

THE
WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY:

THE EVENTS LEADING UP TO IT,
PERSONNEL OF THE BODY, AND
ITS METHOD OF WORK.

AN ADDRESS

PREPARED BY ORDER OF EAST HANOVER PRESBYTERY, AND
DELIVERED BEFORE THAT BODY APRIL 27, 1897, IN THE
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF RICHMOND, VA.,

BY
WILLIAM WIRT HENRY.

Published by the Presbytery.

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The Westminster Assembly

Rev. Dr. H. C. Cameron
with kindest regards of
his friend *J. H. Reynolds*

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ADDRESS.

MR. MODERATOR, AND THE VENERABLE PRESBYTERY OF EAST HANOVER:

I N the ordinance of parliament which constituted the Westminster Assembly, it was stated that the object sought was to effect "a further and more perfect reformation than as yet hath been obtained" in the Church of England; and, as the result of its labors was the consummation of the Reformation in Great Britain, I deem it proper, before entering upon the history of the body, to sketch rapidly the condition of the church which led to that memorable movement in the sixteenth century known as the Reformation, and its progress in the British Isles. We will thus be better able to estimate the importance of the work accomplished by the Assembly, by recalling what had been, and what had not been reformed.

From the time that Constantine, in the fourth century, embraced Christianity and established it as a religion of the empire, the Bishop of Rome, the capital city, increased in importance and in power in the church. It was the eighth century, however, before he exhibited, unmistakably, those characteristics which have since distinguished the papacy. In that century the worship of images was enjoined, prayers for the dead began to be offered, temporal power was assumed by the Roman pontiff over territory given him by Pepin, the usurper who filled the throne of France, and by his son Charlemagne; next came rebellion against lawful civil power and arrogant claims of infallibility. The ninth century saw a rapid progression in corruption and in that darkness which covered christendom so long, and is remembered as the "Dark Ages." Preference was now given to human writings over the Scriptures, the domination of the Pope increased, ceremonies were multiplied in the church as means of salvation, and godly men and women were persecuted. In the next several succeeding centuries even the appearance of moral virtue was lost in Rome, and the church, now governed by worthless prelates, was immersed in profaneness, sensuality, and lewdness. The effort to stem the tide by decreeing celibacy of the clergy, only added to their corruption. In the eleventh century the doctrine of transubstantiation was established by the council of Placentia. The crusades were now undertaken to recover Palestine from the Mahometans, and salvation was offered as the price of

service in them. The precious doctrine of salvation by grace was denied, and salvation by works was proclaimed. Then came indulgencies to commit sin, which were sold by the Pope to raise money for what he called the holy war. The power to pardon sins committed, or to be committed, was claimed by the Pope as the vice-gerent of God, acting in the place of and as Deity. The celebrated Cardinal Bellarmine thus states the power claimed by the Pope: "If the Pope could or should so far err as to command the practice of vice, and to forbid virtuous actions, the church would be bound to believe vices to be good, and virtues to be bad."

In order to keep the people in ignorance, the reading of the Scriptures had been long discouraged, but in 1229 the Council of Toulouse forbade the laity to read the Scriptures, and prohibited their translation. About the same time the Inquisition was instituted for the torture and murder of all who dared to worship God aright, or who fell under the displeasure of the Inquisitors. Monastic orders also had sprung up, whereby a multitude of monks lived on the credulity of the people, charging for their prayers, and for the privilege of kissing the false relics of saints with which they filled their churches and monasteries.

The kings of christendom were infected with the prevailing superstition, and sought from the Pope a confirmation of their right to reign, and thus became the servants of him who claimed the right to pull down and set up thrones. The emperors had been driven from Rome, and the imperial purple of the Caesars was changed for the scarlet of the popes; and, rich with the reward of iniquity, they lived in more than regal splendor.

The church in Great Britain shared in the corruption of the church on the continent. Richard the Lion-hearted, his brother John, and Henry II., attempted indeed to defy the papal power, but each was made to cower before it, and John and Henry were craven enough to hold their kingdoms as a gift from Innocent III., and to pay him tribute as his vassals.

The doctrine of infallibility of councils and popes led to the punishment, as heretics, of all who refused to accept their decrees; and the Church of Rome revelled in the blood of holy men who refused to obey her, and who kept the faith once delivered to the saints. The Waldenses, the Albigenses, and the followers of John Huss, in Europe, the Culdees of Scotland, and the Lollards of England, were put to death by the ten thousands, and holy men, such as Jerome of Prague, John Huss, Savonarola, on the continent, and Lord Cobham

in England, were burned at the stake. Wickliff was persecuted while living, and after his death his bones and his translation of the Bible were committed to the flames.

The vision of Saint John was now fully realized, when he saw the vile woman who sat upon the seven hills of Rome, and debauched the kings and the peoples of the earth: "The woman arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations, and filthiness of fornications, drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."

But in the fifteenth century the scourge of the idolatrous church was sent, as foreseen in the Apocalypse: "And the four angels were loosed which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men, and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone." In the year 1453 the four divisions of the Turkish Empire, already established in Asia, united under Mahomet II. in an attack upon Constantinople, using cannon for the first time in the history of wars, and in its capture the last of the emperors fell, and the followers of the false prophet established themselves in eastern Europe, to put to the sword the Christian church. But God, who restrains the wrath of man and makes the remainder thereof to praise him, brought good out of evil, and made the inroad of the Mussulman to work the reformation of the church. The Greek scholars, who had congregated at Constantinople, fled at its fall, and sought refuge in Italy. Aided by the art of printing, discovered in 1440, their teaching gave birth to what historians call, "The new learning." It was at first a revival of the study of the Greek masters in literature, but it afterwards extended to the Latin and Hebrew authors. Not content with the study of pagan authors, it soon turned to sacred literature. As Hilkiah found the book of the law of the Lord given by Moses, which had been covered by dust and rubbish in the temple, and lain forgotten for years, and which King Josiah brought forth and read to the people, causing them to renew their long-forgotten covenant with God, so the new learning found the completed word of God, long hidden from view in the Romish church, covered by the dust and rubbish of the superstition of the Dark Ages, and brought it forth, to be expounded to the people, and to cause them to renew the covenant of grace with Christ as their Redeemer. Soon the people were furnished with translations of the holy book in their own language, Luther performing the task for the Germans, Lefèvre for the French, and Tyndale and Coverdale for the English. The word of God was,

