

THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

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ARTICLE I.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF DR. BLEDSOE.

The Sufferings and Salvation of Infants, and Reviewers Reviewed, being Dr. BLEDSOE'S rejoinder to the strictures of the SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW on his *Theodicy*. Southern Review, January, 1871.

History of Infant Baptism. Southern Review, April, 1874.

The Southern Review and Infant Baptism. Southern Review, July, 1874.

The Suffering and Salvation of Infants. Southern Review, January, 1875.

Infant Baptism and Salvation in the Calvinistic System. By C. P. KRAUTH, D. D.

Our Critics. Southern Review, October, 1875.

The Perseverance of the Elect. Southern Review, Jan., 1876.

We have a long score to settle with Dr. Bledsoe. Something more than twenty years have elapsed since we noticed, in two *critiques*, his great work, then newly published, "the *Theodicy*." This dogmatic and spirited book, as we then showed, has for its key-note the Pelagian doctrine, that, in consequence of the self-determination of the rational will, omnipotence itself cannot efficaciously control a soul without destroying its freedom. And the great "theodicy" or vindication of Dr. Bledsoe, for God's admission of sin into his universe is, that *he could not help it*. These strictures Dr. Bledsoe resents in his Review of January,

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ARTICLE V.

RECENTLY DISCOVERED MEMORANDA OF THE
WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY.

Minutes of the Sessions of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, while engaged in preparing their Directory for Church Government, Confession of Faith, and Catechisms (November, 1644, to March, 1649). From Transcripts of the Originals, procured by a Committee of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Edited for the Committee by the Rev. ALEX. F. MITCHELL, D. D., Professor of Ecclesiastical History of the University of St. Andrews, and the Rev. JOHN STRUTHERS, LL.D., Minister of Prestonpans. William Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh and London, 1874. Pp. 556, 8vo.

The Dr. Williams Library, Grafton Street, London, seems to be a rich mine of Presbyterian antiquities. From it were obtained the "Knox Papers," which have proved so valuable in the illustration of Knox's career as an English Reformer. And in it also have recently been found these "Minutes of the Westminster Assembly of Divines," contained in three volumes of manuscript foolscap, inscribed with this title, though in a more modern hand than the manuscripts themselves. In the judgment of those competent to decide such a question, there can be no doubt that the "Minutes" are in the handwriting of Adoniram Byfield himself, one of the Clerks of the Westminster Assembly, whose name is written several times on the records in the same handwriting as the Minutes. The whole record extends from August 4, 1643, to April 24, 1652. The present published volume, however, embraces only that portion of the records extending from November, 1644, to March, 1649. No one seems to know how this remarkable manuscript came into the Williams Library. In the catalogue of manuscripts, it is merely said: "It does not appear when these volumes were deposited in this Library. They came, most probably, with Morrice's Manuscripts."

This record, imperfect as it is, will be deemed by Presbyterians of greater importance, because, as will be remembered, no formal record of the minutes of the Westminster Assembly is now known

to be extant. The record is supposed to have been destroyed in the great fire in London.

It will be found, however, that these are not, in any strict and formal sense, "Minutes" of the Westminster Assembly, but merely such memoranda as a clerk of one of our Presbyteries is accustomed to make while business is going on, with a view to aid his memory in making up the records more fully and accurately at his leisure, only that, in this case, the clerk seems to have aimed to discharge the functions of a reporter as well as clerk. The resolutions passed in the Assembly are not entered, but merely referred to, as is the custom with our clerks. Occasionally the memoranda of speeches made are sufficiently full to enable us to get the drift of the argument and sentiments of the speakers; but more commonly the record is only of broken sentences and catch-words, from which no one but the writer, by the aid of his memory, could gather the full sense.

From this general description of the manuscripts should properly be excepted one portion of them, which seems to have been written out more fully and accurately from his memoranda by the scribe. This portion embraces what more properly may be called the "Minutes" of the Assembly from March 9, 1645 to August, 1647. It is to this portion that the editor of the volume has given special attention, and by most painstaking search of the contemporary records of Parliament, has been able to supply important documents which are referred to in these Minutes, but not recorded in them.

On the discovery of these papers, the General Assembly of the Established Kirk of Scotland took immediate measures to secure the publication of them. A Committee was appointed to procure a transcript, which, when obtained, was put into the hands of Prof. Mitchell and Dr. Struthers, to be carefully edited and published. The present volume, embracing an important part of the records, is the result of this arrangement.

