

The
Solemn League
and
Covenant,
1643.

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Addresses Delivered
at the
Tercentenary Celebration,
Belfast, 1943.

A good many years ago we read "The Environment of Early Christianity" by Prof. Angus. After discussing the Social and Moral and, in part, the Religious Conditions of the Graeco-Roman world of that day, the author quotes the following lines as summing up the position :

"On that hard Pagan world disgust
And secret loathing fell :
Deep weariness and sated lust
Made human life a hell.
In his cool hall, with haggard eyes
The Roman noble lay ;
He drove abroad in furious guise
Along the Appian way,
He made a feast, drank fierce and fast,
And crowned his hair with flowers—
No easier nor no quicker passed
The impracticable hours."

Then he proceeds: "Side by side with this *taedium* we find a deep-seated pessimism, from which only the Jew escaped. The gay light-hearted Greek, just because he was so sensitive to joy, was early overtaken by a melancholy which gradually deepened into unrelieved gloom Nowhere do we find despair expressed so pathetically and so sublimely as in Greek literature The Romans were infected by Greece with pessimism as with rationalism and scepticism. We find among the Roman writers a large proportion of pessimists who are disgusted with the present, and see no hope for the future Livy says, 'we can neither cure nor endure our vices'." (p. 72).

We turn now to "The Early Days of Christianity," by Canon Farrar, and we read; "The epoch which witnessed the early growth of Christianity was an epoch of which the horror and the degradation have rarely been equalled, and perhaps never exceeded, in the annals of mankind. Its wickedness, was stamped upon its coinage, cut on its gems, painted upon its chamber walls, sown broad-cast over the pages of its poets, satirists and historians." "I need but make a passing allusion to its enormous wealth; its unbounded self-indulgence; its coarse and tasteless luxury; its greedy avarice; its sense of insecurity and terror; its weariness; its strange extravagances alike of infidelity and superstition." And as if even his vigorous and graphic prose could not do justice to the terrible state of human society he quotes the lines already given. Were the persons thus described 'godless villains' or 'sons of the Eternal Father'?

What we wish to call attention to is the fact stated by Prof. Angus that the Jew alone escaped the grip of the pessimism and despair which held fast the Greek and Roman peoples. We are reminded of Paul's words to the Ephesians,

"Wherefore remember that ye being in time past Gentiles . . . were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." (Eph. ii. 11, 12). The Jew with his burdensome sense of sin and his high thought of God the Creator was the optimist of the age; the Greek stressing the dignity of man, conceiving Deity as all but on man's level, was smitten with the darkest pessimism. "There were," says Prof. Angus, "two concurrent views of man which we may term the Hebrew and the Greek; the former exalted God, the latter man. Hebrew religion was like all true religion, theocentric; Greek culture anthropocentric The sense of sin was congenial to the one temperament, as that of man's native dignity to the other: the one needed grace, the other believed in merit." Do the words not answer to the contrast between the Westminster Divines and their defamers? Again we quote Prof. Angus of twenty years ago, "To the Hebrew, man's spiritual constitution was weakened by pre-natal sin and poisoned by actual guilt; he is a helpless creature before Divine justice, incapable of saving himself. The Greek knew no original sin; he was almost unconscious of the ravages of moral evil in his nature; he believed he was his own saviour by exercising, after the illumination of wisdom, his personal will-power." (Environment of Erly. Chrity. pp. 83-84). The Westminster Divines were not pessimists; like the Hebrews of old they had a deep sense of man's sin, they realised from what height man had fallen, but they had hope, strong unquenchable hope, that through the mercy of God believing man would be lifted to a still higher level. They were the optimists of their day.

When we stand before the broken walls of an ancient castle, we may have a sense, at once, of glory and ruin. The massive remains tell of the castle's former magnificence while the obvious decay induces a feeling of sadness. But as we gaze, there springs up instinctively the thought that, given the mind that planned and the hands that executed the work, we could see it rise again in all its original splendour. The Westminster Divines dwelt in sad contemplation upon God's "living temple," man, in ruin; they noted this and that particular suggestive of former greatness, but now illustrating the effects of sin, and their hearts clung to the ruin with tender interest and affection. They might have appropriated the language of the Psalmist in reference to the beloved city in its fallen state, "Thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof." Their picture of ruin is but a measure of their conception of the former dignity of man; and our power to appreciate the terrible effects of sin is the

FOREWORD.

The year 1943 was notable for the number of Anniversaries which were of special interest to Presbyterians everywhere, and, in particular, to Reformed Presbyterians. It marked the Centenary of the Disruption of 1843; the Bi-centenary of the Constitution of the Reformed Presbytery in 1743, the beginning of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland as a separate entity; and the three-hundredth anniversary of two events in 1643, the convoking of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, and the swearing of the Solemn League and Covenant. Our hope that 1943 would continue a notable sequence and be known as the year of liberation has not been realised, but it has provided a definite turning of the tide of battle in our favour.

Dr. Hetherington, in his History of the Church of Scotland, says of the Solemn League and Covenant, that it is a document, "the noblest, in its essential nature and principles, of all that are recorded among the international transactions of the world." It was inevitable then that the Tercentenary of such an event should be deemed worthy of some celebration by Covenanters everywhere. The Tercentenary of the National Covenant of 1638 had been suitably and splendidly celebrated in Scotland in 1938 by a Convention of the three Covenanting Churches. A similar Convention in 1943 might have been discussed if war conditions had not made the project impossible. Instead it was decided that the three sister-churches should observe the event separately. The day on which the Covenant was actually signed in St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, London, was the 25th September. For various reasons, a commemoration at that season was deemed unsuitable, and so the Tercentenary was celebrated during the 1943 meeting of Synod.

Four topics were chosen, and able and competent speakers were secured to deal with them. Two of these, Rev. Prof. McFarlane and Rev. A. Gilmour, belong to our own Irish Church, and are among its best-known and respected ministers; and two came from Scotland. One of these, Rev. A. C. Gregg, is as well-known in Ireland where he was nurtured, as he is in Scotland. The other, Dr. Scott Pearson, has but lately come from Scotland to occupy and adorn the Chair of Church History in the Presbyterian College, Belfast.

measure of our kinship with God, and the measure, too, of our faith in God's mercy and will to save. The Hebrew Psalmist, under an overwhelming sense of sin, wrote, "If Thou, Lord shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand"? But the next instant he voices his hope and confidence, "Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption." (Ps. 130). We are told that the Confession has caught man at his worst, but so also has the Bible. And there is no word more suggestive of man's ruin by the fall than Christ's word to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." The glory of the Gospel is that it comes to man at his worst and offers salvation to the vilest and the most desolate. Christ said, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Matt. ix. 13).

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY.

Any true system of religion must start with God and derive all its spiritual energy from God. This, the system of Calvinism expressed in the Confession of Faith, most surely does. It asserts in unambiguous terms the general Sovereignty of God and the sovereignty of God's grace in man's salvation. At the same time, truth requires that the fact of man's distinct personality and responsibility should be definitely recognised, and here again the Confession is true to the fact. Thus we read: "God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away but rather established." In contrast to this carefully-worded statement is the crude and hasty language of Prof. Angus which practically merges the moral personalities of God and man in one and makes God culpable for all man's acts. He asserts that, "This Spirit" (the Holy Spirit) "is not something external to us, but constitutive of us as moral agents." (p. 87). And he asks, "Is not the Divine Spirit operating within our spirits in all affections and actions?" (p. 88). It is not in such a way that Scripture speaks of the work of the Holy Spirit in the matter of man's salvation, and it is not thus that the Confession of Faith speaks. In that clear distinction which Scripture draws between God as a Person, and man as a personal moral agent, there is not only a recognition of sovereignty and responsibility respectively, but a recognition also of the possibility of God through the Holy Spirit acting upon the soul of man and quickening it into new life. And this, in the words of Dr. A. Kuyper, "is even the heart and kernel of the Calvinistic confession of predestination."

To him a special welcome was given for his kindness and brotherliness in coming to our platform to deal with the history of the Covenant. The Moderator of Synod graciously honoured the Witness Bearing Committee, which had assumed responsibility for the arrangements, by inviting the Convener to preside at the meeting.

Accordingly, on June 22nd, a large audience, representative of Presbyterians and Covenanters alike, gathered in Grosvenor Road Church, Belfast. The addresses were up to the highest expectations. History was considered afresh, and the challenge of modern times was confronted. In accordance with the general wish and by direction of Synod, the addresses are now published, in the hope that the perusal of them will bring as much edification and inspiration to the readers, as the hearing of them brought to the audience on 22nd June.

R. B. LYONS.

Limavady, February, 1944.

The doctrines in question must be tested, not by an appeal to human reason but by an appeal to Scripture; but this is the appeal which Prof. Angus refuses to make, his objection being not only to the Confession but to the teaching of the Word of God. "We have heard too much," he says, "of the conception of God as an Oriental Despot so prevalent in the Old Testament, and carried over into ix-xi of Romans" (p. 51). These chapters have given rise to much discussion, and one result has been to give prominence to the fact that has been clearly recognised by Calvinists, that it is impossible in one act of thought to comprehend and reconcile the two Scripture truths of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. "We can but state the two sides," says Sanday and Headlam, "we can not solve the problem. But there is one conception in which the solution lies. It is in a complete realisation of what we mean by saying that God is Almighty. The two sides of Free-will and the Divine sovereignty can not be reconciled in our own mind, but that does not prevent them from being reconcilable in God's mind. We are really measuring Him by our own intellectual standard if we think otherwise. And so our solution of the problem of Free-will, and of the problems of history and of individual salvation, must finally be in the full acceptance and realization of what is implied by the infinity and the omniscience of God." (Romans, Inter. Cr. Com.). The human mind in seeking to bring the great truths of Scripture within the limits of its finite comprehension narrows the truth, and as a fatal consequence narrows also itself. Every true believer subscribes to the statement expressive of personal duty and sovereign grace, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Phil. ii. 12-13). On such a high mystery we can not do better than fall back on the words of Paul in drawing his great argument in Romans ix-xi to a close, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

THE RESURRECTION.

One of the most unsatisfactory sections in Prof. Angus's book is his short statement on "The Physical Resurrection of Jesus." The subject is dismissed in two brief pages with a haughty contempt for the faith of the Christian Church down the ages, and with an equally callous contempt for Christ's little ones to-day who find in the truth of the resurrection a

The Covenant—Its Historical Setting.