as ever, a two edged sword, and wherever it was devoutly read Romanism felt its keen edge, sickened and died. The papacy was aroused at its danger, and fought for its life, seeking to destroy the pure religion of the word of God by fire and sword; putting to death, when in its power, the men who believed that salvation is the gift of God, offered to all who have faith in his Son. But the conscience, as well as the intellect, of men had been aroused, and the power of the Pope could no longer enslave them. Christian men of great piety and learning boldly led the new movement for a reform in the church. Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, Erasmus, Oecolampadius, Farel, and last, but not least, John Calvin, on the continent; Colet, Tyndale, Latimer, and Langton, in England; Knox and Melville, in Scotland, united in the great reformation of religion. Several powerful princes threw off the shackles of papacy and protected the reformers, among them notably Henry VIII., of England, who declared himself to be the head of the church in his dominions. His action was prompted by a quarrel with the Pope, who declined to offend the Catholic king of Spain by divorcing his aunt from Henry. Henry never heartily embraced the reformed faith, which at first he had openly antagonized, and seemed to be content to put himself in the place of the Pope in England rather than thoroughly reform the faith of the church. He thus gave a direction to the Reformation in England different from what it had taken on the continent, where prelacy had been discarded. His great service consisted in exposing the immorality of the monasteries and nunneries, breaking them up and confiscating their property, and in requiring the universities to teach the Greek and Hebrew of the Bible, and its theology. His pious son, Edward, during his short reign, through Archbishop Cranmer, made much greater progress in reforming the church, and settled its articles of faith and form of worship; but Bloody Mary, his successor, attempted to undo all that had been done, and to restore England to the papacy. Then came Elizabeth, who assumed again the headship of the church, and halting at first between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, attempted a compromise of the two, but finally restored the reforms of Edward. These, indeed, were only partial, for while the creed was cast in the mould of Calvinism, the liturgy and form of government were cast in the mould of Romanism, though they have been since further reformed by many alterations. During her reign a wonderful change took place in England and Scotland, by which both became firmly Protestant. By this time the new learning had stimulated in a wonderful degree the intellect, as well as the religious faculties, of the people. It was the period of Raleigh and

Cecil, of Frobisher and Drake, of Coke and Bacon, of More and Sidney, of Spencer and Shakespeare, the age in which England began to stretch forth her hand to grasp North America. At Geneva John Calvin gave form to Protestant theology and church government with an apprehension of his subject not surpassed, if ever equalled, since the days of the Apostle Paul. His pupil, John Knox, carried his teaching to Scotland, and changed Roman Catholicism there into Presbyterianism. In England Calvinism pervaded the Protestant movement in spite of the prelacy of the established church. The old Catholic priesthood gave way to new ministers who were ultra Protestant, of the Geneva school; and the universities, from being the nests of papists, became the hotbeds of Calvinism. Eminent scholars occupied the professors' chairs, and imparted the learning which appeared afterwards in the translation of the Bible in the reign of James, and in the Westminster Assembly in the reign of his successor. The threat of the Spanish king to invade England aroused a spirit of patriotism which pervaded Catholics as well as Protestants, and the defeat of the Armada raised the power of the queen to its highest pitch. She exercised it by requiring all of her subjects to accept the doctrines of the established church, and to worship by its forms, and persecuted both Catholics and Puritans for non-conformity.

Puritanism had now become a power in the land, and its rise and development are of the greatest interest. Under the reign of Bloody Mary Protestants fled from her persecutions, and found refuge on the continent. In the cities of refuge which protected them, they organized English churches. In these churches there arose controversies as to church worship and clerical vestments. One party desired to disturb as little as possible the orders of the English church, while the other desired to reform that church by ridding it of all that it retained of Romish forms. Calvin endeavored to reconcile the parties, and advised a ritual of greater purity than that established by Edward. John Knox, who led the extreme party, was satisfied with the ideal of a liturgy purified of human tradition, and when the exiles returned to England after the accession of Elizabeth, this party became known as *Puritans*. They at first only attempted to purify Protestant worship, but the effort of Elizabeth to enforce uniformity caused them not only to antagonize the forms but the doctrines of the Anglican church. Under the influence of Cartwright, their great leader, the Puritans became Presbyterians in theory, and sought to assimilate the Church of England to the Calvinistic churches of the continent. A small fraction of them urged local church government, and were

known as Independents. On the other hand the high churchmen, led by Bancroft, now first claimed apostolic succession and divine right for the Anglican church, a claim not made by Cranmer and his prelates. As the controversy progressed, the high church party, in their antagonism to the Puritans, became Arminians in theology, while the Puritans held more firmly to Calvinism. But there was another most important difference between the contending parties. Geneva was a free commonwealth, and the English exiles who found refuge there became no less devoted to civil liberty than to the faith of Calvin. On their return to England they became the stoutest foes to tyranny. James, who had been rebuked by Melville, when he attempted as king of Scotland to lord it over the kirk, declared, after mounting the throne of England, in favor of prelacy, saying: "A Scottish Presbytery as well fittith with monarchy as God with the devil! No Bishop; no King!"

The Anglican church thereafter supported the Stuarts in their efforts to blot out the liberties of England, while the Puritan dissenters, by whatever name they were called, stood for civil liberty and a church cleansed from all popish impurities. The indebtedness of the world to the Puritans is incalculable. The liberty in church and state which has been the outgrowth of their struggle has not blessed Great Britain alone, established as it was by the Revolution of 1688, which put William and Mary on the throne, and made the England of the present day. It was embodied in the liberal charters under which Englishmen peopled North America, and its full development is seen to-day in the civil and religious liberty we enjoy, the beneficence of which all Europe feels. In the persecutions which the Puritans experienced under James and Charles, they were driven to an austerity in manners and religious faith which their enemies have used in the attempt to make them despicable in the eyes of the world. But, while not free from the frailties of human nature, they were immeasurably superior to the men with whom they contended; and they numbered in their ranks, and in their allies, sooner or later, some of the most accomplished men of their age, men far removed from the narrow-minded fanaticism ascribed to their party in Butler's *Hudibras* and Clarendon's *War of the Rebellion*. Such were Elliott, Hampden, Pym, Russell, Sidney, Vane, Hutchinson, Essex, Milton, Selden, and Hale. Indeed, it seems that it was the regiments of the "Invincibles" of Cromwell, organized by him on the principle of religious enthusiasm, little short of fanaticism, which has given the impression of Puritanism which has so largely prevailed. But whoever desires an accurate pic-

ture of the real Puritan will find it in the delightful memoir of Col. Hutchinson by his clever widow.

James I. attempted through his Court of Ecclesiastical Commission to destroy Puritanism, but he unwittingly did more to increase the numbers and zeal of the party than any one had ever done. One of his earliest acts was the appointment of a commission of learned men to make a new translation of the Bible. In 1611 they completed their work, and gave the accurate and beautiful translation which has held its place among English-speaking people until our own day. Upon its appearance, as has been said by one of her great historians, "England became the people of a book, and that book was the Bible." It became familiar to every Englishman, and its truths, clothed with the force and beauty of its language, kindled a startling enthusiasm. Everywhere one heard theological questions discussed, and the Bible quoted, and the claims of prelacy and royalty to divine right ceased to be respected in proportion to the enlightenment of the people. Heedless of the rising storm, the king became more and more despotic, declaring all to be Puritans who opposed his claim to absolute prerogative. Perceiving that the Puritans were Calvinists, he took into his favor those who embraced Arminianism, and thus brought about two hostile combinations, the one composed of those who advocated despotism in the state and error in the church, the other of those who advocated civil liberty and sound theology. He had for his active agent Bancroft, now the Archbishop of Canterbury, who deposed a great number of ministers because of their Calvinistic faith, and filled their places with Arminian divines, ready to do his bidding. So general was this, that when one was asked what Arminians hold, he replied wittily, but truly, "all the good places in the church." The nation, already disgusted by the truckling policy of the king toward Catholic Spain, became alarmed at the persistent efforts to establish despotic powers in church and state, and the ranks of the Puritans were soon filled with men who before had shown no sympathy with them in their sufferings for conscience' sake, but who were not willing to relinquish that civil liberty which had been the boasted inheritance of Englishmen.