Probably to no other man in Scotland could such a trust have been more appropriately confided than to the amiable and accomplished Professor of Church History in Saint Andrews. His position, his tastes, and his high accomplishments, all combined

to secure for him the confidence of the Presbyterian public, and fit him for the peculiar work to be done. The result of his labors justifies fully the wisdom of the Assembly's selection. His very able introduction, his well considered notes explanatory of his text—or of the omissions of the text—and his singular and successful diligence in searching the contemporary Journals of the Houses of Parliament for Acts and Resolutions concerning the Westminster Assembly and its labors, with which to illustrate and interpret these imperfect memoranda, all evince the signal qualifications of Dr. Mitchell for the task undertaken, and entitle him to the grateful acknowledgments of Presbyterians of all names and countries.

Though the discussions on Church Government and Discipline form a small part of the record now published, Dr. Mitchell announces his purpose in the introduction to deal almost exclusively with the proceedings of the Assembly connected with the framing of its doctrinal standards; leaving the question of Church Government, we suppose, to be discussed in connexion with the "Minutes" of sessions from July, 1643, to November, 1644, which relate more especially to the questions of Church polity and worship of the Church. He supposes that the account of the doctrinal discussions connected with the framing of the Articles of Religion will be of more general interest, seeing that here Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Independents were more generally agreed. And his judgment is that the history of these Articles of Religion will "tend to remove misunderstandings which have long alienated those who were then so closely associated, and lead them again to think and speak more kindly of the Westminster divines and the work they sought to forward, of uniting all these Protestants in defence of the principles of the Reformation."

It is well also for another reason, that—if obliged to publish at present only a part of these records—Drs. Mitchell and Struthers should have selected the "Minutes," beginning with November, 1644, for this first volume. From "Lightfoot's Journal of the Assembly of Divines," extending from the opening of the Assembly, July 3d, 1643, to December 31st, 1644, and from

George Gillespie's "Notes of Proceeding of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster," extending from February 2 to May 3, from September to December 31, 1644, we are enabled to form a much clearer conception of the course of discussion in the Assembly, than could possibly be done from the imperfect memoranda of these Minutes. This will be very apparent on a comparison of the jottings of these Minutes with the Notes of Lightfoot and Gillespie, covering, with several omissions, the brief period from November to December 31, 1644. The three records of December 9th, 1644, are as follows:

1. Lightfoot's account is :

"We speedily fell upon the business about burial as soon as we were set; and the matter was, whether to have anything spoken at the burial of the dead.

"Dr. Temple moved that something might be said at the very interment of the body; but this was thought not fit to be given any rule for, but rather to pass it over in silence; and so the minister left something to his liberty. Dr. Temple moved again, whether a minister, at putting a body into the ground, may not say, 'We commit this body to the ground,' etc. And it was conceived of the Assembly that he might; and the words '*without any ceremony more,*' do not tie him up from this.

"Then fell our great controversy about funeral sermons; and here was our difficulty—how to keep funeral sermons in England for fear of danger by alteration, and yet to give content to Scotland that are averse from them. It was the sense of the Assembly in general, that funeral sermons may be made, if a minister be called on for it; and the debate was now to find terms to fit and suit with both parties. At last we fixed on this: 'That the people should take up thoughts and conferences concerning death, mortality, etc.; and the minister, if he be present, shall put them in mind of that duty.' Here I excepted at the last word, 'duty,' for that a little speech would put them in mind of meditating and conferring spiritually; therefore I moved an alteration, which was much backed by divers, and it was changed, '*of their duty.*' The mind of the Assembly was that these words give liberty for funeral sermons. And thus we had done the directory for burial.

"Then fell we upon the report of our votes concerning Church Government, where we had left off the last day; and when we had done them, Mr. Burroughs entered his dissent against two or three propositions, viz.: against the subordination of Assemblies one to another, and against the instance of the Church of Ephesus for a Presbytery; and so did Mr. Nye, Mr. Carter, Mr. Sympson, and Mr. Bridges; and Mr. Sympson offered from Mr. Goodwin to enter his dissent; but we would not admit of any proxies."

2. Gillespie's account of the same debate, under date December 9, 1644, is :

"The votes of Government were read and ordered to be transcribed, that they may be sent to the Parliament.

"Messrs. *Burroughs*, *Nye*, *Bridges*, *Sympson*, and *Carter* entered their dissent from three of the propositions : 1. That there is a subordination of congregational, classical, provincial, and national Assemblies for the government of the Church. 2. That the example of the Church of Ephesus proves the propositions concerning Presbyterian government. 3. That no congregation which may associate ought to assume all and sole power of ordination. Mr. *Goodwin* and Mr. *Greenhill* were not present."

It will be seen that he omits the debate on funerals altogether.

3. Now, under the same date of December 9, 1644, the Minutes before us make the following record :

"*Sess.* 337, *Dec.* 9, 1644, *Monday Morning.*

"Protestation read. Debate of the Directory for Burial. . . . Nevertheless this doth not inhibit any minister at that time being present to give some seasonable word of exhortation.

"*Mr. Marshall* offered a paper to express the affirmative part.