BY

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There are two kinds of historical happenings, those that come as bolts from the blue of God, and those that are manifest blossomings of seeds planted in the earth. The Solemn League and Covenant belongs to the second kind. It was the outcome of two movements that ran abreast for about two hundred years and forty three years in Scotland and England.

These two movements may be traced to one man, John Wycliffe and his followers, the Lollards. They were currents of Puritanism, the adherents of which sought a pure church, a pure society, a pure conscience. The Scottish movement was an offshoot of the English one, and its first known leader was an Englishman, James Resby, a Franciscan monk, converted to Wycliffitism, who crossed the border after the opening of the 15th century, and crowned his mission with martyrdom at Perth, ca. 1407. From his day onwards the Scottish Puritan movement grew, passing through its Lutheran, Calvinistic phases in the 16th century, and culminating in the Presbyterian Covenanters of the 17th century. The cognate English movement underwent similar changes, and came to a head in a large body of reformers who in their reaction against the absolutism and high-church episcopalianism of Charles I. and Laud found expression in the Long Parliament. Often the two currents touched and mingled, but never to such a degree as when they made their epoch-making conjunction in the Solemn League and Covenant. The English Lollards had cast their bread upon the Scottish waters, and it returned to England and its Puritans in their time of need after nearly two centuries and a half.

The pact was made by two parties in need, representing, as the preamble suggests, Scotland in danger and England in distress. It is not generally known that it was an Irishman and a Roman Catholic woman who made the Scottish Covenanters realize their peril and made them ready to respond with alacrity to the English appeal for aid. The Irishman was the Earl of Antrim who was captured near Carrickfergus by some of the Scottish troops stationed in Ulster—among whom the first Irish Presbytery had been erected the previous year. On the Earl were discovered

real source of comfort and strength. His manner and language are those of the demagogue, rather than the calm and conscientious interpreter of Scripture. We find such sentences as the following: "The world is not interested in the body of Jesus as a moral dynamic, but in the spirit of Jesus. Shall we expend our energies in wrangling over the physical or metamorphosed body of Jesus?"

Prof. Jas. Stalker, D.D., in his "Christology of Jesus," says: "That He foretold His rising from the dead the third day is one of the facts most distinctly and unanimously testified by the Evangelists In the whole field of the modern interpretation of the past I do not remember anything less creditable than the manner in which this prediction is dealt with by large sections of contemporary scholarship. Fixing on a prophecy of Hosea in the mere sound of which there is superficial resemblance to the words of Jesus—'After two days will He revive us; in the third day He will raise us up; and we will live in His sight'—they assume that Jesus intended no more than to intimate that after a vague and brief interval of eclipse His cause would revive it is difficult to treat such an interpretation seriously." (pp. 222-3). As Prof. Stalker proceeds to point out, the record indicates that "the faith of the disciples had been stricken dead," as witness the two on the way to Emmaus, and some explanation is necessary to account for that change from utter dejection and despair to the buoyant and eager faith of the day of Pentecost. Prof. Stalker attributes it to the bodily resurrection and ascension of their Master, and he concludes that "the wit of man will never be able to devise another explanation which has even the appearance of likelihood." We do not believe that any other explanation has yet been discovered. Peter, one of the most forward of the disciples, had denied Christ, all forsook Him and fled, not one of them gave any indication of having become possessed of the moral fervour or spiritual insight to equip them for taking up the cause of their Master as a moral and spiritual enterprise, and yet we are asked to believe that within a few weeks they had launched out on a campaign of world regeneration, marked by unparalleled enthusiasm, hopefulness, confidence and self-sacrifice. The only explanation is that given by Peter on the day of Pentecost, "This Jesus has God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." (see also Acts i. 22). "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear," (Acts 2.32-33). "If Jesus had not risen there would never have been a resurrection of Christianity." (Stalker, p. 227)

papers which disclosed a plot for the invasion of Scotland and England by Irish Roman Catholics. Behind the plot was Charles I's. Romanist Queen—*cherchez la femme* in history—and its purpose was to bring aid to the King against his subjects now claiming their rights and liberties. Scotland was alarmed. She believed that her safety and Protestantism were in danger. She saw that her sovereign was not to be trusted, and for the sake of self-preservation as well as the Evangel, she was willing to accept the proffered alliance with the English Parliamentarians.

The need of the English Parliament was greater still. As Baillie wrote, it was "running down the brae." In June and July, 1643, the Royalist forces were going from success to success. Hampden was slain, Essex was ineffective, Fairfax and Waller were defeated. The King was master of the north and was advancing in the south-west. Bristol was besieged and likely to fall. London was discontented. All was dark. Then one man, John Pym, decided that Parliament must appeal to Scotland for help. Accordingly on the 19th July it appointed commissioners, two peers and four commoners (Sir Harry Vane, jun., was one), to go north and request the aid of a Scottish army. The Westminster Assembly was now meeting, and two of its members, Stephen Marshall and Philip Nye, were added to the commissioners. Six of them landed at Leith on 7th August. They brought letters from the English Parliament and Westminster Assembly and another from seventy English Divines with them, and at once entered into negotiations with representatives of the Convention of Estates and the General Assembly then in session. Both parties, the English emphasizing a civil league and the Scottish a religious covenant, ultimately agreed to the draft of the Solemn League and Covenant, composed by Henderson, minister of Leuchars, Fife, and Johnston of Wariston. The English desired to leave room in the pact for Congregationalism or Independency, but the Scots peremptorily opposed this suggestion—and it was this omission that was largely responsible for the failure of the Covenant, especially after Cromwell and his Independent soldiers took matters in hand. Vane proposed that the words "according to the Word of God" should be added to the clause referring to the reformation of the Church of England, and this phrase—non-committal and certainly not necessarily implying Presbyterianism, although the Scots holding by the *jus divinum* of that system believed it did—was incorporated in the Covenant.

To accept the explanation of Prof. Angus and his friends is to reduce Christianity to the level of Spiritism, or rather below the level of Spiritism. "What is the Resurrection faith? Is it the acceptance of a reanimation of a body from a tomb? . . . or that, in the possession of the indissoluble life, 'he is alive for ever,?'" he asks. We are to think of the 'spirit' of Jesus as somehow renewing fellowship with the disciples and quickening new hope and faith and energy in their souls; this is for Prof. Angus "the fact of the resurrection." To quote Dr. Kenneth Edward in his exposition and defence of Prof. Angus: "The story of the empty tomb and the reanimation of the body of Christ from the grave, he rejects on critical grounds, but he further declares that he holds not only the Resurrection faith, but the 'supernatural, objective, historical' fact of the Resurrection. It is therefore not a case of 'setting aside' the fact upon which faith builds, but of determining what the fact really is." We ask, "What 'really' is the fact? What really is the 'super-natural objective, historical' fact of the Resurrection?" Dr. Edward answers the question in the words of Dr. J. F. Bethune-Baker: "The doctrines of the Incarnation and the Resurrection are strongly attested by the experience of the Church. But no such attestation can be claimed for the traditional belief in the miraculous Birth and the restoration to life of the body of our Lord These latter are not facts of religious experience even to those that believe them. It is conceivable that both these beliefs (in the Birth from a Virgin and the 'physical' Resurrection) were early intellectual inferences drawn by some of the first disciples from genuinely religious experience which they enjoyed of the personal power and influence of Jesus in His life time, and His presence with them after His Death on the Cross. It is surely in the indisputable fact of this moral and spiritual experience of those who were privileged to be with Him in the days of His flesh and to know Him with them after His Crucifixion, that we must see the permanent, unshakable, historical basis of the doctrine, of the Incarnation, and the Resurrection." (The Creeds and the Living Church, pp. 70-71).

The fact of the Resurrection, then, according to this view, is not the reanimation of the body of Christ, but just the fact that the disciples had some moral and spiritual experience which they ascribed to the 'spirit' of Christ working in them. It is simply juggling with words to write as these men do about the Incarnation and the Resurrection. They are asking us to believe in an Incarnation that is not an Incarnation and in a Resurrection which is not a Resurrection as those terms have been understood in the Christian Church. It is no more than to say that the spirit of one's father, or mother, or friend,

Democracy is often justifiably charged with a time-lag in the execution of its purposes. But on this occasion democracy exhibited an extraordinary expedition. On Thursday, 17th August, the draft agreement was unanimously approved by the General Assembly in the forenoon, and the Convention of Estates in the afternoon; next day eight commissioners were chosen to represent the Church of Scotland in the Westminster Assembly—Henderson, R. Douglas (never sat), Baillie, Rutherford, Gillespie and three elders, Lord Maitland, Earl of Cassillis (never took his seat) and Johnston of Wariston. On 26th August the solemn document was presented to the English Parliament, favourably commented upon, and sent at once to the Westminster Assembly. This Assembly discussed it fully, added the parenthetical explanation of prelacy (i.e. Church Government by Archbishops, etc.), and on 31st August reported to the House of Commons, who introduced Ireland into the Covenant. On 25th September the Commons and Westminster Assembly took the Covenant in St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, after a prayer an hour long, two sermons each an hour in length, and on 13th October it was sworn and subscribed in St. Giles, Edinburgh, by commissioners of the Scottish Estates and the General Assembly. The urgency of the civil war made it imperative that the Solemn League and Covenant should be adopted with speed.

Subscription throughout Scotland was enjoined by the Commission of Assembly (11th October), and the Estates under pain of ecclesiastical censures, confiscation of property and exclusion from public office. Accordingly, as an ardent Covenanter (James Guthrie) put it, many signed from fear, carnal prudence, and for the sake of preferment or even livelihood. The English Parliament (Feb., 1644), ordained that all persons of 18 years of age and onwards must sign, but, of course the adherents of the King ignored the injunction. In Ireland, four Scottish Assembly Commissioners—James Hamilton, William Adair, John Weir and Hugh Henderson—came to the newly erected Presbytery with directions to the padres of the Scottish army to administer the Covenant to the army. None of the officers refused, except Major Dalzell, afterwards notorious as a persecutor of the Covenanters in Scotland. The Scottish deputies went through the northern counties and obtained the voluntary subscription of civilians, more in number than the military, in Belfast, Comber, Newton, Bangor, Broadisland, Islandmagee, Route and Coleraine districts, Derry, Letterkenny, Enniskillen

acting through one's memory helps one to live a more worthy life. The real fact is not that the wonderful experience of the Apostles on the day of Pentecost constituted the Resurrection of Christ, but that the Resurrection, even the reanimation of His body, was evidenced by that heavenly visitation.