Charles succeeded his father in 1625, while the nation was in this perturbed state, and, with what seemed a judicial blindness, not only attempted to rule with increased despotism, but showed himself utterly unprincipled by breaking every promise made to his parliaments for redress of grievances, by which he had induced them to grant him supplies. Two most dangerous men became his trusted

counselors, Archbishop Laud and the Earl of Strafford. Laud claimed for the Anglican bishops divine right as the successors of the apostles, and the bishops' courts persecuted every one who denied the claim. The king having married a papist, the daughter of the French king, was believed to be inclined to that faith, along with Laud, and their increased severity towards the Puritans strengthened that belief in the minds of the people. Strafford was the embodiment of tyranny, and he deliberately planned to make Charles the absolute ruler of England, independent of, and superior to, parliaments, and to put the estates and personal liberties of the whole people at the disposal of the crown. For eleven years no parliament was called, and in the meanwhile large sums were exacted by illegal means, and men who claimed civil rights were thrown into prison.

Two incidents occurred in the meanwhile which brought the conflict between Charles and the people to an issue. The one was the patriotic resolve of John Hampden to resist the collection of the illegal tax demanded of him by the king's officers, for which judgment was pronounced against him by a subservient court, and he cast into prison. The corruption of the highest court in the kingdom, which thus decided against the express provisions of *Magna Charta* and the Bill of Rights, consented to by Charles himself, added fuel to the flame already kindled. The other incident led directly to the bursting out of that flame, which destroyed the faithless king and his wicked advisers. At the instance of Laud, the king attempted to force upon Presbyterian Scotland the whole mass of prelatic rites and ceremonies. The Dean of Edinburgh, at the bidding of the king, attempted to introduce the English liturgy in Saint Giles in the presence of the privy council, magistrates, and a large body of people, on Sunday, July 23, 1637. A plain woman, Jennie Geddes by name, outraged at the service, hurled the stool on which she had been sitting at the head of the dean. A tumult arose in the congregation, and the outburst of popular indignation soon pervaded Scotland, and the clergy were unable to proceed with the service they had been commanded to use. The people entered into a covenant to oppose prelacy and uphold Presbyterianism, which was eagerly signed throughout the kingdom. It is known as the National Covenant of 1638. Charles at once raised an army to put down the Scottish rebellion, as he called it, but he found a Scottish army at the border ready to meet him, with which he deemed it better to make a truce, which he did not intend to keep. But to subdue Scotland he was forced to raise more money than he could gather from forced loans and other illegal exactions, and

reluctantly he called a parliament. This body, knowing the treachery of the king, demanded redress of grievances before granting supplies, and the king, in anger, dissolved it, and threw the leading members into prison. The convocation of the established church now came to his aid, and raised for him a considerable sum of money. With this he broke faith with the Scots, and marched an army northward again to subdue them. He found himself anticipated before he reached the border; for the Scots, aware of his design, had marched their army into England. Unable again to cope with them, Charles arranged a cessation of hostilities for two months, with a promise to support their army in the meanwhile. He soon found his treasury exhausted and himself forced to summon another parliament, to meet in the fall of 1640. The English spirit had been now fully aroused, and the people returned their ablest and most determined leaders; nor has England ever had abler or more patriotic men. John Pym was the leader in the House of Commons, and there never has been a greater parliamentary leader. The necessity of a thorough reform in church and state was recognized, and the body set at once to work to effect it. Laud was impeached and sent to the tower, to be afterwards executed, and the ministers he had displaced were restored to their livings. Strafford was attainted and brought to the block. The courts of the Star Chamber and of the High Ecclesiastical Commission were abolished. The exaction of forced loans was declared illegal; the judgment against Hampden was annulled, and a bill was passed which declared that the parliament should not be dissolved without its consent. The Protestant zeal of the body was raised to the highest pitch by a Catholic rising in Ireland, believed to have been favored by Charles, in which it was estimated that fifty thousand Englishmen perished. The king, with his wonted duplicity, while formally approving the acts of parliament, was secretly plotting with the royalists in Scotland to effect a reconciliation with that kingdom, and obtain its support against the English parliament. The leaders in that body, finding his strength lay mainly in the established church, took steps to reduce its power and wealth. At first it was not proposed to effect a radical change in its constitution, but only to purge it of its popish taints and to curtail the powers of the bishops by the creation of a council of ministers. The first step was the severance of the clergy from all secular or state offices, and a demand was made, backed by a petition of seven hundred ministers of the church, that the bishops be excluded from the House of Lords. After a severe struggle this was finally effected. To further reform the church, an act for calling an

assembly of divines was presented to the king, which he rejected. The attempt of Charles in person to arrest the five leading members of the House of Commons during its session on January 4, 1642, was the opening scene of the civil war that ensued. Defeated in his effort, the king left London, and raised an army, with which he commenced hostilities with the purpose of crushing the parliament. That body raised an army for its defence, and continued its work of reform, and with that in view, abolished, in one act, the whole of the prelatical hierarchy which had so constantly supported the king in his tyranny. Parliament soon realized the need of aid from Scotland and of sympathy abroad to maintain the war upon which it was now entered, and as prelacy, so hated north of the Tweed, was now out of the way, it determined to attempt to assimilate the church in England with the church in Scotland and the Protestant churches on the continent, as a first step towards securing that aid. On June 12, 1643, an ordinance was passed by the two houses, to convene on July 1, 1643, an assembly of learned and godly divines and others, to advise with parliament in settling for the church in England its doctrine, government and form of worship. The ordinance sets forth the occasion of its passage as follows:

“Whereas, amongst the infinite blessings of Almighty God upon this nation, none is nor can be more dear unto us than the purity of our religion; and for that, as yet, many things remain in the liturgy, discipline and government of the church, which do necessarily require a further and more perfect reformation than as yet hath been obtained; and, whereas, it has been declared and resolved by the Lords and Commons assembled in parliament, that the present church government, by archbishops, bishops, their chancellors, commissaries, deans, and chapters, archdeacons, and other ecclesiastical officers depending upon the hierarchy, is evil, and justly offensive and burdensome to the kingdom, a great impediment to reformation and growth of religion, and very prejudicial to the state and government of this kingdom; and, therefore, they have resolved, that the same shall be taken away, and that such a government shall be settled in the church as may be most agreeable to God’s holy word, and most apt to procure and preserve the peace of the church at home, and nearer agreement with the Church of Scotland and other reformed churches abroad; and for the better effecting hereof, and for the vindicating and clearing of the doctrine of the Church of England from all false calumnies and aspersions, it is thought fit and necessary to call an assembly of learned, godly, and judicious divines, who, together with some members of both

houses of parliament, are to consult and advise of such matters and things touching the premises as shall be proposed, by both or either of the houses of parliament, and to give their advice and counsel therein, to both or either of the said houses, when, and as often, as they shall be thereunto required."