"Debate about something to be added to the negative.

"*Dr. Temple* made report of the alterations in the frame* of government.

"Ordered, this draught of Government be transcribed, to be sent to both Houses of Parliament.

Mr. Burroughs enters his dissent from the subordination of Assemblies in that proposition, 'it is lawful and agreeable;' and that 'of particular congregations assuming the power of ordination;' and that 'of the Church of Ephesus,' if you mean [that they were congregations, fixed†.]

"*Mr. Nye* enters his dissent to the same propositions.

"*Mr. Carter* desires the same. *Mr. Sympson* desires the same. He also desired that *Mr. Goodwyn's* dissent may be entered, he being not well.

"*Ordered*, That he have leave against to-morrow.

"*Mr. Bridges* desired the same."

This comparative exhibition of what is said in the "Journal" of Lightfoot, and the "Notes" of Gillespie, and in these "Minutes," touching the debate of December 9, selected by us at

* "Draught" is written above "frame" in the manuscript, which, as will be seen from Lightfoot, quoted already, is more proper.

† The words in these brackets are crossed over with a black line.

random, will enable the reader to form some conception of the general nature and style of these recently discovered records.

Within the limits of a single article it would be folly to attempt to sum up the history and estimate the character of the Westminster Assembly. Hetherington, in his *History of the Westminster Assembly*, McCrie, in his *Annals of English Presbytery*, and Stoughton, in his *Church of the Civil Wars*, have, with less restricted limits, very fully and ably handled the subject. But the perusal of these Minutes suggests several new and striking views of certain points in the history and acts of this remarkable body, which are well worthy the consideration of those who would fully understand the spirit of our standards. Premising that the calling and the deliverances of this body are not to be estimated from our American point of view in the nineteenth century, but from the European point of view in the seventeenth, it is proposed here to call attention to certain facts in the history of the Westminster Assembly and certain phases of its action brought out in the volume before us somewhat more fully and distinctly than in previous writers on the subject.

1. It is important to bear in mind that the Westminster Assembly was the creature of a civil revolution, and lived, through the whole period of its existence, in the midst of tumult and excitement. The Ordinance of Parliament of the 12th June, 1643, declared that, as the present Church government by archbishops, bishops, convocations, and chapters, is offensive, it is resolved to remove it for one more agreeable to God's holy word, to the Church of Scotland, and to the other Reformed Churches abroad. That an Assembly should be called, consisting of learned and godly men—thirty lay assessors, ten of whom should be peers, and one hundred and twenty divines, all to be chosen by Parliament. This Assembly was prohibited from assuming any other ecclesiastical powers than those delegated to it by Parliament. In case of any differences of opinion, their proceedings should be directed by Parliament. The delegates selected were chosen largely from the Episcopal dignitaries and learned men of England as well as from among those whose predilections were for Presbytery and Independency. But King Charles, though in

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May he had expressed his consent to such a council, yet by public proclamation of the 22d June, 1643, prohibited the Assembly as illegal, and forbade those named in the Ordinance of Parliament to meet. In consequence of which prohibition, the great part of the Episcopal dignitaries and learned men declined to attend the Assembly. So that, at the opening of the sessions, July 6, 1644, there were but sixty-nine of the one hundred and twenty delegates chosen in attendance.

The personal advantage of service in the Assembly was certainly no temptation; for the provision for its members was four shillings per day for every day's actual attendance, and for the ten days previous to taking a seat, and ten days after leaving it. And even this small sum was so poorly paid, that many of the ministers were forced to go home from inability to pay their boarding. These Minutes show that the pay of the members was sent to the Assembly usually in driblets of 100, and 200, sometimes 1,000 pounds, at long intervals. And the great Moderator, Dr. Twisse, died while in attendance at his Assembly, in the greatest pecuniary straits—so much so, that during his last sickness his extreme poverty was brought to the notice of the Assembly.

The contemporary newspaper notices of the meeting of the Assembly reflect the public sentiment of the two opposing parties touching this remarkable Council. Says a bulletin of the Parliamentary newspaper, entitled "*Certain Information from Various Parts of the Kingdom*," under date of 3d-10th of July, 1643: "On Saturday last the Assembly of Divines began at Westminster according to the Ordinance of both Houses of Parliament, when Dr. Twist of Newbury, in the County of Berks, preached on John xiv. 18: 'I will not leave you comfortless; I will come unto you'—a text pertinent to these times of sorrow, anguish, and misery, to raise up the drooping spirits of the people of God who lie under the pressure of Popish wars and combustions. But we shall forbear to relate any of the points thereof, because we suppose his said sermon will be published in print for the satisfaction and comfort of all who desire to read it. The number that met this day were three score and nine," etc.