Sanday and Headlam sum up the teaching of Paul on the Resurrection as follows (abbreviated):—

“1. The Resurrection is the most conclusive proof of the Divinity of Christ.

2. As proving the Divinity of Christ, the Resurrection is also the most decisive proof of the atoning value of His Death.

3. In yet another way the Resurrection proved the efficacy of the Death of Christ. Without the Resurrection the Sacrifice of Calvary would have been incomplete. The Resurrection placed upon the Sacrifice the stamp of God's approval; it showed that the Sacrifice was accepted, and that the cloud of Divine Wrath had passed away.

4. The Resurrection is the strongest guarantee for the resurrection of the Christian.

5. But that resurrection (of believers) has two sides or aspects; it is not only physical, a future rising again to physical life; but it is also moral and spiritual, a present rising from the death of sin to the life of holiness.” (Romans. Inter Cr. Com. p. 117).

We close this section with two further brief quotations. “If Jesus be a dead man, He cannot—unless the Church's conception be brought in again—exert any influence on men now living. By thinking of Him, men may stir themselves to effort, but the thought and the effort are alike their own: it is they who influence themselves really, and what really underlies this substitution of ‘the spirit of Jesus’ for the Holy Spirit and the Incarnate Son of God is a worship of self.” (The Athanasian Creed in the Twentieth Century, Taylor, p. 63). “The spread of scepticism on this point in the theological schools of the Continent is by far the most serious feature of the history of religious opinion during the last decade of the nineteenth century; and, as it has become the fashion, it may spread much farther. Its fruits have still to be seen in the practical life of the Church. My own belief is, that, were it to become general, Christianity would wither at its very root.” (Stalker: The Christology of Jesus, p. 224.).

THE DYNAMIC OF THE GOSPEL

“I wonder,” says Prof. Angus, “do my opponents realize what they are claiming in asserting the Deity of Christ, and of what religious dynamic they are depriving men.” (p. 16).

and elsewhere. In most of these places there was a warm response, and it was only at Derry that there was at first any considerable opposition. Northern Ireland became a land of Covenanters.

Now consider the Covenant itself. There are two sections—first the preamble, and second, the enunciation of aims. The preamble calls to mind the historical background, particularly the plots directed against the true religion since the Reformation began. So the subscribers would think of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, the Spanish Armada, and other manifestations of the post-Tridentine attempts to crush alleged heresy, and they would also recall the persecution of Puritanism by prelates like Whitgift and Bancroft, and the absolutist sovereigns under whom they lived. They would think of recent exhibitions of tyranny and cruelty—the terrors of the Laudian regime, and the Popish massacres in Ireland in 1641. The preamble mentions the civil and ecclesiastical consequences of these rigours, deplorable in Ireland, distressed in England and dangerous in Scotland, and also the ineffective attempts to secure remedy ; supplications, remonstrances and grievous suffering have not secured safety and religious liberty, and so some more effective method must be tried. Then the preamble states that recourse is now being made to a custom, namely, that of a covenant, long cherished not only in Britain, but also among other nations. In this connection we note that the covenant-idea, deduced ultimately from the Old Testament, but also from feudal times, was put into practice among Scottish reformers from the beginning of their Reformation. They were always making bands or covenants with God and with one another, and so were Covenanters from the beginning. But now one of the most important of these covenants was entered into.

WHAT WERE ITS AIMS ?

1. To preserve the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, which for about forty years had lost its liberty under James VI. and I. and his son, and had been placed under Episcopacy, which was overthrown by Jenny Geddes in 1637 and the Covenanters of 1638.

2. To reform THE church—the Covenanters thought of ONE nation, ONE church—in England and Ireland, which till now had been Episcopalian in government and inclined to Romanism in rite and ceremony. But to reform a church means to re-form it and bring it back to its norms in doctrine,

Apparently he believes that it is by emphasising the humanity of Christ and stressing what He did and suffered as a man among men that we are to make others sensible of the dynamic force of the gospel. But in so far as the dynamic of the gospel lies in what Christ did and suffered in the flesh, the orthodox theologian conserves that element much more truly than does Prof. Angus and his friends. If Prof. Angus insists that to assert the Deity of Christ is to create a gulf between Christ and man, the orthodox theologian's scriptural doctrine that the Son of God took "upon Him man's nature, with all the essential properties, and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin," bridges the gulf and establishes the closest understanding and fellowship between Christ and us.

And this is in full harmony with the testimony of the Apostles, as witness such words as the following in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "For-as-much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." (Hebrs. ii, 14-18).

Herein lies much of the wonder and the dynamic of the gospel, that One so exalted as the Son of God humbled Himself to take the form of a servant and "learn obedience by the things which He suffered," "that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest."

Prof. Angus treats of the agony and death of Christ with singular lack of moral and spiritual insight. "Suppose," he says, "that Jesus knew beforehand that his death was a necessity to secure forgiveness of sins by God for the salvation of men why did he wrestle in Gethsemane against the thought of death? No man worthy of the name of man would hesitate to lay down his life gladly if his death meant so much for mankind. Jesus laid down his life in the interests of the kingdom of God, and for the love of his fellow-men."

The reader will notice a distinct inconsistency in the statements quoted. If the thought "that his death would secure forgiveness of sins by God" could have inspired Christ with calm courage, should not the same courage have been called forth by the thought that he was laying "down his life in the interests of the kingdom of God, and for love of his fellow-men"? But let the inconsistency pass, and let us overlook the fact that the words "his fellow-men" treat Christ as a mere man.

worship, discipline and government, and the Covenanters were convinced that these norms were to be found in the Word of God. So they inserted, at Vane's suggestion, the phrase "according to the Word of God." But the Scriptures could be interpreted variously, and so they added "the example of the best reformed churches," a phrase also liable to different constructions, but one that meant to the Scottish Covenanters, Presbyterian Churches, such as their own, while to some of the English Covenanters it meant a mixed Episcopal Church, or an Erastian Church, that was a department of the State, or even a non-episcopal church on Independent lines.

3. To bring the Scottish, English and Irish Churches to the nearest conjunction and uniformity by common standards—Confession of Faith, Form of Church Government, Directory of Worship and Catechisms. As the Covenanters thought of this purpose they had in mind Calvinist doctrine, and the Scots would think with reverence of Knox's Liturgy, and the English would think of the Puritan Prayer Book, based like Knox's upon the Genevan, but they would not all think alike when they considered a Form of Church Government.

4. So far the Covenant has specified positive aims. Now it speaks negatively when it declares that its aim is the extirpation of Popery, Prelacy, Superstition, Heresy, Schism and Profaneness. Of course, we have here an expression of intolerance, but the Covenanters would have said that it was intolerance of evil, and that evil is intolerable. As children of their age they held that it was their imperative duty to destroy what they regarded as enemies of the truth. The method of extirpation is not mentioned, but the fact that many Irish Roman Catholics fled in 1644 from the approach of the Scottish ministers, who were going through Ulster to administer the Covenant, because they knew that the Covenanters intended to extirpate Popery, shows what the Romanists thought it meant. Just three years before the Irish Papists had used the method of massacre in order to destroy the Protestants. But the Covenanters do not define the means they intended to use against their foes. By 1643 all Christians had not yet realised the expulsive power of affection, persuasion and education. The way of force was still in fashion. And the Old Testament was still a book of precedents to go by. The first evil mentioned by the Covenant was Popery, and the extent of its menace we are apt not to realise, but the Covenanters of that date lived

Prof. Angus fails to account for Christ's agony in the garden, except by suggesting that in His ignorance of what it all meant Christ showed Himself something of a coward.

To the reverent mind touched with a little spiritual insight Christ's agony of soul reveals the perfection and sensibility of His human nature and the greatness of His moral courage. Of two captains on the field, one may be pale with fear as he faces the issues of the battle, the other may be marked by stolid insensibility. The man who rises superior to his fears is a more heroic soul than he who goes to death as an animal goes to the slaughter.

Christ had a clear and full consciousness of the issues depending on Him in that hour of suffering, and the trembling which shook His soul to its foundations was part of that expenditure of moral energy by which He was to conquer, it was part of that experience by which He was to learn obedience as He made His soul an offering for sin. It was the price He was paying for man's redemption.

Daniel and his companions displayed great courage in facing death for a principle, but the question of the world's salvation did not depend upon their fidelity. Christian martyrs have displayed great courage in dying rather than deny their crucified Redeemer, but the world's redemption did not depend on their heroic endurance.

The types and promises of the Old Testament were focussed upon that hour in Christ's life; the whole future of human history hung upon the fact of Christ's "obedience unto death." Could the human soul of Christ be other than agitated under a sense of the tremendous responsibility that rested upon Him? We cannot appreciate all the elements which entered into that cup which was being raised to Christ's lips. We cannot conceive what it meant for the compassionate and loving Saviour to endure in that hour the attack of the concentrated forces of evil.

It may be that in a way and to a degree which we cannot understand, Christ entered into the feeling of desolation and unworthiness that fills a soul stricken with a sense of guilt, that He felt in all its intense bitterness the solemn truth that "the wages of sin is death." That abysmal depth of woe which opens in front of the guilty conscience may have made Christ's sensitive soul to shudder. Somehow He "tasted death," and in that experience He not only demonstrated the truth that love is strong as death, but so met the last claim of God's law, that God can 'be just and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.' (Rom. iii, 26). "For if the blood of bulls and of goats . . . sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ who

amidst the horrors of the Thirty Years' war, and the Spanish Inquisition, the persecution of the Huguenots, and the Gunpowder Plot were not too far off to be forgotten, and of course the Irish Papists' inhumanity of 1641 was still stinking in their nostrils. Next came Prelacy, and in order that there should be no doubt about what was meant, the Westminster Assembly defined it as meaning government by Archbishops, Bishops, Deans—yes, Deans, etc. The whole crew must go. Presbyterians, of course, believed in parity of ministers, but the Westminster Divines, by their definition, left room for an inequality of ministers, as long as they were not attached to an episcopalian hierarchy. Then Superstition and Heresy were marked out as foes to be destroyed, the subrational and irrational foes of truth. Schism comes next in the black list. If there is one ecclesiastical evil which Calvin desired to see swept away it was this, and true Calvinists—and all Presbyterians are supposed to be such—cherish the same end. These Covenanters abhorred schism too. And if they were to come to earth at present they would deplore that Presbyterians are divided and subdivided and guilty of this very abominable sin. Then comes Profaneness, which now we might call worldliness or secularism, the sin to which man is so prone because he lives in the flesh, and in the world of time and space, and is sorely tempted to give way to animal instincts and selfish desires and to make idols of material things.