The ordinance contained the names of one hundred and fifty-one persons who were to constitute the assembly, of whom ten were members of the House of Lords and twenty were members of the House of Commons. Thus a hundred and twenty-one were divines, and thirty were laymen. No one of the commission that thirty-two years before translated the Bible for King James appears on the list. If any were alive they were too old for the work. Dr. William Twisse was named as prolocutor, or moderator, in the ordinance, and he opened the assembly on the day appointed with a sermon on the text: "I will not leave you comfortless," John xiv. 18, delivered in the Abbey church in Westminster before a great congregation, in which sat the members of the two houses of parliament and many of the divines named in the ordinance. The assembly then went into the chapel of Henry VII., where the roll was called. The body continued to meet in this chapel until the approach of winter, when, finding it too cold a place, it adjourned to the Jerusalem Chamber, where the sessions were afterwards held. It was most appropriate to connect the history of this memorable assembly with the venerable Abbey, which is such a depository of all that is great in English history. The first church built upon the spot now occupied by the Abbey was the pious work of Sebert, king of the East Saxons, upon his conversion to Christianity in the sixth century, and is believed to have been intended as a memorial of the visit of Saint Augustine to England when he attacked and overthrew the Pelagian heresy in the native country of its author. The beautiful chapel of Henry VII. was built in 1502, and dedicated to the Virgin Mary by this the last of the mediæval kings of England. It has been the burial-place of nearly every king since its erection, as the Abbey has been the place of their coronation. This has been beautifully expressed by the poet Waller in the lines,

"That antique pile behold,
Where royal heads receive the sacred gold;
It gives them crowns, and does their ashes keep:
These made like gods, there like mortals sleep,
Making the circle of their reign complete,
These suns of empire, where they rise they set."

The Jerusalem Chamber was built by Abbot Littlington in the

latter part of the fourteenth century as a guest chamber for his house, and took its name from the tapestry pictures of the history of the siege of Jerusalem with which it was hung. It had been made memorable by the death of Henry IV. from apoplexy, March 20, 1413, while he was preparing for a visit to the holy land. Shakespear thus describes the scene:

King Henry : "Doth any name particular belong
 Unto the lodging where I first did swoon?"
 Warwick : "'Tis called Jerusalem, my noble Lord."
 King Henry : "Laud be to God! even there my life must end.
 It hath been prophesied to me many years,
 I should not die but in Jerusalem;
 Which vainly I supposed the Holy Land;
 But bear me to that chamber; there I'll lie;
 In that Jerusalem shall Henry die."

Now a body of the most pious and learned men of English history were to occupy these venerable chambers, to restore the pure theology of Augustine; to teach a wicked king that resistance to tyrants is obedience to God; over the ashes of the greatest and the noblest of the English race, to proclaim the precious doctrine of the resurrection of the dead through a risen Saviour; to point from this most venerable but perishing pile to the new Jerusalem, not built with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Among the rules for the regulation of the body framed by parliament, two are worthy of mention: 1, That "every member, at his first entry into the assembly, shall make serious and solemn protestation not to maintain anything but what he believes to be the truth, in sincerity, when discovered unto him"; the other, that "What any undertakes to prove as necessary, he shall make good out of the Scripture."

The body at first undertook to revise the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England, and had proceeded as far as the first fifteen when an order came from parliament to proceed at once to the forming of a Directory of Worship and Discipline, and a form of government to take the place of what had been set aside. In the meanwhile important events had taken place which materially changed the purpose of the assembly. A convention of estates, and a General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland, had been called to meet in Edinburgh on the second of August, in order that the affairs of that kingdom, both civil and religious, might be put upon a firmer basis amidst the dangers that threatened them. The war had at first gone against the forces of parliament, and the necessity of obtaining aid from Scotland had become

more pressing. Parliament thereupon sent as commissioners to the two bodies the Earl of Rutland, Sir William Arnyrn, Sir Henry Vane, Jr., Mr. Hatcher, and Mr. Darby. The Assembly joined with them two of its members, Mr. Marshall and Mr. Nye. These commissioners bore letters from the parliament and Assembly, describing the deplorable condition of the kingdom of England, and supplicating aid in their struggles against the enemies of civil and religious liberty. So touching was the appeal, that we are told it drew tears from the eyes of many of the sturdy Scotchmen. They determined to go at once to the aid of their English co-patriots. But a seeming difficulty had to be overcome, arising from the different motives which had theretofore inspired the action of the two kingdoms. The struggle in England had for its primary object the restoration of civil liberty, and the reform of the church was but a secondary consideration forced upon parliament, nearly every member of which was a member of the Church of England, by the attitude of prelacy towards the movement. In Scotland the movement had for its object the restoration of the church to its previous Presbyterian model, set by Knox disentangled from the partial prelacy forced upon it by the Stuarts. The fear that Charles, after overthrowing the liberties of England, would attack those of Scotland, was indeed entertained by many, but it was not aroused in the breast of the people, till it was discovered that the king was enlisting a force of Irish Catholics to support a rising in the Highlands under the Earl of Montrose, which aimed at the overthrow of the government at Edinburgh. It was at this juncture that the English Commissioners arrived in Scotland.

Alexander Henderson on the part of the Scotch, and Sir Henry Vane on the part of the English, soon came to an agreement to bind the two kingdoms by a solemn League and Covenant in the defence of civil liberty and pure religion. This celebrated paper was said to have been drawn by Henderson, the moderator of the Scotch Assembly, and if so, it shows that he was an accomplished statesman, as well as a learned divine. It binds with a solemn oath to the preservation of the reformed religion in the Church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government; to the reformation of religion in the kingdoms of England and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government according to the word of God and the example of the best reformed churches; to the endeavor to bring the church in the kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in faith, government, worship, and catechising; to the endeavor to extirpate popery, prelacy, superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever shall

be found contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness; to the endeavor, with their estates and lives, mutually to preserve the rights and privileges of the parliaments, and the liberties of the kingdoms; to preserve and defend the king's person and authority, in the preservation and defence of the true religion and the liberties of the kingdoms: to preserve a firm peace and union between Scotland and England, and zealously to assist and defend all who shall enter into the League and the Covenant. The paper closes with a humble confession of sin, and a purpose of amendment and reform, that God may turn away his wrath, and establish truth and peace in the land.

The Convention of Estates and Scotch Assembly cordially and unanimously adopted the League and Covenant without delay, and sent it by a special messenger to London. There on the twenty-fifth of September, 1643, it was ratified by both Houses of Parliament and the Assembly, in the church of St. Margaret, Westminster, each member, with bare head and right hand uplifted, swearing to its faithful performance.

This changed the work of the Assembly. The task laid upon it now was the framing of a system of theology, of church government, and of worship, that would be accepted and adopted by the reformed churches in the three kingdoms. Upon this task the Assembly entered, disregarding its previous work. In its accomplishment it was greatly aided, I may say led, by the able commissioners sent by the Scottish Assembly to take part in its deliberations, who, however, declined to vote, though invited to do so.