On the other hand, the Royalist journal—the *Mercurius Anglicus*—of Friday, July 7, 1644, presents its readers with this account of the opening of the Assembly (which adjourned from the 3d to the 7th July): “It was advertised this day that the Synod which, by the pretended ordinance of the two Houses, was to begin on the 1st July, was put off till the Thursday following, being the sixth of the present month, that matters might be prepared for them, whereupon to treat, it being not yet revealed to my Lord Say, Master Pym, and others, what gospel ’tis that must be preached and settled by these new Evangelists. Only it is reported that certain of the godly ministers did meet that day in the Abbey church to a sermon and had some doctrines and uses; but what else done, and to what purpose that was done, we may hear hereafter.”

In evidence of the extreme ecclesiastical party spirit of the times, may be cited the fact that during the period of the civil conflict in England, no less than thirty thousand pamphlets were issued from the British press, mostly on the Church controversy. Many of these were indeed grave and masterly discussions of the great issues of the struggle for civil and religious liberty, but the large majority of them the fiercest and most violent of philippics of partisan against partisan. Indeed, no more striking illustration of the fierce blindness of the partisans on one side, is needed than the fact that not only Clarendon, a contemporary historian, with all his assumption of philosophic elevation and his native courtly elegance of style, should malign the great men of the Westminster Assembly,* but that the philosophic Hume, a century later, should have so imbibed the malignant partisan spirit of the preceding age as to speak of the “barbarism and ignorance” of the Scottish commissioners, Henderson, Baillie, and Gillespie, and describe their sermons as “holy rhetoric delivered with ridiculous cant and provincial accent.”† It seems never to have occurred to these accomplished historians that in the judgment of thoughtful and candid men, such statements are far more discreditable to their own repute than to the men whom

* History of Rebellion, Vol. I., p. 258.

† History of England, Vol. III., p. 311.

they thus malign. For what can be more absurd than to speak of the ridiculous cant, the barbarism and ignorance, of Alexander Henderson, the man whose counsel King Charles valued above all others, and who was thrice invited to the most important professorships in the great Universities of the Continent? Or to speak of the barbarism and ignorance of the accomplished Baillie, who wrote Latin in almost the purity of the Augustan age, and was master of some thirteen different languages? Or to speak of either the cant or ignorance or barbarism of the youthful George Gillespie—that prodigy of learning—who proved more than a match in debate for the “learned Selden,” the astute jurist and encyclopædic scholar? And yet these absurdities—as if the partisanship of the English Revolution were transmitted by a sort of “apostolic succession”—are repeated by scores of historians and critics down to this day!

It was the misfortune, as men would say, of the Westminster Assembly and its work, to be allied politically with a “lost cause”—though that cause was the cause of liberty and righteousness, which, in the mysterious providence of God, is often allowed to be a failure in a human point of view. And what renders the matter worse is, that the great ideas represented in it being first crushed out by the strategy of Oliver Cromwell, its treacherous ally in the cause of liberty, it has nevertheless been held responsible for the deeds of Cromwell, its ally, when the treacherous Charles, by whom its adherents were again betrayed, re-established religious despotism. Hence this great Christian Council has been assailed and maligned for more than two hundred years by the partisans of the two extremes of thought, to which the men of the Westminster Assembly stood equally in antagonism—the advocates of *individualism* and no-churchism, which renders a free Christian Commonwealth impossible on the one hand, and the advocates of a hierarchical despotism on the other.

It has been a very common mistake with writers on the era of the Westminster Assembly to classify all who opposed the usurpations of Charles I. as *Puritans*, and thus to hold Presbyterianism responsible for the theories and measures of the English Pu-

ritans, to whom, in all except the matter of theological creed, the Presbyterian was as thoroughly in antagonism as to Prelacy itself. True, the Presbyterian and the Puritan were allied as one body in warring against the despotic claims of the Tudors and the Stuarts for royal prerogative. But the grounds upon which they fought the Tudors and the Stuarts were widely different. The Puritan resisted the Stuart because he trod ruthlessly upon his own individual rights as a man. The Presbyterian resisted the Stuart because he sacrilegiously invaded the kingly prerogatives of Jesus Christ in his Church. The Puritan, with all his zeal for religion, cared nothing for a visible Church, united as one body, in which Christ rules. The Presbyterian was just as *churchly* in his conceptions as the most earnest champion of Prelacy, though differing from him *in toto* as to the mode by which the unity of the Church is secured, and the authority by which the Church shall be governed. And in this conflict between the great churchly ideas that prevailed in the Westminster Assembly, with extremes on either hand, is doubtless to be found the solution of the singular fact that for two hundred years past, Pilate and Herod—Rationalism and Ritualism—have been friends together as against the Westminster Assembly and its work, and have united in misrepresenting and maligning it.