5. The Covenant then enunciates its civil and political aims—the preservation of the rights and privileges of Parliaments, the liberties of the kingdoms and the monarchy itself, so far as that consists with true religion and a free people. Behind this statement lies much history. It contains a self-vindication on the part of Puritans against the charge, made by Elizabeth and James, and now by royalist adherents that they were revolutionary rebels, advocates of democratic confusion, and exponents of “the darling principle” proclaimed by Calvin that tyrants may be deposed or even killed by inferior magistrates, such as nobles or a Parliament, on behalf of the people.

6. After asserting that one of the aims of the Covenant is to bring to light and justice incendiaries and malignants who seek to hinder the Reformation or divide the King from his people or the kingdoms from one another, it proclaims :—

7. That peace between the kingdoms is a principal plank in its platform. This aim also has an extensive

through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebs. ix. 13 14).

We may well be astonished, not at the fact of Christ's agitation, terror and agony, but at the fact that it was possible for a human soul to sustain itself through that dark hour, and be able in all the sincerity of tenderest compassion to pray, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Christ trembled but His courage rose superior to His agony, and for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross. (Heb. xii. 2).

The sufferings of Christ are hidden from our view, they were too awful for the eye of nature to contemplate, there was darkness over the land while the soul of the Redeemer was "tasting death for every man." (Heb. ii. 9). Scripture supplies the explanation of Christ's agony. "He made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (11 Cor. v. 21).

"Redemption! 'twas the labour of the skies;
Far more than labour—it was death in heav'n.
A truth so strange! 'twere bold to think it true;
If not far bolder still to disbelieve."

We must preserve a sense of the moral distance between God and man if we are to preserve the dynamic of the Gospel. As we diminish that distance we diminish the wonder and also the power of the Gospel; we deprive man of much of his ground for gratitude and praise. Prof. Angus asks, "Is not the Divine Spirit operating within our spirits in all affections and actions? Do we ever cease to act, either as saints or sinners, as those whose spirit is the candle of the Lord?" Was it then the Divine Spirit in man that cried, 'Crucify Him; Crucify Him'? And was it the same Divine Spirit who from the depths of sin-stricken souls cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The dynamic of the Gospel, according to Prof. Angus, is to tell men that they need no gospel, dynamic or otherwise, for he writes, "We still constitute God's family among whom God Himself lives and works with the co-operation and assistance of his sons." (p. 91).

"The ordinary man," we are told, "welcomes a religion which declares that 'the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, etc.'" "I am certain which kind of creed men with a sense of ultimate realities will choose—the one which compels them to moral activity and strengthens spiritual aspiration." (pp. 115-116). But it is just a religion and a creed that includes all this that men have been offered and have rejected. The gospel offers all and more than all the morality which the philosopher can offer, but it offers this morality on terms of grace, and ordinary men are too proud to accept the gift.

historical background. We have but to consider the Anglo-Scottish amity championed throughout the sixteenth century by English and Scottish Protestants, how Henry VIII. and Elizabeth strove to close the Scottish back-door to England against Romanist foes by alliance with the Scots, and how Scottish Protestants became responsible for the shelving of the Auld alliance with France and promoted instead peace and amity with the English. Behind this peace-aim there also lies the Irish question, for at the time of the Covenant it was an unsolved problem, and many vain attempts had been made, often by wrong methods, to establish peace, unity and amity between the Emerald Isle and Great Britain. Protestant reformers were already faced by the horrors of Rome Rule for Ireland and the difficulties of Home Rule and of Union with Great Britain.

8. After asserting the reciprocity of the League and Covenant the great document

9. Ends, as it began, with God and expresses the desire of the signatories to become worthy of God's blessing and of the fulfilment of their aims by a humble confession of sin and a high resolve to amend their lives.

The immediate results of the Covenant were twofold—

(1). In pursuance of the League the Scottish Army entered England and helped, conspicuously at Marston Moor, to turn the tide of battle in favour of the English Parliamentarians.

(2). In pursuance of the Covenant the Westminster Assembly was ordered by the English Parliament to address itself to the formulation of standards for the proposed united British Church.

By order of the English Parliament on 12th October, 1643, the Assembly switched from the consideration of the revision of the XXXIX Articles to that of Church Government. They were now assisted by Scottish Commissioners—Henderson, Gillespie, etc.—and they now concentrated on the question of Presbyterianism, and first of all on church officers. From 22nd November to 8th December they debated the problem of ruling elders, and ultimately came to the conclusion that they were not Presbyters but assistants of ministers, especially in matters of discipline, and that they are warranted by New Testament texts such as Romans xii. 8, and I. Cor. xii. 28, which refer to governors. It is noteworthy that I. Timothy v. 17 was not adduced as a

They refused it in Christ's day and they refuse it still. Let Prof. Angus go out into the armed camp of the world, where suspicion, distrust, animosities, bitter memories perpetuate the spirit of hate and tell the nations that they are all the sons of God, members of one family. Let him go into the castles of avarice and selfishness and sordid worldliness and call the owners to rise to heroic self-sacrificing effort for their less favoured brethren. Let him go into the lanes and warrens of the city and tell the denizens of the beauty of virtue and praise of morality and results will be few. But let him tell men of the love of God in Christ, our substitute, let him point them to the cross, let him speak of Christ bearing their sins and hearts will melt and tears will fall. We must find the dynamic of the Gospel in some point of view that will at once emphasise the heinousness of sin and the wonderful love of God. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight." (Ps. 51. 4.).

THE CROSS.

The dynamic of the cross is the dynamic of the gospel; the cross and the gospel became synonymous in the language of Paul. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power (dynamic) of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." (Rom. i. 16.). "For the preaching (word) of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto which are saved it is the power (dynamic) of God But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." (1 Cor. i. 18, 23). Why is the cross the power of God unto salvation? "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed." (Rom. i. 17). The question of the sin-troubled soul still is, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?" There is a sense of duty undone, of guilt incurred, of a law broken, of righteousness unrealised. How can guilt be expiated and the righteous law of God fulfilled? Can man weep those tears of sorrow that will be adequate to wash away his sin? Can he summon up in himself that spirit of obedience that will be proportioned to the demands of God's perfect law? He cannot, the sin-conscious sinner knows he cannot. But he sees Jesus Christ in that obedience which culminated in the cross working out a righteousness not for Himself but for sinners; he sees Christ tasting death for the death-deserving. Herein is the secret of the power of the cross, which is the power of the gospel. The cross is the uttermost expression of God's love to us. And through that work of Christ which reached its climax on the cross we have not only an assurance of God's love, but we have a judicial sentence removed from every believing sinner. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Thus, "Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life."

And was the ransom paid? It was: and paid
(What can exalt the bounty more?) for you."

proof text. These Covenanters did not affirm that ruling elders are the equivalent of New Testament Elders or Presbyters as so many modern Presbyterians do. The Assembly's findings regarding Presbyterianism are contained in its "Form of Church Government." We can refer only briefly to the other formularies produced at Westminster—the Confession of Faith, the Directory for Public Worship, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms—all the notable fruits of the Solemn League and Covenant, all exhibiting sagacity, learning, piety, theological acumen and Scriptural knowledge in an eminent degree. It is singular that these documents and the Metrical Psalter of Francis Rous, a Cornish lay member of the Westminster Assembly, which, after the Assembly, by order of the Commons, had perused it, was approved by the latter, and after further revision was adopted by the Church of Scotland (1650), it is singular that these documents, all made in England and chiefly by Englishmen, became the subordinate standards of the Scottish church and through her of Presbyterian churches throughout the English speaking world, Ireland included, and that some of them still officially retain their position of authority. They are a priceless heritage and alone would mark the success of the Solemn League and Covenant, which by many has been regarded as a failure because Covenanters like Oliver Cromwell resiled from their covenant obligations and because the Presbyterianism which the Scottish Covenanters so ardently desired had only a short-lived existence in England, as the polity of an Established Church.

A Covenant with such fruitage is worthy indeed of the tercentennial celebration of to-day.

IN DEFENCE OF THE SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT

By REV. A. C. GREGG, B.D., Greenock, Scotland.

Mr. Gladstone once said that Charles I was a liar ; that Cromwell did not always tell the truth ; and that Queen Elizabeth was a great liar. In defending the Solemn League and Covenant and the policy of the Covenanters that lay behind it, one must remember that characteristic of Charles I which was noted by Gladstone, and which even apologists of Charles have admitted. The Rev. Alexander Henderson was not only, as Professor David Masson said, the wisest and

If "the Trinity was unknown to, and impossible to, the thought of Jesus," then no one who is a Christian according to such a statement can believe that the Holy Spirit is, as Prof. Angus asserts, "the Lord and Giver of Life," nor can such a Christian believe even in the existence of the Holy Spirit. To deny that the Holy Spirit is one of the Persons of the Godhead, and at the same time to assert that He is "the Lord and Giver of Life" is both profane and absurd.

With the Person of the Son and the Person of the Holy Spirit removed from the Godhead by Prof. Angus, what have we left? A solitary God; an infinite Being the slave of a self-centred life, powerless to love because there is no object of love within the circle of His divine life, powerless to enter into fellowship because there is no one with whom to commune, more characterless than the jelly-fish because in the infinitude of His being there is no distinction of person and no relationship in which God's personal life can realise itself. The God whom Prof. Angus would leave us would scarcely be worthy of those titles which he irreverently applies to the God of the Old Testament when he refers to Him as an "Oriental Despot," or "Divine Sultan."

In practically discarding the authority of Scripture and building mainly upon individual experience Prof. Angus deprives himself of the right and the power to give any positive message to the world. When he claims for himself a "prophetic calling," he must mean that he has been called either to interpret the Bible, or to add to the Bible, or both to interpret and add to it. It seems to be the latter and more ambitious claim that Prof. Angus makes. He says: "We cannot believe that the written revelation is such that unto it 'nothing at any time is to be added whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men'. We rather believe that the God who spoke in a Son, at a period which good men believed to be the imminent end of the world, has never ceased to speak in and through countless other sons, and shall so speak to the end of time." (pp. 101-102). Again, "The Church has never yet been able to make out a convincing case for the strange conduct of the Holy Spirit in delivering in some classic past a fixed quantum of Revelation and then leaving it in the custody of professional theologians." (p. 122).