And now that the Assembly has entered upon the work that made it famous, let us turn back the clock of time two hundred and fifty-three years, and look in upon it, note its members, its method of work, and what it accomplished.

As we enter the chamber from the outer door a picturesque scene is presented. The members are clothed in a variety of costumes, all, however, of grave character, and strongly contrasting in the want of ornamentation with the gay fopperies of the cavaliers, which one had been accustomed to see on the streets of London. The English members wear knee-breeches with black hose, some with boots, and others with gaiters covering their ankles and legs. They have long waistcoats buttoned up so as completely to conceal their shirt-bosoms; around their necks are white bands, not very large, yet sufficient to reach the shoulders. The members of parliament wear short cloaks of various patterns and fashions; the divines wear gowns of different fashions also, a few exhibit the canonicals of the Church of England.

The Scotch have gray hose, leather girdles around their waists, and capacious woollen coats; around their necks are neckties of different colors. All have short hair on their heads, while some have clean-shaven faces, and others beards, generally gray.

At the upper end of the room Dr. Twisse, the prolocutor, sits in a chair on a frame raised a foot from the floor. Before him two chairs are placed on the floor, in one of which sits Dr Cornelius Burgess, one of the two assessors who preside in the absence of the prolocutor; the other chair is vacant, owing to an attack of the gout which detains Mr. White, the other assessor. In front of these a long table stands, at which the two scribes, Rev. Henry Robrough and Mr. Adoniram Byfield, sit; next to this table, on the prolocutor's right hand, there are three or four ranks of benches; on the lowest one the six Scotch commissioners sit; back of them are the members of parliament, who are deputed as members of the Assembly. On the prolocutor's left hand there are three or four ranks of benches, which occupy the entire length of the room, and have their duplicates on the opposite side of the lower end, reaching to those first described as on the right hand. On these sit the English divines. From the chimney, at the lower end of the room, to the door is an open space, which is used by the lords of parliament, who sit in the chairs around the fire. Over the mantel is a painting of the death of Henry IV., and texts relating to Jerusalem. We have hardly time to look around and take in the scene, before Dr. Twisse raps the body to order, and opens the session with a short prayer. He shows his great learning in the wording of his petition, and his patriotism in his earnest supplication for the success of the cause of parliament, which he presents before the throne of grace as the cause of civil liberty and Christian purity. The invocation ended, we may examine more closely the body while the clerk is reading the minutes of the preceding day, and calling the docket of business. Selected by parliament for their piety and learning, the members show in their faces the benignity of the Christian and the refinement of the scholar. Nearly every one is a university graduate, educated at Oxford, Cambridge, or St. Andrews. Coming from different parts of the kingdom, they represent the different phases of Christianity which prevail, though most of them have had Episcopal ordination. They are easily classified, as Erastians, holding that the power of punishing all offences, civil or ecclesiastical, belongs to the civil magistrate, and denying to the church the power of censure or excommunication of unworthy members; Independents, holding that each congregation has complete power over its members, and that there is no supervisory power over the individual church in any kind

of church council; Presbyterians, holding that ecclesiastical censures are to be inflicted by church courts, and these should consist of sessions, presbyteries, synods and assemblies, constituted of elders, both teaching and preaching, and that these, with deacons, are the proper church officers; and the parity of the ministry. But few Episcopalians attended the Assembly, and these had all withdrawn after the adoption of the League and Covenant, except Dr. Featly, who was afterwards expelled for improper conduct, in revealing the proceedings to Archbishop Usher, in violation of the directions of the ordinance of parliament.

We find the leaders of the Erastians to be able men, especially eminent for their rabbinical learning. They are John Selden, now somewhat advanced in age, one of the most learned men and accomplished lawyers England ever produced, pronounced by the learned Grotius to be "the glory of the English nation," a man whose learning had proved too great for his mental digestion, and whose conclusions were, therefore, not always sound; Dr. John Lightfoot, a great scholar, modest, temperate in all things, except in his insatiable thirst for knowledge, and more learned in biblical studies than the great Selden himself. To these is joined Rev. Thomas Coleman, also greatly distinguished as a scholar.

Five able and consecrated divines led the Independents: Thomas Goodwin, Sidrach Simpson, Philip Nye, Jeremiah Burroughs, and William Bridge. They have been exiles in Holland during the ecclesiastical reign of Archbishop Laud, and have returned upon the meeting of parliament.

These parties, small in their numbers, derive their importance from the forces back of them. The parliament, loth to give up power, sustain the Erastians; the army, with the Independents of Cromwell's "Ironsides," give increasing strength to the Independents. In the Assembly the Presbyterians greatly preponderate, not in numbers only, but in the many able men in their ranks. Chief among these are the Scotch commissioners. The leader of these, Alexander Henderson, has been three times moderator of the Scotch Assembly, wrote the National Covenant of 1638, and the International League and Covenant of 1643, and is reputed the wisest member and most eloquent divine in the body; and no one exerts more influence over it. On the same bench are the other Scots, the learned and saintly Samuel Rutherford, whose "Religious Letters" have been a precious inheritance to Christianity. The still more learned Robert Baillie, the master of thirteen languages, and a theologian of such fame that the

four Scotch universities each offered him the chair of Divinity about the same time. His extensive correspondence furnishes us with much of our knowledge of the inner history of the Assembly. The youngest of the Scotch commissioners, and the youngest member of the body, being only thirty years of age, is George Gillespie. He is the ablest debator, and is considered the one most thorough in his acquaintance with the matters engaging their deliberations; a brilliant speaker, of whom it may be said, as of the youthful Francis Bacon by Ben Johnson, "The fear of every one that heard him was lest he should make an end." In the Scottish delegation sit two elders, Lord Maitland and the accomplished lawyer and statesman, Archibald Johnston, of Warriston, both now zealous covenanters, but the first destined, after the restoration, to become an apostate, and, under the title of the Duke of Lauderdale, to be a ruthless and bloody persecutor of the Scotch Covenanters; the second to stand fast to his principles, and to suffer death in the persecution conducted by his present associate.

Back of the Scotch sit the distinguished delegates of parliament. Among the Lords we note three powerful nobles, the Earls of Northumberland, Salisbury and Bedford. In the veins of Northumberland courses the blood of Harry Percy, the Hotspur of Shakespeare. His brother, George Percy, had been one of the earliest and most prominent of the Jamestown colony. Salisbury is the son of the second Cecil, who, with his father, had been Elizabeth's great prime ministers, and whose talents have been inherited by the present premier of England. Bedford mostly interests us in his famous son, Sir William Russell, the intimate friend of Algernon Sidney, both of whom became martyrs to the cause of civil and religious liberty after the restoration of Charles II., and whose genius, piety, and heroic deaths have fixed them as twin stars of the first magnitude in the galaxy of English heroes. But two other Lords, Wharton and Howard, excite our special interest because of their narrow escape from the vengeance of Stratford. They were brave enough to petition the king to make peace with Scotland, and for this were charged with treason and thrown into the tower, from which they have been recently released.