Yet, so far as pertained to the main purpose of this Council—the framing of Articles of Religion which should give expression to the great gospel doctrine of the Reformation in a form which might secure universal agreement among Protestants—it may well be doubted whether, with all the difficulties in its way, any other Christian Council, since the Nicæan, was ever so successful. For, however much it may be the fashion in this day to rail at the Westminster Confession and Catechisms as presenting a narrow, harsh, gloomy theology, it is beyond all question that these standards expressed the views of almost the entire Protestantism, of whatever name, both in Great Britain and on the Continent, at that era. That it expressed the views of the true Protestantism of the Church of England, will be made abundantly manifest a little farther on. That it expressed the theological views of the Independents, is shown by the fact that in the “Declaration

of the Faith and Order owned and practised in the Congregational churches in England," agreed on at the Savoy in 1658, it is affirmed that they and their brethren in New England fully assent to the substance of the Westminster standards. That it expressed the theological views of the Baptists of Britain is shown by the "Confession of Faith put forth by the elders and brethren of many congregations of Christians," agreed on at London in 1688—in which Confession they desire "more abundantly to manifest their consent to the Westminster standards in all the fundamental articles of the Christian religion." The criticism so generally current which pronounces the theology of the Westminster standards narrow and harsh, must be founded upon partisan narrowness and ignorance of the history of Christian doctrine in the seventeenth century. A theology which met the assent alike of Usher, Calamy, Baxter, Davenport, Bishop Hall, John Bunyan, Howe, and John Owen, could hardly be obnoxious to criticism as narrow and rigid.

It is well known that the first labors of the Assembly were directed, not to the framing of an independent Confession, but to revising the Articles of the Church of England; that after revising the first fifteen Articles, this business was thrown aside and the work of framing a new Confession taken up. Yet after three years, the matter of revising the Articles was again taken up, and these revised Articles are found figuring in negotiations with King Charles in the Isle of Wight. This whole matter is so fully explained in the Assembly's Memorial to the Parliament, enclosing the fifteen revised Articles, and the paper so well illustrates the relation of the Assembly to the Parliament in framing Articles of Religion, that we recite here the Assembly's official paper :

"To the Honorable House of Commons assembled in Parliament :

"The Assembly, at their first sitting, received an order from both the Honorable Houses of Parliament, bearing date July 5, 1643, requiring them to take into their consideration the ten first Articles of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, to free and vindicate the doctrine of them from all aspersions and false interpretations. In obedience whereunto they forthwith took the said first ten Articles into consideration. Afterwards they received another order for the nine next follow-

ing; and accordingly took the same into consideration. But being limited by the same orders only to the clearing and vindicating of them, though we found ourselves necessitated for this end to make some, yet we made fewer alterations in them and additions to them than otherwise we should have thought fit to have done, if the whole matter had been left to us without such limitation; conceiving many things yet remaining to be defective, and other expressions also fit to be changed. And herein we proceeded only to the finishing of fifteen Articles, because it pleased both Houses, by an order bearing date October 12, 1643, to require us to lay aside the remainder and enter upon the work of Church Government. And afterwards, by another order, to employ us in framing a Confession of Faith for the three Kingdoms, according to our Solemn League and Covenant; in the which Confession we have not left out anything that was in the former Articles, material or necessary to be retained. Which having finished and presented to both Houses, we would have forborne the tendering of these fifteen Articles, (both as a piece several ways imperfect, and the whole as relating only to the Church of England,) but that we were commanded otherwise by an order of the Honorable House of Commons, bearing date December 7, 1646. According whereunto we present them as followeth."

It will be perceived, therefore, that the change of plan from the revision of the Thirty-Nine Articles to the framing of an independent Confession of Faith, was from no fickleness of purpose on the part of the Assembly, nor any unwillingness on their part to accept the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England as the basis of the Confession to be framed by them. This fact of itself makes it manifest that these men were no narrow, bigoted theologians, bent upon radical changes and a revolutionising of the current religious belief of the nation, after the fashion of the "Thorough" school.

2. Dr. Mitchell, in his introduction, brings out very prominently a fact which hitherto has been little noticed, namely, that there is not merely a similarity, but frequently an absolute identity between a large number of the Articles of the Westminster Confession and the Articles of Religion of the Irish Church prepared by Archbishop Usher and others, agreed to by the Archbishop, Bishops, and Convocation of the Irish Church, and approved of by the Viceroy in 1615. Nothing is more evident than that these Irish Articles, and not any foreign Confessions—Dutch or Genevan—formed the basis of the Westminster Con-

fession. This Dr. Mitchell demonstrates by setting over against each other, in parallel columns, first, the headings of the Articles of the two, respectively; and secondly, the language of the Articles, particularly the Article of God's Decree—thus:

IRISH ARTICLES.