Prof. Angus's principle places him in the position of one who is "ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." It is presumption then for him to attempt to teach others. Has he garnered all the truth that the Holy Spirit has gifted to those "countless other sons" who have lived since the volume of Scripture was closed? How does he know that the Holy Spirit has spoken to countless others? How are

ablest of the Scottish Covenanters' leaders, but he was also a man of a godly and incorruptible character. Henderson was the chief architect of the Solemn League and the chief opponent in Scotland of the absolutist pretensions of Charles, whom he tried in vain in personal argument, face to face, to turn from his autocratic designs. I cannot bring myself to think that in the struggle between the side represented by Henderson and the Solemn League on the one hand, and Charles I and the Royalists on the other hand, the slippery and deceitful King was in the right and Henderson in the wrong. If we judge the two causes by the two principal champions on each side respectively, our verdict must be given in favour of the Covenanters.

The late Rev. Sir George Adam Smith, in his well-known book on Isaiah, permitted his temper to explode in a violent rage against the Solemn League and Covenant. It was when he came to deal with the passage about "a covenant with death and an agreement with hell." The Prophet Isaiah said : " Hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement therefore thus saith the Lord God your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand, for the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it ; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it." (v. Isa. xxviii. 14—20). That, argued Dr. George Adam Smith, was the type of covenant to which the Solemn League and Covenant belonged.

Now, that is surely a fearful and shocking thing for a Scottish Presbyterian divine to say. The covenant with death and agreement with hell, of which the Prophet speaks, was that of men who were scorers of Divine teaching, men who had made lies their refuge, and had hid themselves under falsehood, priests and prophets who erred through strong drink and were swallowed up of wine. The very idea of putting that Scots worthy, Alexander Henderson, in the same category with the scorers and drunkards whom God charged with making a covenant with death and an agreement with hell is unjust, unfair, and unworthy of that noted expounder of Isaiah.

The late Rev. J. P. Struthers of Greenock, was only once, in my hearing, carried away with passionate and burning speech, and that was at the Covenanters' Convention at

we to know that the Holy Spirit has spoken to and through Prof. Angus? What credentials does he offer of his "prophetic calling"?

Such folly as Prof. Angus writes subverts the authority of the only Bible that the world has, makes religious fellowship impossible, as each man's untested experience becomes his own standard of religion, and deprives the world of any message of life and salvation.

The result is seen in the utter lack of unity among sceptics themselves, the constant jarring and conflict of opinions, and the lack of cohesion which marks the lifeless particles of a heap of sand. True, a dry wind from the Lord may carry and spread those particles of sand over a wide area and vegetation may be scorched and buried, but in due time the desert shall again rejoice and blossom as the rose.

"I believe firmly," says Prof. Angus, "that moral obedience is the first and the last step on the pathway of true religion." If it is possible to think of first and second as between faith and moral obedience, we would say that faith is the first step and the ever constant exercise of the soul alive unto God, even that abiding in Christ as the branch abides in the vine, which is the essential condition of all moral obedience.

In stressing moral obedience Prof. Angus still fails to give a message to the weary and heavy-laden world. He opens no source of power, he discloses no treasures of grace and wisdom, but vainly asks the over-burdened soul to rise up under a weight that is crushing it down to earth.

He brings forward no new virtue, he suggests no new grace of character, he proposes no new plan for alleviating suffering, eradicating social evils, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked or promoting peace and goodwill. The great Christian virtues have not been sufficiently practised, but they have been and are being pressed upon the human conscience in thousands of evangelical churches. Depriving himself of the power which resides in the truth that Christ gave Himself "a ransom in the stead of many" Prof. Angus betakes himself to "rhetorical violence" to whip up human hearts into zeal for goodness, but his high-sounding sentences will prove as futile as the waves which dash themselves to pieces upon the rock or moan away their life in some dark cavern.

Glasgow in 1896, when he denounced that passage in George Adam Smith's "Isaiah." Mr. Struthers acknowledged the scholarship, the renown, and the Christian character of George Adam Smith, but he asserted that it was just because Smith was a brother in Christ, and a Scottish Presbyterian of immense influence as an expositor, that his naming the Solemn League in the same breath with that "covenant with death and agreement with hell" was felt by the Cameronian Covenanters to be such an outrageous comparison. Can you for one moment believe that Alexander Henderson could devise and swear a covenant which deserved to be likened to that "covenant with death and agreement with hell" which so revolted the Spirit of God speaking by the Seraphic Prophet?

Was the Solemn League a failure? We all remember the four lines which Robert Burns wrote about it. He, at any rate, did not consider it a failure:—

" The Solemn League and Covenant
Cost Scotland blood, cost Scotland tears ;
But it sealed Freedom's sacred cause ;
If thou'rt a slave, indulge thy sneers ! "

But we can add to the poet's testimony the testimony of a living Scottish authority on Scottish History—Professor J. D. Mackie, M.A., of the Chair of Scottish History in Glasgow University. In his book, " Cavalier and Puritan," he says that the "immediate effect" of the Solemn League was to give the English Parliamentary Party "the added force required to beat the King." The advance of the well-equipped Scots army of 21,000 men, who followed Sir Alexander Leslie, then Lord Leven, across the Tweed, "altered the whole character of the war," says Professor Mackie. On the 2nd July, 1644, the Battle of Marston Moor was won by English and Scots united, Oliver Cromwell leading, and achieving his first great victory. That meant the loss of North England to the King's cause. The war swayed this way and that for a time. In Scotland the "Great" Marquis of Montrose smashed army after army of Covenanters, and made himself master of Scotland, but he met final and crushing defeat at Philiphaugh on September 13th, 1645. In April, 1646, the last army left to Charles was forced to capitulate in Cornwall. The King had appealed to the sword, and the sword had given its verdict against him. That result, as Professor Mackie has said, was the first fruit of the Solemn League and Covenant. Scotland stood to her bargain and the tyrant King who had challenged his Parliament

to arms lost the war. That in itself was a huge and historic success for the Solemn League.

The Westminster Confession of Faith and the Shorter Catechism constituted another immediate fruit of the Covenant, for it was upon the swearing of the Covenant, and in obedience to its terms, that the Westminster Divines, dropping their revision of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, proceeded to draw up a common confession for both England and Scotland. The English signatories of the Solemn League and Covenant so far stood to their oath, and by far the larger share of the credit and honour due to the framers of the historic Westminster Confession of Faith must go to the English Divines and not to the three or four Scottish Ministers who sat with them.

But the larger and grander hopes to which the Solemn League gave shape were certainly not fulfilled. Hence the Covenant has been pronounced a failure. A distinction, however, falls to be drawn here. Where lay the failure? Was it in the Covenant, or in the signatories of the Covenant?

Suppose we take the Covenant of the League of Nations, which may now be looked upon as a dead letter. Was the League of Nations ever honestly applied? How can we say that it was a failure if it was never put in operation in the fashion which the League itself laid down and required? Had it been boldly and unitedly applied when aggression raised its hideous head again after the Great War, would not Japan have been kept out of Manchuquo? Would not Mussolini have been prevented from raping Abyssinia? And would not Hitler have been called to account and brought to a dead stop immediately after he had struck down his first victim? But the Powers, both great and small, failed the League. It was not the Covenant of the League that failed. It was the Covenanters of the League that failed. The United States would not come in at all. When the call came for the use of force against the aggressor, no country but Britain offered to send an armed expedition. And so the nations failed their own League.

The same may be said of the Solemn League and Covenant. England drew back first, and the apostasy spread to Scotland. When Cromwell saw that he could win the war against Charles, he had no further use for the Solemn League, though himself a party to it. The "Killing Times" in Scotland meant that Charles II, a secret Papist, and his brother James II, an avowed Papist, had found in Scotland

plenty of traitors to the Covenant to act as their instruments and ply rope and gun for the extermination of the faithful Covenanters. And so the signatories of the Solemn League, in vast numbers, both north and south of the Border, failed their Solemn League. It might have been a blessing to them, but they preferred a curse.

How is it that the Ulster Covenant did not fail? Six counties at least are to-day outside the jurisdiction of Mr. de Valera and his anti-British regime. The reason is that the Ulster Covenant had men and women behind it who were firm, faithful and determined. Their spirit made their Covenant a success.

Had there been an unconquerable spirit behind the Solemn League and Covenant—a spirit corresponding to the spirit of the pact—there would have been no Restoration of 1660 and no “Killing Times.”

It has been charged against the Scottish Leaguers that they were bent on thrusting upon the English Church a Scottish form of Church Government. We should remember the facts. The English Parliament of 1641—two years before the Solemn League, and one year before the civil war broke out in England—passed the Grand Remonstrance, drafted by the great Commoner, John Pym, pledging the English Parliament to the establishment of a Church Government to be neither Anglican nor Independent, but to be “according to the Word of God,” and “certainly,” Professor Mackie asserts, “some form of Presbyterianism.” Can it then be maintained in face of that resolution of the English Parliament that the Scottish Presbyterians meant by the Solemn League to enforce Presbyterianism on the English?

It is also to be remembered that the Westminster Assembly met before the Solemn League and Covenant was resolved upon, and that Alexander Henderson, one of the Scottish Commissioners at the Assembly, was prepared to discuss Church Government. He said: “We are not to conceive that they will accept our form, but a new form must be set down for us all.” That was not the language of dictation. Henderson was prepared to enter into conference with the English with a view to framing a Church Government which would satisfy both sides. He certainly believed that the Presbyterian order was of Divine Right and Original, but he would not stand on the Scottish form as a cast-iron model not to be altered or not capable of betterment. He would not touch Episcopacy in any shape—

least of all a king-appointed bench of bishops—nor would he ever have preferred Independency to Presbyterianism, but he would treat the Presbyterian order as an elastic one, resting on a few great principles of the New Testament, with room for variety in their application, according to changing circumstances of church life and work.