Among the Commons we see the learned John Selden, Sir Henry Vane, Jr., distinguished equally in New England as in England; John Pym, the eminent parliamentary leader; Francis Rouse, famous for his version of the Psalms; Sir John Evelyn, whose diary is a classic; Mr. Sergeant Wilde, afterwards Chief Baron of the Exchequer; Bulstrode Whitelock, afterwards Keeper of the Great Seals; Oliver St. John, afterwards Chief Justice of Common Pleas, and Sir Matthew

Hale, the future great Chief Justice of England, eminent for his piety as well as his learning, whose "Contemplations, Moral and Divine," furnished the model on which the character of our great Washington was formed by his mother. In front of the Scotch and to their right, where sit the English divines, the figures which first strike us are those of John Arrowsmith and Herbert Palmer, because of their physical defects; Dr. Arrowsmith, from the loss of an eye, and Dr. Palmer, from diminutive size, on account of which he is called by his associates "Little Palmer." Both are among the ablest men in the body, and its work shows their impress. As for the rest, we can only note some of the most prominent leaders: Edmund Calamy, no less courageous than learned, who did not hesitate to rebuke Cromwell and Monk for their misdeeds when they were at the height of their power; Thomas Gataker, recognized as one of the most able, learned and pious divines of his age, whose name as a scholar stands nearly on a level with that of Selden and Usher; Stephen Marshall, whose ability and activity in the cause of parliament caused Clarendon to calumniate him in his *History of the Rebellion*; Lazarus Seaman, described by his associate, Dr. Calamy, as "a great divine, thoroughly studied in the original languages of the Holy Scriptures," and by another, as "almost invincible as a disputant"; Matthew Newcomen, excelling in wit and originality, an accomplished scholar and a gifted orator.

But time fails us to inquire further as to the most distinguished members, for the preliminary business of the morning has been accomplished, and the order of the day has been taken up for debate. It is the report of one of the three grand committees of the body, that "church courts have the power of censure and excommunication," and the discussion is to be on Matthew xviii. 15-18. Mr. Byfield first reads the proposition and then the text of Scripture: "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church: but if he neglect to hear the church let him be unto thee a heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

The Erastians, feeling the importance of the question, put forward their ablest champion. The learned John Selden arises to address the

chair, and all eyes are fixed on him, for his great learning and subtlety of argument are relied on by his party, and dreaded by their opponents. He has an air of superiority in his address, arising from a consciousness of great learning and wide-spread reputation. We can only note the substance of his speech. He says:

“There is nothing in Matthew xviii of excommunication or jurisdiction, and they could not be exercised by the ancient church till the Church of Rome got its power from the emperor. Some late men, as Dominicus Solo, and Sayrus, and Henriquez, say that there is some power given to the church, which the church afterwards did specify to be a power of excommunication. Matthew’s Gospel was the first that was written, about eight years after Christ’s ascension, the first year of Claudius; it was written in Hebrew, and translated into Greek by John; though the Hebrew that Matthew wrote be not extant, yet two editions of the Gospel are in Hebrew, one by Munster, another by Tilius; we find in Tilius’ edition, *Kahal* (Matt. xviii.) and *Guedah* (Matt. xviii), though in Munster’s, *Kahal* be in both places. Now, there being no place of the New Testament written when this was written, we must expound it by the custom of the Jews, which, according to the law (Lev. xix. 17), was, that when one offended his brother, the offended brother required satisfaction; and if he get it not, speak to him before two or three witnesses; and if he hear them not, to tell it to a great number (for which he offers to show them many Hebrew authors and Talmudists). They had in Jerusalem, besides the great Sanhedrim, two courts of twenty-three, and in every city one court of twenty-three. The casting out of the synagogue was only the putting of a man in that condition that he might not come within four cubits of another; any man being twelve years of age might excommunicate another; not that he was altogether cast off from having anything to do with the synagogue. The convocation is called *clerus anglicanus*, and the parliament, *populus anglicanus*. So here *Guedah* and *Ecclesia* signify only a select number. The word is used in one place for woman: Deut. xxiii. ‘shall not enter into the congregation.’ Christ when he said *Die Ecclesie* was in Capernaum, where there was a court of twenty-three. The meaning is, tell the Sanhedrim, which can redress the wrong. If the Jewish state had been Christian, their civil government might have continued, though the ceremonies were gone; so that *Ecclesia* here would have been a civil court.”

When he has finished, Mr. Herle and Mr. Marshall, two able debaters, attempt in succession to answer him, but as they do not do so

satisfactorily, we need not take note of their arguments. When Mr. Marshall has finished, the eyes of the Presbyterians turn wistfully to the Scotch commissioners, and are fixed on George Gillespie. He had been seen to use his pencil freely while Mr. Selden was speaking, and it was supposed that he was taking notes of his speech, that he might reply; but the commissioner who sat next to him afterwards reported that there was nothing on the paper before him, but such sentences as these, "Lord, send light. Give assistance. Lord, defend thy cause." He rises slowly and with evident diffidence, and commences his address with a handsome compliment to the learning displayed by Mr. Selden. We can only note the heads of his speech. He says:

"It is a spiritual, not a civil, court which is meant by 'the church,' Matt. xviii.; for, 1. *Subjecta materia* is spiritual. 'If thy brother trespass against thee,' is not meant of personal or civil injuries, but of any scandal given to our brother, whereby we trespass against him, inasmuch as we trespass against the law of charity. Augustine and Testatus expound it of any scandal, and the coherence confirmeth it; for scandals were spoken of before in that chapter. 2. The end is spiritual—the gaining of the offender's soul, which is not the end of a civil court. 3. The persons are spiritual, for Christ speaks to his apostles. 4. The manner of proceeding is spiritual (verses 19, 20)—prayer, and doing all in the name of Christ; which places, not only our divines, but Testatus and Hugo Cardinalis, expound of meetings for church censures, not of meetings for worship. 5. The censure is spiritual—binding of the soul, or retaining of sins. (Vs. 18, compared with Matt. xvi. 19; John xx. 23.) 6. Christ would not have sent his apostles for private injuries to a civil court, especially those who were living among heathens. (1 Cor. vi. 1.) 7. If we look even to the Jewish customs, they had spiritual censures. To be held 'as a heathen man and a publican' imports a restraint *a saceris*; for heathens were not admitted into the temple. (Ezek. xliv. 7-9; Acts xxi. 28.) So the profane were debarred from the temple. Josephus (*Antiq.*, lib. xix., cap. 17) tells us one Simon, a doctor of the law of Moses, in Jerusalem, did accuse King Agrippa as a wicked man, that should not be admitted to the temple. Philo (*Lib. de Sacrificantibus*) writeth, it was the custom in his own time that a manslayer was not admitted into the temple. The Scriptures also giveth light in this; for if they that were ceremonially unclean might not enter into the temple, how shall we think that they which were morally unclean might enter?"