I. Of the Holy Scriptures and the Three Creeds.

II. Of Faith in the Holy Trinity.

III. Of God's Eternal Decree and Predestination.

IV. Of the Creation and Government of all things.

V. Of the Fall of Man, Original Sin, and the State of Man before Justification (including the English Article of Free Will).

VI. Of Christ, the Mediator of the Second Covenant.

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I. Of the Holy Scripture.

II. Of God and of the Holy Trinity.

III. Of God's Eternal Decree.

IV. Of Creation. V. Of Providence.

VI. Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment thereof. IX. Of Free Will.

VII. Of God's Covenant with Man.

VIII. Of Christ the Mediator.

This remarkable parallelism of titles is extended to every Article of the Confession of Faith, except six—the 12th, 15th, 17th, 18th, 20th, and 24th. But not less remarkable is the identity of the language of the Articles—particularly in the Article of "God's Eternal Decree," which it is the fashion of Episcopalians now-a-days to hold up as the special bugbear in our Confession—thus:

IRISH ARTICLES.

Art. III. Of God's Eternal Decree and Predestination.

God, from all eternity did, by his unchangeable counsel, ordain whatsoever in time should come to pass; yet so as thereby no violence is offered to the wills of the reasonable creatures, and neither the liberty nor the contingency of the second causes taken away, but established rather.

By the same eternal counsel, God hath predestinated some unto life, and reprobated some unto

WESTMINSTER CONFESSION.

Chap. III. Of God's Eternal Decree.

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.

By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated

death; of both of which there is a certain number known only to God, which can neither be increased nor diminished.

Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby, before the foundations of the world were laid, he hath constantly decreed in his secret counsel to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ unto everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honor. The cause moving God to predestinate to life, is not the foreseeing of faith, etc.

We have here cited only a part of each of the two Articles "of God's Eternal Decree," by way of illustration. The remaining portions of the two Articles are as nearly identical throughout as the portions here cited.

3. It is very evident that in framing the Westminster Articles, there was not, as some have intimated, an attempt to determine certain points of doctrine more rigidly even than the Synod of Dort had done. Instead of falling back, as they might have done, upon the decrees of the Synod of Dort, they fell back upon the Articles of the Irish Church, which were drawn up before the Synod of Dort had framed its decisions; and which, before the time of Laud, expressed the commonly received faith of the Church of England. Having been called together for the special purpose of vindicating the doctrine of the Church of England and showing that it was in harmony with that of the other Reformed Churches, and to devise such changes of polity and worship as would bring her into closer union with the Church of Scotland and the Churches of the Continent, the men of the Westminster Assembly aimed throughout, in the most catholic and

unto everlasting life, and others are foreordained to everlasting death. These angels and men thus predestinated and foreordained are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be increased or diminished.

Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions moving him, etc.

compromising spirit, to set forth in very cautious and moderate terms a creed that could be accepted by all parties. And no doubt it was with that design that they selected Archbishop Usher's Articles as the basis of a new formula, when, by order of Parliament, they laid aside the revision of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. If Archbishop Usher, the author of the Irish Articles, is justly eulogised by all parties as a divine of the most enlarged views and catholic spirit, why are the men of the Westminster Assembly denounced as narrow-minded and rigid bigots, who accepted Usher's Articles, and endeavored to make them, substantially, the creed of all Britain?

That the Assembly was ruled by this moderate and cautious spirit—even though its Moderator, Dr. Twisse, and others of its leading members, were not behind the Synod of Dort and Gomarus himself in the rigidity of their Calvinism—appears from many memoranda of debates in these "Minutes," which show at the same time, that, while adopting the Irish Articles as the basis of discussion, the Assembly scanned closely every word of their utterances. Thus, under date of August 29, 1645, Friday morning, we find these entries :

"Debate on the report of the first Committee of God's Decree."

"Debate upon the title.

"Debate about the word 'counsel;' about those words, 'most holy, wise;' and about those words 'his own.'

"Debate about the word 'time,' about the word 'should.'

"Debate about the transposing."

So, again, in the continuation of the same general subject, under date of October 20, 1645 :

"Proceed in the debate about permission of man's fall, about 'the same decree.'

"*Mr. Seaman.* If those words, 'in the same decree,' be left out, it will involve us in great debate.

"*Mr. Rutherford.* All agree in this, that God decrees the end and means; but whether in one or more decrees, is not . . . say 'God also hath decreed.' . . . It is very probable but one decree: but whether fit to express it in a Confession of Faith . . .

"*Mr. Seaman.* . . .

"*Mr. Rutherford.* If there can be any argument to prove a necessity of one and the same decree, we would be glad to hear it.

"*Mr. Whitakers.* If you take the same decree in reference to time, they are all *simul* and *semel*; in *eterno* there is not *prius* and *posterius*.

"*Dr. Gouge.* I do not see how the leaving out of those words will cross what we aim at. I think it will go on roundly without it.