On this important point I will quote again Professor David Masson, of the Chair of English Literature in Edinburgh University, the distinguished author of a monumental work on John Milton and his times, in which he says: "It was still, be it remembered, the universal notion among English politicians that there must be a National Church, and that no man, woman or child within the land should be permitted to be out of the pale of that Church." After the Scottish National Covenant, in the years 1640 to 1643, "the passion for Presbytery," says Masson, "among the English laity had pervaded all the counties (of England); and scores and hundreds of parish-ministers who had kept as long as they could within the limits of mere low-church Anglicanism, and had stood out in their private reasoning for the lawfulness and expediency of an order of officers in the Church superior to that of simple Presbyters, if less lordly than the Bishops, had been swept out of their scruples, and had joined themselves, even heartily, to the Presbyterian current. Thus when the Westminster Assembly met (July, 1643) to consider, among other things, what form of Church Government the Parliament should be advised to establish in England in lieu of Episcopacy, which it had been resolved to abolish, the injunction almost universally laid upon them by already-formed opinion among the Parliamentarians of England, whether laity or clergy out of the Assembly, seemed to be that they should recommend conformity with Scottish Presbytery Out of the 120 parish-ministers of the city (of London), surrounding the Assembly, only three, so far as could be ascertained, were not of strict Presbyterian principles Yet the existence of a certain amount of opinion in favour of Independency, and consequently of a demand for some toleration for Independency in the system to be established, was no longer (1642-43) dubious."

All the considerations of fact I have mentioned may serve to blunt the edge of the uninformed charge that Scotland attempted by the Solemn League to fasten her own Presbyterian model on an unwilling England.

Are we to condemn this vision and hope of Henderson and his Scottish colleagues, both in Church and State, as a

mere mirage, as a practical impossibility? Certainly the hope was not fulfilled, but it was not the hope of a fool. Alexander Henderson was no fool. There was no more level-headed man in Scotland—or in England either. The Solemn League and Covenant might have been translated into blessed fact if only its signatories had not split into sections over political, ecclesiastical, and military problems, all tangled and confused by the sanguinary conflict between a King whose main principle of action was, as Lord Macaulay says, a combination of hatred of liberty and love of absolute power, and a Parliament that could not and would not suffer a royal dictator.

It is quite true that Henderson and his fellow-Covenanters, both in England and Scotland, thought it right for Church and State to enforce the Covenant and make it a test of loyalty to the Reformed faith and to the Government set up—or meant to be set up—under the terms of the Covenant. They had not yet attained to the perfect law of liberty of conscience.

But think of the difference on this point between the Covenanters and the parties opposed to them. Charles I would enslave them body and soul to his absolute monarchy. His two sons would punish and torture them for daring to hold that their King should govern according to law and for the good of their subjects. And prelates, the appointees of an autocratic King, could join hand and glove with the royal tyrant and his minions in persecuting Covenanters. Archbishop Sharp, that unspeakable traitor, could sentence loyal Covenanters to be hanged. What fair judge would say that the Covenanters' regime was as bloody and iniquitous and tyrannical as that for which the three last Stuart Kings and their instruments, including king-made Bishops, were responsible? Whatever the amount of intolerance and violence chargeable against the supporters of the Solemn League—and it is only honest and right to admit that they did offend—yet, put it all together, it is a drop of the bucket to the enormities of their royal and prelatic persecutors.

—It was bad enough that the Scottish Covenanters sold themselves to Charles II, and were broken by Cromwell at Dunbar. The worst of all was that the perjured monarch found quondam Solemn Leaguers in Scotland to help him to persecute, torture and kill Scottish Covenanters, and to hail him as supreme in Church and State, following the slavish Bishops in England who preached that it was a sin against God to resist the King in any circumstances. Thus they

bowed the knee to the wretched and vicious prince who, as Lord Macaulay says, began his reign by taking the Covenanters with his tongue in his cheek, and ended it dying with the wafer sticking in his throat.

One of the vilest forms of the manners of Charles II's reign was the stage play. I have never read, and never will read, the Comic Dramatists of the Restoration Period, but I have read the opinion of a well qualified judge who did read them, though it was to him like wading through filth. I mean Lord Macaulay. He says these plays were thoroughly wicked, and a disgrace to our English Literature. He brands them with three Biblical epithets—"earthly, sensual, devilish." John Dryden was a great poet, but, a Poet-Laureate with a miserable salary, he was obliged to produce the sort of stuff that Charles II and his like-minded subjects wanted in song and play. Dryden, of course, should not have soiled his genius for such patrons. He should have devoted his high poetic powers to the carrying out of his noble ambition to write an epic on King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. But he yielded to the royal and fashionable taste for the low and the indecent. Sir Walter Scott, in his "Marmion," refers to the wicked pressure put upon Dryden by his bloated paymaster. These are Scott's lines :—

" And Dryden, in immortal strain,
Had raised the Table Round again,
But that a ribald King and Court
Bade him toil on to give them sport,
Demanded for their niggard pay,
Fit for their souls, a looser lay,
Licentious satire, song and play,
The world defrauded of the high design,
Profaned the God-given strength and marred the
lofty line."

Charles II belonged to the off-scouring of humanity. He sinned and made others to sin, plumbed the lowest depths of infamy, and led multitudes of his subjects to serve the flesh and the devil. His reign is reckoned one of the blackest and most shameful in British history. The Solemn League and Covenant envisaged a nation honouring God and His Christ, standing for righteousness, and ruled by just laws. Covenanters of to-day need fear no honest comparison between that ideal and the regime of the Restoration. The difference is that between light and darkness, the Divine and the infernal.

The Covenant, an Exposition of Covenanting Loyalty.

By Rev. Prof. T. B. McFARLANE, B.A., Newry.

For true loyalty there must be a high ideal, a sublime and worthy object, an exalted standard by which it is to be governed. The Covenanter's ideal was twofold yet single, the glory of God and the advancement of Christ's kingdom. This ideal they had found in the Scriptures, the standard to which they appealed in all their engagements, testimonies, sufferings. Perhaps none had a clearer insight into the truths of revelation than the men and women of the covenant. Judge them by their sermons that were preached among the mountains.

Wodrow's suggested three-fold division describes the character of the preaching of the Covenanters—"The majesty of God, the loveliness of Christ, the sins and sorrows of the human heart." May that not be spoken of as a good description of the gospel of the glory of the blessed God? Judge them by their writings. In the preparation of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, the Covenanters had a large share, and after three hundred years these documents are still unsurpassed as an interpretation of the mind of Christ. Judge them by their testimonies. They could speak of the Word of God to Kings, and not be moved with shame. Young men and maidens were able to confound their judges in matters relating to the doctrine and government of the Church." They feared the Lord and His secret was with them, and He shewed them His Covenant." In view of this we can easily see that in the framing of the Covenants and in their maintainance, the Covenanters were not impelled by a blind fanaticism, a zeal without knowledge. They took their stand on the truth of Christ, and in His purest light they saw clearly the path they should follow in those troublous times. As they prayed and meditated on the Word, they were ever hearing a voice—"This is my Beloved Son, hear ye Him." They grasped the truth that the end of Scripture is to reveal Christ in His sufferings and the glories that should follow them. Spurgeon calls this "the ultimatum God's grandest revelation." The vision of the enthroned Lamb was so burnt into the souls of these witnesses that it coloured and controlled their thoughts and

lives. They judged everything in its relation to that vision—the individual life, the home, the church, the nation. All were to be brought under the sway of the Mediator's sceptre, all were to be judged by their loyalty to His righteous rule.

THE CHARGE of DISLOYALTY has been hurled often times against the Covenanters. It is not surprising that it should have been so, for wherever there has been raised any persecution against the witnesses of Christ, this has usually been one of the chief accusations. It was so in the case of the Apostle Paul, who was charged with being a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition. It was so in the case of our Lord Himself, Who was condemned as one who opposed Caesar. There are many evidences which prove that the Covenanters were not rebels and traitors, but the most loyal subjects in the land. The Covenant itself makes it abundantly clear what was their attitude to the earthly sovereign. They swore "to preserve and defend the King's Majesty's person and authority, in the preservation and defence of the true religion, and liberties of the Kingdoms, that the world may bear witness with our consciences of our loyalty, that we have no thoughts, or intentions to diminish his Majesty's just power and greatness." Was such a declaration of loyalty not full clear and satisfactory? Could more be expected or required of subjects? But there is a qualifying clause that must not be forgotten—"in the preservation and defence of the true religion." If the King preserved and defended the worship and liberties of the Church they were ready to follow him, and to lay down their lives in his defence. But if he invaded those liberties and grasped the power which belongs only to Christ, then they came to the parting of the ways, and their decision could only be that of the apostles—"We must obey God rather than men." The Covenanters made it clear that their first homage was to Zion's King, as Alexander Henderson said to the King's Commissioner at the Glasgow Assembly—"Next to piety towards God, we are obliged unto loyalty and obedience to our King."

THE EFFORTS made by the Covenanters to save the King from ruin after the defeat of his army showed how ready they were to defend his person and throne. When the King gave himself up in the Scottish camp, the Covenanters offered their support, provided he would be true to the Covenant. But their offer was rejected, and then a last attempt was made to save the King from his enemies when Henderson and other Commissioners pleaded with him on

bended knees to declare his allegiance to the Covenanted Reformation and they would rally to his side. But all in vain. Still further the Covenanters protested against the proposed execution of the King. Was all this the action of men moved by the spirit of rebellion? Was it not due to a passionate desire to guard the name and fame of the King in fulfilment of their Covenant pledge? INSTEAD of being charged with disloyalty the Covenanters were to be censured for their rashness and their infatuation in placing the crown on the head of Charles II, though they must have had evidence of his hypocrisy, lack of integrity and rooted dislike for the cause of the Covenant. Their error was to be followed by many and great troubles.

Again the Covenanters were IMBUED with the loftiest patriotism, and sought the best interests of their native land. In the Covenant they declared they had before their eyes "the true publick liberty, safety and peace of the Kingdoms, wherein everyone's private condition is included." Further, in paragraph IV. of the Covenant, they shewed their desire for the peace and welfare of the Kingdom in their engagement to "the discovery of incendiaries malignants or evil instruments, by hindering the reformation of religion, dividing the King from the people, or one of the Kingdoms from another, or making any factions or parties amongst the people contrary to this League and Covenant."