So ably does he enforce these positions, and expose the subtle fallacy of Selden's argument, that Selden himself realizes that he has been

vanquished on his own chosen ground, and turning to his neighbor, he says frankly, "That young man by this single speech has swept away the labors of ten years of my life." No reply to Gillespie is attempted, and the Assembly votes the proposition as reported, with but few negatives.

In such debates the Assembly was long engaged, as the different parties watched closely every proposition brought forward, and discussed every point on which they differed, at great length. As the abolition of prelacy left the church without any recognized mode of ordination, or government, the parliament soon after signing the Covenant as we have seen, directed the Assembly to take up at once the topics of discipline, and Directory of Worship and Government. In preparing these, the greatest difficulties arose from the different views of church government held by the three parties into which the body was divided. The great contest was between the Independents and Presbyterians, but the Erastians took part whenever they deemed their particular tenets involved. Finding that the Presbyterians outvoted them in the Assembly, the Independents determined to appeal to parliament and the public, and published a very able and adroit defence of their doctrines and conduct, which is known as the *Apologetical Narration*, in which they attempted, by flattery of parliament and covert attack upon the Scotch commissioners, to control the Assembly through outside influences. They were answered and completely refuted by publications emanating from leading Presbyterian divines, but the public controversy left a taint of bitterness in their subsequent debates in the Assembly. Notwithstanding this, by the tact and conciliatory conduct of the Scotch commissioners, the Independents would have been induced to yield their opposition to the most important of the positions of the Presbyterians in framing a form of government, had it not been for Mr. Nye, their main leader. He was intimate with Cromwell, who, it is believed, did not desire Presbyterianism to be established in England, being himself an Independent. When the Book of Discipline and Form of Government had been prepared and presented to parliament, the Erastians in that body succeeded in passing ordinances for changes, in which the power of parliament over church courts was claimed. These were firmly resisted by the Assembly, and especially by the Scotch commissioners, who considered it a breach of the Covenant; but as the parliamentary forces had now overcome the army of the king, parliament assumed the attitude of offended dignity, and made rude communications to the Assembly. But when the king fled to the Scotch army, fearing

the effects of offending the Scotch people, who had shown more disposition to come to terms with him than the English, parliament on June 9, 1646, adopted the work of the Assembly, divided England into presbyteries, and ordered the election of elders. The Directory of Worship had been completed, and ratified by parliament previously in the winter of 1644.

On the subject of Psalmody, there was difficulty in the Assembly. Mr. Francis Rouse, a member of parliament, had completed a metrical version of the Book of Psalms, which he communicated to that body, and obtained an order that the Assembly should take it into consideration. The principle that he contended for was, that in using the Psalms in worship, the very words of the sacred text should be retained. After two years consideration, correction and revision, both in England and Scotland, the version was reported to parliament, and received its approbation on the 14th of November, 1645. The version after further revision was adopted by the Assembly and parliament of Scotland, and is still in use among Presbyterians in Great Britain and the United States. While it retained much of the devotional spirit of David, it is hardly a fair representation of his genius as a poet

After the Assembly had pretty well settled the principles of the Form of Government an able committee was appointed to compose a Confession of Faith. Most prominent on this committee were Dr. Gouge, Dr. Hoyle, Mr. Herle, Mr. Gataker, Mr. Newcomen, Mr. Arrowsmith, Mr. Vines, Dr. Tuckney, and Dr. Reynolds, who had as assistants the Scotch commissioners. The manner in which this most remarkable of all Confessions of Faith was composed is exceedingly interesting. First the great sacred truths of the Bible were arranged in a systematic order; then these were divided into thirty-two heads, or chapters; these were again subdivided into sections, and they were assigned to sub-committees, each taking a specific topic for concentrated deliberation. The work of the sub-committees was laid before the entire committee, and debated, and altered, till all were of one mind. Each chapter thus prepared was reported to the Assembly, and again subjected to the most minute and careful investigation in every paragraph, sentence, and word, so that all that profound learning, acute intellect, and sincere piety could accomplish, was concentrated in this most perfect statement of systematic theology ever framed.

There seems to have been much less difference of opinion as to this important paper in the Assembly than as to the other papers we have noticed, as the body was very thoroughly Calvinistic in its theology. Two questions only are mentioned as having caused long debates, the

subject of election and of government by church officers as distinct from the civil magistrate. Both of these, however, were decided by overwhelming majorities in favor of the Presbyterian advocates. Yet the distinction between church and state was not made as clear as it should have been, and the twentieth and twenty-third chapters are liable to criticism with our views on the subject. This was to be expected, as the Assembly had been called by parliament and its work was to be approved by it and established in the kingdom, and the Assembly seemed forced to admit the power of the civil government to this extent. On the 3rd of December, 1646, the completed work was presented to parliament, and the Assembly was ordered to add the Scripture references relied on as proof for every part. This was done by a committee consisting of Mr. Wilson, Mr. Byfield and Mr. Gower. The Confession was again reported to parliament with the text-proofs, and was printed May 11, 1647. It was not approved by both houses of parliament till June 28, 1648, and then the chapters on marriage and divorce and on church government failed to receive its sanction, the latter for not allowing enough power to the civil magistrate. These were recommitted, and the latter were never afterwards acted on by parliament, the Assembly having stood firmly by their position that the church should be governed by officers appointed by Christ, its head.

After the Confession was completed, the Assembly took up the framing of the Catechisms, based on the Confession, which had been previously referred to a committee, to which the committee on the Confession was now added. The same systematic method of work was followed as in the case of the Confession. Dr. Anthony Tuckney, who had been a fellow of Cambridge, is credited with much of the work on the Catechisms, and he is said to have composed the exquisite exposition of the commandments. With him, Drs. Arrowsmith and Newcomen are credited with most of the work. One beautiful incident said to have occurred in the committee, though often related, must not be omitted here. At an early meeting the question, "What is God," was to be discussed. The sublimity of the divine idea filled the minds of the members with reverential fear, and all shrank from the task. With a sense of deep humility it was resolved that the youngest member, George Gillespie, should make the attempt. He at first modestly declined, but upon being urged to do so, asked that they first unite with him in prayer for divine guidance. Then in slow and solemn accents he began, "O God, thou art a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in thy being, wisdom, power, holiness, jus-

tice, goodness and truth." When he closed his prayer one of the members wrote down this sentence, and the committee at once adopted it as the best answer that could be framed, one that seemed given by God as a description of himself to his devout servants.

We find from the journal of the Assembly, discovered of late years, that the Larger Catechism was first composed and presented to parliament on October 24, 1647, and the Shorter Catechism was finished and presented November 19, 1647. The proofs were not ready for presentation till April 14, 1648. The work was approved by parliament without difficulty. On October 19, 1647, an affecting scene occurred in the Assembly. The Rev. Samuel Rutherford, the most beloved perhaps of all the Scotch commissioners, arose, and moved that it be entered on the record that the commissioners from the Church of Scotland had given their assistance during all the time of the debating and perfecting of the four things mentioned in the Covenant, viz.: the Directory of Worship, the Confession of Faith, Form of Church Government, and the Catechism, during which time some of the said commissioners were always present, assisting in the work. This being ordered, the commissioners formally took their leave, after being warmly thanked for their valuable assistance by the prolocutor. On this interesting occasion only Rutherford, Gillespie, and Warriston, of the Scotch delegation, appear to have been present. Maitland had returned to look after his private interests, Baillie to prepare for the approaching meeting of the Scotch Assembly, and Henderson, exhausted by his labors in the Assembly and on the commission to treat with the king, had fallen asleep in Jesus, soon to be followed by the brilliant Gillespie, who at thirty-six fell an early victim to overwork.

