of his peers was their earnest desire for him “to publish in print his elaborate and judicious Lectures upon the Law,” which are now being made available to us in this facsimile.³

Anthony Burgess was the son of a schoolmaster at Watford in Hertfordshire, England, where Cornelius Burges (no relation) was vicar from 1613 until around 1627.⁴ Although Warwickshire gentry seem to have had a preference for Oxford, Burgess matriculated in St. John’s College, Cambridge.⁵ He completed his bachelor of arts degree in 1627, one year after the Duke of Buckingham, an Arminian, was seated as chancellor of the university, and all predestinarian teaching was forbidden.⁶ Having completed his course of undergraduate studies at St. John’s in 1627, Burgess proceeded to take his master of arts degree in 1630, having transferred to Emmanuel, a college more favored by the godly. Burgess remained at Emmanuel as a fellow of the college until January 13, 1635, at which time he was elected curate and lecturer to the parish church of St. Mary Magdalen, Milk Street, London. Burgess held that position for only a month, apparently unable to obtain a preaching license.⁷ He then received the living of Holy Trinity Church in Sutton Coldfield, Warwickshire, where he established his godly reputation as a preacher and theologian.

With the outbreak of civil war, Burgess was forced to flee with others to Coventry for safety in October of 1642.⁸ While in Coventry he met with

³. Burgess, Vindiciæ legis, from the foreword.
⁸. It may have been here that he stayed with Lady Scudamore, to whom he writes in the “Epistle Dedicatorie” of Vindiciæ Legis. There he acknowledges the “manifold favours which your Ladiship hath plentifully vouchsafed to me and mine.” (See the unpublished history of Holy Trinity Church: Norman Gramville Evans, “An Investigation of Holy Trinity Parish Church, Sutton Coldfield” (1983–1992), 141, 161). The rigors of his ministry are illustrated in the parish records. Over the course of his twenty-seven year incumbency (though there are gaps in the records due to the civil unrest during his ministry, and no record of who performed these duties in his absence), the church register indicates that 804 people were christened, there were 155 marriages, and 616
about thirty other ministers who found themselves in a similar plight, including in their company the larger-than-life figure of Richard Baxter. There among the refugees Burgess again distinguished himself as a man of solid learning and pastoral sensibilities. Because of his distinguished reputation Burgess was, in 1643, appointed as one of two Warwickshire delegates to the gathering of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster Abbey in London, Richard Vines being the other.

On January 25, 1645, he was elected vicar of the Guildhall church of St. Lawrence Jewry, where his lectures on the law would eventually be delivered. The timing for the call and delivery of these lectures is significant. Burgess delivered these lectures in the midst of the Assembly's discussion and debates regarding the law of God, and *Vindiciae Legis* provides exegetical and theological rational, consonant with the teaching of chapter XIX of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

In the midst of much contemporary confusion and misunderstanding that surrounds this most important loci, Burgess brings us right back into the thick of the discussion and expounds for us the biblical-theological logic typical of the Assembly members. The Westminster Confession is just that—a confession. It does not purport to give us more than conclusions drawn from a process—a process which we are able, in part, to observe through one of its principal architects.


11. The foreword preceding the title page of *Vindiciae Legis* calling for the publication of Burgess’s lectures is dated June 11, 1646, and this is a significant clue to understanding its historical milieu. It is clear that the lectures were delivered some time in the months preceding June of 1646. This is important because we also know that on November 18, 1645, the writing of the section on the law for the Confession of Faith was referred to the third committee, of which Anthony Burgess was a member. A report on the law was then made to the plenary session by John Wincop on January 1, 1646, and debates followed on January 7, 9, 12, 13, 29, and February 2 and 9, 1646. The minutes also tell us that on January 12 that year a special committee was established to consider "the meaning of the description of ceremonial and judicial" Alex F. Mitchell and John Struthers, eds., *The Minutes of the Sessions of the Westminster Assembly of Divines* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1874), 178. It was subsequently debated in Grand Committee August 21–31 and in the Assembly September 1, 2, 3, 4, 15, 17 and passed September 25, 1646. (See Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1931], 112.)
In his own preface to the work, Burgess explains that his polemical concerns would be addressed in three successive stages. He planned to consider the law as it was given to Adam, then “as promulgated by Moses to the people of Israel” and finally in relationship to the gospel of the New Testament.12 Along the way Burgess addresses a number of critical issues of contemporary interest including natural law, the covenant of works, the nature of the Mosaic covenant, and the nature of the relationship between the law and the gospel.