IT WAS NOT long after the Restoration until the King laid aside the cloke of hypocrisy and revealed his true character. With a lie on his lips he had sworn the Covenants solely to gain the opportunity of establishing his own despotic authority. The Dagon of royal supremacy was set up again. Act after Act was passed by the Drunken Parliament whereby the whole fabric of a Covenanted Reformation was razed to the ground. Then came the day of testing. Would the Covenanters yield an unqualified allegiance to a tyrannical godless and unscrupulous monarch, or abide fast by their Covenant with the King of Kings? Some few like Sharp threw aside the mask of deception and unblushingly manifested the Spirit of Judas. But the main body went forth without the camp bearing the reproach of their despised Redeemer and King. The spokesmen of Christ CONTENDED that their loyalty to the Covenant demanded that they should disown the tyrannical power by which their liberties were threatened with utter destruction. Donald Cargill in his last testimony declared—"This is the magistracy that I have rejected, that was invested with Christ's power. And

seeing that this power taken from Christ which is His glory, made the essential of the crown, I thought it was as if I had seen one wearing my husband's garments after he had killed him." The same testimony was made by Richard Cameron and his companions when they fixed their famous Declaration to the market cross in Sanquhar, whereby they "disowned Charles Stuart, that has been reigning (or rather tyrannizing as we may say) on the throne of Britain these years by gone, as having any right, title to, or interest in, the said Crown of Scotland for government, as forfeited several years since, by his perjury and breach of Covenant, both to God and His Kirk, and usurpation of His Crown and royal prerogatives therein and many other breaches in matters ecclesiastic, and by his tyranny and breach of the very *leges regnandi* in matters civil." The publication of that Declaration has been called "one of the most magnificent strokes of Christian statesmanship in all history." The MEN who uttered these testimonies were not, as some have stated, guilty of rashness and rebellion. Rather did they declare themselves to be far-seeing and disinterested patriots, the courageous and loyal-hearted pioneers of freedom whose trumpet call in the wilderness became the voice of the whole nation eight years later. They were men who had understanding of the times and knew what Israel ought to do.

AS WE LOOK BACK to that fateful year 1940, we can realize more clearly the part that Britain played when she stood single handed and alone to face the hordes of barbarism, and by her heroic endurance preserved liberty for mankind. In that far-off day when another tyranny equally destructive of the cause of freedom, equally hostile to the Kingdom of Christ, was about to plunge the land in total eclipse, there was a loyal remnant whose hearts God had touched, who unfurled the banner—"For Christ's Crown and Covenant," and by their steadfastness in testimony and in suffering, prepared the way for the downfall of the house of Stuart, and the establishment of the liberties which succeeding generations have enjoyed. What DR. SMELLIE says of Cameron, we may say of the Covenanters in general—"They became rebels, but glorious rebels whom our consciences justify and our hearts revere." The real rebels were those who brake asunder the bands of Christ's authority, cast His Crown to the dust, and slaughtered His saints.

Never was there seen in Scotland a people more noble-minded, more enlightened, more devoted to religion or more

zealous for the nation's good, than those who went forth to the wilderness in obedience to the call of conscience and of their Saviour King. As Prof. Masson quoted by Dr. Hewison says—"They were simply the whole flower and strength of the Scottish nation, from the highest peerage to the lowest peasantry."

The greatness of the loyalty of the Covenanters is seen when we think of the greatness of the suffering they endured without yielding. They were hunted as wild beasts on the mountains, crowded into loathsome dungeons, tortured, exiled, beheaded, drowned, and yet all that devilish ingenuity could devise in the way of cruelty could not make them renounce their allegiance to Christ. And as we remember that their sufferings were not for a day or a month, but for many a dismal year, we appreciate their steadfast spirit through all. When sorrows come not single spies but in battalions, and when the troubles are prolonged, it takes the strongest spirit to endure unto the end. During the defence of the last fort of the Philippines, one day a shot hit the flag pole and the flag was fluttering down, but ere it reached the ground two American soldiers grasped it, and soon it was flying again. As one and another leader of the Covenant fell, there was ever an arm stretched out to hold aloft the banner. As one says "The banner had been dyed in blood, but never for one hour had it been left lying on the ground for want of a standard-bearer.

This loyalty was seen not in ministers and men only. Women and children manifested the same unquenchable spirit of devotion. "Tyrants, thought ye the torture and stake, could that intrepid spirit break, which ev'n in woman's breast withstood, the fury of the fire and flood."

When the Ministers of the Covenant had to seek a dwelling among the lonely hills, they did not forget their scattered flocks. Up and down the coutry they journeyed, often by night, and even at hazard to their lives, that they might provide the Bread of Life for the hungry, strength for the weak, and comfort for the sorrowing. They were still loyal to those over whom the Lord had made them overseers. A striking testimony to the power of the Gospel was given in connection with the sermons preached in the solitudes of the mountains. May we not say that the outpouring of the Spirit on these gatherings was the Divine approbation of loyalty to Christ.

Concrete examples of loyalty were as numerous as are the grave-stones of the martyrs. Many pictures rise before the mind. We see the grey-haired widow and the maiden of eighteen summers led down the street in Wigtown to be tied to stakes within the tide-mark. Did the voice of Margaret Wilson not sound sweet across the waters as she sang her farewell song of praise? How beautiful her constancy in that when dragged out of the flood, and offered her life, if she would renounce the covenant she cried, "I will not. I am one of Christ's children, let me go." She was thrust back into the tide and soon the sweet voice was silenced. Silenced on earth, to take up the song of the Lamb upon the sea of glass.

One of the blackest deeds of Claverhouse was the murder of John Brown at his own door, and in presence of his wife and children. But amidst the blackness there shines the bright star, may we not say the twin star of loyalty. Was the courage of the wife not equal to that of her husband? Though her soul must have been in agony she would not utter a word that might cause her loved one to falter. Rather did she strengthen his hand in God saying, "Indeed John, I can willingly part with you." With like courage as she looked upon her dead, did she call the murderer to question for his crime. Or again we think of the youthful ANDREW HISLOP standing on the moorland with his Bible in his hand, refusing to draw his bonnet over his eyes because his murderers for a time were unable to find their hands before that dauntless gaze. As an example of loyalty possibly most would single out JAMES RENWICK. Though delicate and frail in body, often with no dwelling, save the moss-hag or the damp cave, with a price on his head, and ever pursued by his enemies—yet he travelled throughout the country, preaching the Gospel, administering the sacraments, visiting the Societies, guiding them in all things. "The boy Renwick" as his enemies called him, carried on his own shoulders for four long years the care of all the persecuted ones. Never did loyalty to Christ burn with a purer or a brighter flame than in him who was the last of the martyrs for the Covenanted cause of Christ in Scotland.

Whilst the records of many of the heroes and heroines of the Covenant have been preserved, there were many others, nameless ones, who sealed the same testimony with their blood, whose death was equally precious in the sight of the Lord, and whose names are in the Book of Life.

How may we EXPLAIN the loyalty of the Covenanters? They knew whom they believed. They had drunk deeply of the fountains of life. They had seen Jesus on the shameful tree, freely giving His Blood for them, and that vision bound them to Him with cords of love, that tribulation, distress, persecution, could not sever. They had seen Jesus on the throne, crowned with glory and honour, and that vision determined the path they must follow as His loyal subjects, as it also inspired them with hope, and guided them with might. As DR. STALKER says—"The eye of the dying Covenanter saw painted on the mist of the moorland the vision of a consecrated land ruled by a Covenanted King." There are things in the Covenant specially applicable to the past, but the central truth, the Headship of Christ, for which all the battles of the Scottish Reformation were fought, is ever the same. To that truth the nations pledged allegiance, and by that engagement they are still bound. Various schemes are outlined for post-war reconstruction, and it is a hopeful sign that attention is being more directed to the truth that except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. When in faith and repentance the rubbish is cleared away and the new structure is set on the old base of the Kingship of Christ, then glory will come to dwell in the land.

WE BEAR THE NAME OF THE COVENANTERS. How much they put us to shame! How far short we come of their attainments! We do not claim perfection for them. Let Donald Cargill speak for them herein—"I do not say I am free from sin, but I am at peace with God, through a slain Mediator." Peace with God, that must be the foundation on which all true testimony is built. Peace through a slain Mediator, loyalty to His Crown and Covenant, zeal for His Gospel, when these are met together in our lives we shall be more worthy followers of those who without fear of man, or thought of personal comfort, pressed forward towards one aim, the fulfilment of their vows to their Covenant King, even though it should be at the parting with life itself.

The Covenant—A Timely Challenge.

By REV. A. GILMOUR, M.A., Dromara.

It is a proud and healthy instinct that has guided men to record and commemorate the high achievements and valiant endeavours of other days. The Bible itself emphatically does so on many a stirring page. What, for instance, is Hebrews xi. but such a record and memorial? There, in words that never fail to grip and thrill the heart, we read the splendid story of the past—of men and women who, when the low and easy way lay invitingly before them, deliberately took the high and arduous way; and who, when the pleasures of Egypt were theirs for the asking, chose rather the path of blood and tears, if so be they might walk with God. Nor were they disappointed in their choice: their names stand entered on the muster-roll of fame.

Now in all such procedure the Bible has practical ends in view. It is with an eye to the present it records the heroisms of the past. Faith's daring deeds of yesterday are recounted as a challenge to us, the men and women of to-day. As we read the moving story, we can hear the still small voice within us speak: "Go thou and do likewise."

But the writer to the Hebrews could not tell the full story. To do that, the time would utterly have failed. And besides, since his day, during the nineteen centuries that have elapsed, many great things have come to pass, which, not to mention Calvary and Olivet and Pentecost, are not unworthy to bear comparison with the sublimest happenings of those remote years. Amongst these historic latter-day deeds a place by no means low is deservedly assigned to the swearing of that famous Covenant whose Tercentenary we celebrate to-day.

The occasion was momentous and even critical. The clouds were massed ominously, all-overhead. The things that good men prize most dearly were everywhere in peril. A cruel despot filled the British throne, the ready and serviceable tool of his restless popish Queen. For years the National Church had itself been suffering under the harsh, pettifogging government of Charles' creature, Laud—that domineering Prelate whose pronounced Romeward leanings had led the Papacy privately to offer him a Cardinal's red hat. At long last the breaking-point had come. And between the King and his Parliament a bloody struggle was being waged, the ultimate issue of which no man could foresee.

It was in these circumstances, when the cause of liberty hung precariously in the balance, that the English Puritans turned for sympathy and aid to their nearest spiritual kin, the Covenanters of Scotland. The step, thus taken, was very natural. Their cause was one, and their aim one. Out of the negotiations, thus initiated, there emerged the Solemn League and Covenant.