"*Mr. Whitakers.* Our conceptions are very various about the decrees; but I know not why we should not say it.

"*Mr. Seaman.* All the odious doctrine of Arminians is from their distinguishing of the decrees; but our divines say they are one and the same decree.

"*Mr. Gillespie.* When that word is left out, is it not a truth? and so every one may enjoy his own sense.

"*Mr. Reynolds.* Let us not put in disputes and scholastic things into a Confession of Faith; I think they are different decrees in our manner of conception.

"*Mr. Seaman.* You know how great a censure the Remonstrants lie under for making two decrees concerning election; and will it not be more concerning the end and the means?

"*Mr. Calamy.* That it may be a truth, I think in our Prolocutor's book he gives a great deal of reason for it; but why should we put it in a Confession of Faith?

"*Mr. Calamy.* I question that 'to bring this to pass:' we assert *massa pura* in this . . . I desire that nothing may be put in one way or other; it makes the fall of man to be *medium executionis decreti*.

"*Mr. Palmer.* You will be in a worse snare in leaving it out.

"*Mr. Woodcocke.* I desire to know whether this be meant of the decree or the execution of it.

"*Mr. Gillespie.* Say 'for the same end God hath ordained to permit man to fall.' . . . This shows that *in ordine naturae* God ordaining man to glory goes before his ordaining to permit man to fall."

So, again, under Sess. 521, Oct. 21, 1645, Tuesday morning:

"Report made from the first Committee, sitting before the Assembly:

"*Resolved* by them, that mention be made of man's fall.

"*Resolved* by them, that those words, 'to bring this to pass,' shall not stand.

"*Dr. Wincop* to pray with the House of Lords next week.

"Debate about those words, 'to bring this to pass.'

"*Mr. Reynolds* offered something: 'As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the same eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto, which he, in his counsel, is pleased to appoint for the executing of that decree; wherefore, they who are endowed with so excellent a benefit, being fallen in Adam, are called in according to God's purpose.'

"*Mr. Chambers* offered something.

"*Ordered*, To debate the business about Redemption of the elect only by Christ to-morrow morning."

This long extract, which presents a very fair specimen of this whole volume, shows how carefully and with what moderation of spirit the Assembly engaged in framing the standards of faith. Though, as has been shown, they had the discussions and decrees of the Synod of Dort before their minds, and though they even made the Irish Articles, prepared by Archbishop Usher, the basis of discussion for their own Confession, yet they did none the less carefully canvass every expression and clause of their own doctrinal statement, as if no other standards of faith had ever before been set forth.

The Catechisms, Larger and Shorter, were discussed with equal care before the whole Assembly, as reported from their Committees, question by question. Under date of January 14, 1646, the record is :

“Upon motion made by *Mr. Vines*, it was *Ordered* :

“That the Committee for the Catechism do prepare a draught of two Catechisms, one more large and another more brief, in which they are to have an eye to the Confession of Faith, and to the matter of the Catechism already begun.”

To Dr. Tuckney was assigned the Shorter Catechism.

It is not until April 12, 1648, that we find the Minute of their completion, as follows :

“The proofs for both Catechisms shall be transcribed and sent up to both Honorable Houses of Parliament. *Ordered* to be carried up on Friday morning by the Prolocutor with the Assembly.”

“APRIL 14, 1646, Friday Morning.

“Prolocutor informed the Assembly that he had delivered the Catechisms, and was called in and told that they had ordered six hundred copies with those proofs to be printed for the use of the Assembly and two Houses ; and give thanks to the Assembly for the same.”

4. The Confession of Faith proposed by the Westminster Assembly seems to have been accepted by the House of Lords without so much discussion and hesitancy as in the House of Commons. Dr. Mitchell, in a very interesting and important note, (p. 412.) presents a compend of the proceedings of the two Houses of the English Parliament and those of the Scottish General Assembly and Parliament in regard to the Confession of Faith, as he has laboriously gathered them from the Journals of the Parliaments and the Minutes of the Scottish General Assembly. It appears that the first nineteen chapters of the Confession were passed by