On April 14, 1648, at the one thousand and fifty-first session of the Assembly, the prolocutor informed the body that he had delivered the Catechisms with proofs to parliament, and the task for which the Assembly was constituted having been completed, it should have been dissolved. But parliament continued it to aid in introducing the Presbyterian system by examining candidates for the ministry and applicants for vacant churches, and thus its life was formally prolonged till February 22, 1649, having sat five years, six months and twenty-two days, in which time it held 1,163 sessions. After that date a remnant of the Assembly was changed into a committee for the trial and examination of ministers, and it continued to act until March 25, 1652, the day when Cromwell with a military force drove parliament from its hall,

locked the door, and put the key into his pocket. With the parliament which called it into existence, the Assembly then expired.

The work of the Assembly had been reported to the Scotch Assembly from time to time, and by it solemnly ratified, the last approval being of the Catechisms, in July, 1648, and it was also ratified by the Scotch Parliament. It has ever since remained a rich inheritance to Scotland, though it was attempted afterwards to be taken from her during a bitter persecution of twenty-eight years.

On the restoration of Charles II., May 29, 1660, prelacy was again established in England, and only the dissenting Presbyterians have retained the work of the Westminster Assembly there.

In America in 1729, the Synod of Philadelphia, then the highest church court, formally adopted the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, declaring, at the same time, that they did not receive the twentieth and twenty-third chapters "in any such sense as to suppose the civil magistrate hath a controlling power over synods with respect to the exercise of their ministerial authority, or power to persecute any for their religion." They also recommended the Directory for Worship, Discipline, and Government to the churches under their care. In 1787 the United Synod of New York and Philadelphia, in preparing for the change into a General Assembly, altered the language of the chapters above mentioned, and of chapter thirty-one, so as to eliminate all power of civil government in calling church courts, or enforcing their orders; thus carrying to its logical conclusion the declaration in the thirtieth chapter of the Confession, that, "The Lord Jesus, as king and head of his church, hath therein appointed a government in the hands of church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate"; and in chapter twenty, that "God alone is Lord of the conscience." Virginia, in her bill of rights in 1776, was the first State that ever embodied the principle of entire separation of church and state in her fundamental law, which she did in the declaration written by one raised under the ministry of Samuel Davies, "that religion, or the duty which we owe to the Creator, and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force and violence; and, therefore, all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion according to the dictates of conscience." This principle has been inserted in every State constitution in the union, and embodied in the Constitution of the United States, thus securing for us an entire separation of church and state, and perfect religious freedom, the full consummation of the Reformation, and the logical conclusion of the declarations of the Confession.

I have spoken of the great aid given to the Assembly by the Scotch divines who sat with it. The body also received material aid from other sources. The ministers of London, some sixty in number, were accustomed to meet every Monday in Sion College, to consult how they could best support their Presbyterian brethren in the Assembly. Both by petitions to parliament and by publications, they defended the work of the Assembly, and especially maintained the position that the Presbyterian form of government had divine sanction, and that the civil magistrate should have nothing to do with the censures of the church, and no right to interfere with them. They afterwards accepted the work of the Assembly, and constituted the Synod of London.

The Assembly also received aid from the reformed churches on the continent. Soon after the body entered on its work it addressed a circular letter to the churches in the seven united provinces, in Geneva, in the Protestant cantons of Switzerland, in Hesse, Hannau, Anhalt, and at Paris. This letter, said to have been suggested by Henderson, represented the occasion of the calling of the Assembly in a severe arraignment of the efforts of Charles to restore papacy in England, and earnestly requested aid in the work undertaken by parliament through the Assembly. To this letter, kind and encouraging responses were received, and the advice of the most learned divines on the continent was obtained through private correspondence on many of the questions discussed in the Assembly. The principal correspondent on the part of the Assembly was Robert Baillie, whose letters are of great value in giving us an insight into its working. The celebrated Apollonius, of Holland, wrote a letter which was so valuable that it was printed for the use of the Assembly. The Elector Palatine, the Protestant son-in-law of James, and the ancestor of George I., attended some of the meetings, and took part in the debates. But of course the members of the Assembly were responsible for their work, and are entitled to the honor attached to it. Royalists, high-churchmen and papists have attempted to depreciate them, both as to learning and pure motives, but orthodox evangelical theologians have, with one accord, defended them. The testimony of the saintly Richard Baxter, who knew so many of them personally, should forever stop the mouths of their detractors. Said he, "The divines were of eminent learning and godliness and ministerial abilities and fidelity; and being not worthy to be one of them myself, I may the more freely speak that truth which I know, even in the face of malice and envy, that as far as I am able to judge by information of all history, and by other evidences, the Christian world, since the days of the apostles, had never

a synod of more excellent divines than this synod and the Synod of Dort." And this testimony is the more important because Baxter did not agree in all points with the form of government framed by the Assembly.

But the most conclusive and imperishable testimony to the learning and piety of the members is contained in the writings they have left, and in the work they accomplished as an assembly. I have examined the sketches of one hundred and six of the divines who sat in the body, and I find that their published works number near nine hundred and fifty, of which over five hundred are sermons preached before parliament and before other audiences. Many of these publications are still extant and in demand among theologians, and fully confirm the estimate of their authors by Baxter. Nothing, however, can equal the testimony in their behalf that is borne by the standards they framed for the church of God, the richest legacy given it since the days of the apostles. In pure theology, drawn from the deep well of revelation, in clearness of statement, and precision of language, nothing equal to them has ever appeared, nor, in all probability, ever will. The Assembly was charged with the task of bringing the church in England into unison with the reformed churches in Scotland and on the continent. It grasped, however, the idea of a grand Christian alliance, and framed standards around which all christendom might, and, let us hope, will finally, rally. Whatever may be the forms of government into which the church may be divided, the Confession and Catechisms should be their common property: for they constitute an impregnable fortress in which pure Christianity may safely abide and defy the darts of its enemies, whether they be thrown by the hand of the papist, the heretic, or the infidel. The great struggle with papacy caused the Assembly to attack it by name, but every heresy which ever troubled the church was passed in review, and though not named, was completely refuted by a distinct statement of the opposing truth, established by abundant Scripture authority. We cannot properly appreciate the Christian courage of this Assembly without recalling the fact that they risked their lives in doing their work. The king had denounced the body and the solemn League and Covenant as treasonable, and had he prevailed in the struggle would very certainly have sought their lives.

It would be interesting to trace the personal history of each active member of this grand Assembly, but I have already trespassed too long on your patience. I need only say that in the troublous times which ensued after the restoration of Charles II., which came with a