The Solemn League and Covenant is, in the fullest sense, an international, civil and religious pact. As such it stands out almost unique in the history of the world. Concerned with the things of the soul, as well as with things mainly temporal, it embraces in its wide sweep the three Kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland ; and is capable, indeed, of indefinite territorial expansion. It was sworn, in the first instance, by two hundred and twenty members of the English Parliament, by the Divines of the Westminster Assembly, and by the Scottish Commissioners then present in London. It was later subscribed, midst scenes of greatest enthusiasm, by all ranks and classes throughout Scotland, as well as in many parts of England and Ireland.

The Solemn League and Covenant has been greatly owned of God. Its high challenge and bracing summons have been heard and answered in darkest hours. It was in obedience to its clarion call that men and women in the far-off KILLING TIME, bravely trod the hard road that so often led to prison and to death. "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword ; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins ; being destitute, afflicted, tormented ; of whom the world was not worthy." Nor were their sufferings in vain. The cause they served triumphed. Crowned and mitred tyranny crashed, not soon to rise again.

" The Solemn League and Covenant
Cost Scotland blood, cost Scotland tears ;
But it sealed Freedom's sacred cause ;
If thou'rt a slave, indulge thy sneer."

And to-day, amid all the loud, conflicting voices that assail our ears, the Solemn League and Covenant may still be heard, speaking with the weight and authority due to its venerable years. It speaks to mind and conscience and heart. It speaks in a language clear and refreshingly strong. It flings down to us a strong challenge : " This is how the Puritans and Covenanters, of three-hundred years ago, believed and spoke and acted, when face to face with problems

and perils fundamentally not unlike your own ; this is how their children acted in times far more painfully trying than any now : go and do likewise."

Now what precisely were the desires and aims and high resolves of those seventeenth century saints, as these find expression in the celebrated Solemn League and Covenant ?

I. They were resolved that in the Three Kingdoms, ruled by Charles, Jesus should reign as Lord supreme. Nothing less would satisfy. To secure that they were ready for any service, however hazardous, and any sacrifice, however great. For them Christ was all. In the sphere of Civil Government, as well as in the Church, their motto really was : " Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." It was as soldiers and crusaders of Jesus Christ they went to war with their Sovereign.

Their conduct here is a rebuke to us. Have we, any of us, prayed and pleaded and toiled like them, that the Royal Diadem might be brought forth, and Jesus crowned Lord of all ? We all desire this blessed consummation ; but have we, as a Church, intelligently and passionately struggled to hasten the day, when in every department of State there shall be a general and thorough-going clean-up, and a Throne shall be made ready for the Lord ? And wouldn't it be worse than futile for us thus to labour and pray, till we have, each of us, crowned Him Lord in our own souls ? This ancient Covenant challenges and rebukes us : let us begin.

II. They were resolved, those men of the Covenant, to have Church-union throughout the Three Kingdoms on the widest possible scale. " One fold, and one Shepherd" ; such was their lofty objective. But in their endeavours to attain that, no known truth was to be sacrificed, and every discoverable error was to be purged out ; thus the causes of disunion would surely disappear. The Church of Scotland, as lately reformed, was rightly taken as model and standard. And for five years, seven months and twenty-two days, English Puritans and Scottish Covenanters were to sit together in the historic Westminster Assembly to draw up the Confession and the Catechisms of the great United Church that was to be.

Here, too, the Solemn League and Covenant challenges and rebukes the Christian people of to-day. It has a timely word of caution for such as will have union even at the expense of some principle, really fundamental and vital. It has also a word for those of us who never yet have come, in

tears of shame and sorrow, face to face with the tremendous implications of our Saviour's moving prayer : " That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee." Yes, indeed, at this point in particular, the Solemn League and Covenant searches me, and humbles me, and sets me side by side with him who long ago, standing afar off, prayed : " God be merciful to me, a sinner."

III. The Solemn League and Covenant, in a further clause, employs a word that has disturbed and even scandalised many good Christian people. " Extirpation," it is commonly felt, is a word which lives and thrives in the rarefied atmosphere of Mount Sinai, rather than anywhere near the hill called Calvary ; and, as such, is quite unsuitable for our day. There were, it appears, three-hundred years ago, certain systems of doctrine and certain ways of life which the Solemn League and Covenant proposed, without respect of persons, to "extirpate." " This is an hard saying ; who can hear it ? "

And yet, even to-day, are there not doctrines and ways of life which even these highly sensitive twentieth-century Christians are themselves endeavouring to EXTIRPATE ? Do they not cheer and bless our gallant airmen as they go forth, night after night, to blast, say, Pantellaria, or to smash, say, the Eder Dam ? Nazism and Fascism, it is agreed, are doctrines so evil and so damnable that they must be EXTIRPATED, even though in the stern process millions of hearts be broken, and the world itself turned into one vast human shambles.

Well, in the days of the Solemn League and Covenant there were systems of doctrine and ways of life that, in the opinion of Puritans and Covenanters, called for like EXTIRPATION. They had proved themselves the stout allies and champions of that soulless tyranny under which free men had lately groaned. They were responsible, those systems of doctrine and ways of life, for most of the plots, conspiracies, murders, assassinations of those terrible years. Popery stood unmasked and condemned. So did Laudianism. So did all those teachings that made for the enthronement of Belial. And it was with the glory of God before their eyes, and an intelligent and passionate love of the Saviour in their hearts, that those stern Covenanters of three-hundred years ago purposed and vowed to discountenance and discourage and even EXTIRPATE all such evil systems.

At this point, also, has not the Solemn League and Covenant a word of rebuke and timely challenge for evangelical Christians to-day? For can it be truly said that, during recent years, we have honestly and intelligently faced the many disquieting features of the situation? The realists among us have too often been taken as needless alarmists; and, when they spoke, have been unregarded voices crying in the wilderness. So many people had come to believe that the Devil was dead, or was dying, or had at last greatly reformed, and that in our enlightened twentieth century some dreadful things, once possible and even common, could never again take place. Assuredly the day had dawned, they supposed, when the wolf would dwell peacefully with the lamb, and the leopard lie down playfully with the kid, and there would be none to hurt or destroy anywhere.

Was such attitude wise? Was it right? Did it manifest an intelligent and jealous concern for our Saviour's Crown, and His people's rights? Romanism is still with us—still virile and ubiquitously active—still powerful and willing to strike—still true to its ancient motto: "*Semper eadem.*"

The challenge of the Solemn League comes now most opportunely. "Awake! up with you!" I think I hear it say—"Away with comfortable illusions! The ruthless enemy we had to face and overthrow in 1643, is the same enemy, differently attired, which you have to face and fight and, with God's help, overthrow, in 1943. Quit yourselves like men! Out with kid-glove methods! No weak compromise with evil things! No truce whatever with the Devil! Forward into battle! Strike! In the grace and strength of the Lord—EXTIRPATE!"

IV. The Solemn League and Covenant, at a still further point, looks quite modern—when it begins to deal with "incendiaries." Those ancient saints and soldiers, it appears were, in those far-off days, constantly vexed and alarmed by "incendiaries." What wide-spread loss and damage had resulted from the action of those same INCENDIARIES! Indeed it might truthfully be said that, wherever there was death or destruction, an INCENDIARY was sure to be found not far away. The incendiaries of those distant Covenanting days were, it seems, even worse than the very worst that Hitler's airmen have ever yet been able to rain down on any of our cities.

“ We shall also,” so reads the Covenant, “ We shall also, with all faithfulness, endeavour the discovery of all such as have been, or shall be, incendiaries.” Thus swore those militant saints, with uplifted hands, on that momentous and memorable day. Now what, or who, were the INCENDIARIES whose discovery and appropriate punishment was one of the main objectives of the Solemn League and Covenant? We are soon told. They were those crafty, resourceful, malignant mischief-makers of that terrible day, who had by subtlest means gained the Sovereign’s ear, and had succeeded, unfortunately only too well, in dividing him hopelessly from his people, and thus setting Britain on fire, from one end to the other. Nor was that the full story of their crime. At that very time they were making most formidable efforts to snap the bond which, for the first time in history, united England, Scotland and, shall we say, Ireland.

The Solemn League and Covenant comes, therefore, with a timely and pertinent message to our people of to-day. It shows us how the Puritans and Covenanters of 1643—the true Loyalists, Unionists and Monarchists of that day—it shows us how they thought, and for what high object they were ready to dare and suffer even unto death. A Throne based on righteousness; broad-based, also, on the people’s will, and gathering closely round itself, in fruitful union, the once-bitterly divided Kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland—such was the grand Covenanting ideal of 1643. Are we wrong or foolish, when, as a Church, we still continue to acknowledge and maintain that the Solemn League and Covenant is of “perpetual obligation?”

V. The Solemn League and Covenant, in its final paragraph, deals with that most painful and disturbing of questions—Britain’s national sin. Its diagnosis is honest and ruthless. It would have us understand that, at that remote day, the greatest of all Britain’s sins was its treatment of Christ and the Gospel of Christ. The people of Britain, so this final paragraph argues, had never honestly tried to receive Christ into their hearts, and to walk worthily of Him. And from that great parent sin had proceeded all those evils, cruelties, assassinations and wide-spread atrocities, which had of late so polluted and scourged the country. In the dreadful circumstances of the time, it is held, only one remedy could suffice—national humiliation and repentance and confession of sin. Let each man, so it is proposed, let each man resolve before God to live henceforth a new life,

and to be an example of godliness to others. Then things would surely change. The Lord would turn from His wrath. and a lasting peace would ensue.

Was that a wise resolve on the part of those soldier-saints of the Covenant? Would a like resolve be wise and appropriate in the not dissimilar conditions of to-day? Or are there still amongst us some who, like the stupid worldlings of Haggai's day, will keep on saying: "The time is not yet"; "The nation is not yet ready"; "Please let us get on with the war?"

And yet, as I take a last look at this concluding paragraph of the celebrated Covenant, a voice from those far-off days comes sounding with a quiet compulsive persistency in my ears. This is its message—its timely, challenging message to conscience and heart: "Now is the accepted time. Up and begin! Do you in 1943 what they did in 1643. The work will be hard, but not unhopeful. But begin first with yourself. Return yourself in faith and penitence unto the Lord. All things then are possible. Great results will follow. In His presence you will catch an enthusiasm which shall be contagious and infectious. It knows no defeat. It can remove mountains. It is the victory that overcometh the world. Up, then! In God's name, begin!"