As the privileged reader will discover in these pages, the development of the doctrine of the law and the covenants was worked out by the careful exegesis of particular texts, including detailed attention to grammatical and lexical features of the text, Here too readers will find thoughtful dialogue with the catholic theology of the Western church, a sophisticated interaction with contemporary interpretive traditions, an eye to ecclesiastical concerns, and a sensitivity to the progress of revelation leading to its culmination in the person and work of Jesus Christ—all presented in scholastic form.

*Vindiciae Legis* is a masterful example of the best of what Protestant Scholasticism produced for the church of Jesus Christ. It is exemplary of theology produced by the church with an eye to the concerns of the church. The patient reader will be richly rewarded.

Stephen J. Casselli

---

II°. Junii, 1646.

We the President and Fellowes of Sion Colledge London, earnestly desire Master Anthony Burgess to publish in print his elaborate and judicious Lectures upon the Law and the Covenants against the Antinomian Errors of these times, which at our entreaty he hath preached, (and for which wee give him most hearty thanks) that so as well the Kingdome, as this City, may have the benefit of those his learned labours.

Dated at Sion Colledge the 11th of June, 1646. at a general meeting of the Ministers of London there.

Arthur Jackson President, in the name and by the appointment of the rest.
VINDICÆ LEGIS:
OR,
A Vindication of the
MORALL LAW
AND
THE COVENANTS,
From the Errors of Papists, Arminians, Socinians, and more especially, Antinomians.

In XXX Lectures, preached at Laurence-Fury, London.
The second Edition corrected and augmented.

By Anthony Burgess, Preacher of Gods Word.

LONDON,
Printed by James Young, for Thomas Underhill, at the Signe of the Bible in Wood-street. 1647.
TO THE
Truly pious and worthily honoured Lady, the
Lady RUTH SCUDAMORE.

Honoured Madam,

Have observed your Ladyship carresall
in two things: to improve the duty
commanded in the Law, and to embrace
the promise tendered in the Gospel; the
former hath been a spurre to holinesse,
the latter a curb to unbelief. The con-
sideration of this (together with the remembrance of
those manifold favours which your Ladyship hath plenti-
fully vouchsafed to me and mine) hath provoked me to de-
dicate this Treatise unto you, which although it hath much
controversall matter in it, yet it is not without many pra-
thetical Directions and Consolations. It hath been Gods
goodnesse unto you, that although in these times of calami-
ties your portion hath been one of the afflictions in Paul's
A Catalogue,
The Epistle Dedicatio.

Catalogue, without settled abroad; yet God hath left your minde fixed and immovable in the truth, being enabled to magnifie Grace in the highest manner, out of the reall sense of your necessity and unworthiness, yet to avoid Antinomianisme: and on the other side, to be punctual and exact in the duties of mortification and holiness; yet to take heed of Pharisaical Popery. And indeed, this is the right sense, when we are so diligent in working out our salvation with feare and trembling, as if there were no grace to justifie; and yet so resting and believing in the grace of Christ, as if no good thing had been done by us.

Madam, goe on with the assistance of God, and account the things of grace more excellent then the things of parts; and while others rejoice in opinions, and new notions about faith and holiness, doe you delight in the things themselves. The Lord keep his best wine for you in the later end of your age, and giue you to see the fruit of your Prayers, a settled reformation in the Church, that so (when your time shall come) you may depart in peace, feeling much of the power and love of God living, and much more of them, dying.

Septemb.11.1646.

Madam, this is the prayer of your Ladisships humble servant in the Lord,

Anthony Burgess.