the House of Lords on the 6th of November, 1646, in the exact form in which that first instalment had been sent up from the Assembly of Divines. And on the 16th February, 1646-7 the Lords took up the remainder of the Confession (Chap. 20-33) and read and passed upon them chapter by chapter, and then the Confession as a whole was adopted and sent down to the House of Commons with a request for the speedy concurrence of that House. But though the Lords, representing Episcopacy, accepted, the Commons seem to have been disposed to examine very critically. The subject was not taken up till the 19th May; and then after discussing it paragraph by paragraph, the first chapter, "Of the Holy Scriptures," was adopted with the exception of the 8th section, which was postponed till the next sitting. This was on the 28th of May, when that paragraph was referred to members of the Assembly who were also members of Parliament, to confer with the Assembly and report on Wednesday next; and chapters 2d, "Of God and the Holy Trinity," and 3d, "Of God's Eternal Decrees," were taken up and adopted without division. This shows that at that time in Britain all parties were agreed as to these two great doctrines of the Trinity and of God's eternal decrees. It was not till near a year after, February 4th, 1647-8, that the House of Commons resumed the subject, adopting that day chapters 21 and 22, and the first three sections of chapter 23, paragraph by paragraph; also the first two sections of chapter 24, "Of Marriage and Divorce." Milton's crotchets about divorce had gained adherents. A debate arose on the clause, "a man may not marry any of his wife's kindred nearer in blood than he may of his own," which on the 18th February was voted out of the Confession, 71 to 40. Sections 5th and 6th were also negatived at that time. On 13th March the House adopted chapters 25, 26, 27, 29, 32, and 33. At that time also the title "Confession of Faith" was voted down, and the title, "Articles of Christian Religion approved and passed," was substituted. This led to one or more conferences with the House of Lords, which had passed the whole Confession in its original form. At a conference held 22d March, 1647-8, the Commons presented the Lords with "the Confession of Faith passed by them, with

some alterations, viz., That they do *now* agree with their Lordships and so with the Assembly in the doctrinal part, and desire the same may be made public: *that this kingdom and all the Reformed Churches in Christendom may see the Parliament of England differ not in doctrine.*" But this did not embrace chapters 30 and 31 of the Confession.

It was not until the 3d June, 1648, that the Lords sent a message to the Commons announcing their concurrence in the Book as amended; and on the 20th June the House ordered the publication of the Confession with the proof texts.

It should be understood that the Confession as thus at first issued by authority of Parliament omitted the chapters 30th, "*Of Church Censures,*" and chapter 31st, "*Of Synods and Councils;*" also the 4th section of chapter 24th, "*Of Liberty of Conscience;*" and the 5th and sixth sections of chapter 24, "*Of Marriage and Divorce.*" These omissions are all significant as presenting the issues on which the conflict ensued between the Presbyterianism of the Assembly and the Erastianism of the Parliament. It was not until March, 1659, when the Long Parliament was restored, that the Confession, with all the chapters except the 30th and 31st, was agreed to by the house, and these chapters referred back to the committee that reported the Confession. On the 14th March a bill was passed for the Presbyterian government of the Church according to the ordinance of Parliament in 1648, entitled "The Form of Church Government to be used in England and Ireland." The Scottish General Assembly in 1648 had adopted the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly, and their act was ratified by the Scottish Parliament on the 7th February, 1649. Thus Presbyterianism, with the Westminster Standards, became for a time the established religion of all Britain. And though this ordinance was rescinded by the general Act of 1661, yet these standards were reënacted by the Scottish Parliament after the revolution in 1690, and thus have continued to be the established creed and Church order in Scotland to the present time.

5. We have a purpose in view beyond the mere statement of historical facts in this recital in detail of the enactments of the

secular government, whereby the theology of the Westminster Confession of Faith was ordained by law to be the religion of the British nation. That purpose is to suggest the inquiry on what ground American Presbyterians receive with so much reverence the doctrinal standards of the Westminster Assembly? It is very apparent that this was no free council of the Church, called by the Church itself under the authority given by her Head to the Church to assemble in council, with the promise of Christ's presence and the guidance of the Holy Ghost in the interpretation of the Word. It was called and controlled by the secular authority of England to which Christ has given no promise of the Spirit to guide it in a spiritual matter of such immense importance as the holding of a Christian council to determine the fundamental question of what shall be held and taught concerning the doctrine and order of Christ's kingdom. What makes it worse is that the convocation of such a council was the movement of a political party for the promotion of its own ends in a violent political convulsion. And worse still, the Christian council was not left free to pronounce authoritatively its clear convictions as to doctrine to be accepted by the people, but its decisions must be reviewed, amended, rescinded, or accepted by a secular legislature, a majority of whose members, perhaps—certainly a large number of whom—gave little evidence of personal guidance by the Spirit of God. How could the decrees thus framed go forth with that solemn and sublime preface, that ought to introduce all decrees of the true Council of the Church, "*It seemeth good to us and to the Holy Ghost*" that such and such things should be accepted as the truth and the will of Christ?

There is one significant ground upon which, in accord with the principles of American Presbyterianism, we justify our veneration for these doctrinal symbols. It is because of the intrinsic excellence and self-evidencing authority of the symbols themselves, and not the official authority either of the council that framed them, or the Parliament, its master, that enacted them. We heartily accept the pious Baxter's noble eulogy of the men. "The divines there congregate were men of eminent learning and godliness and ministerial abilities and fidelity: * * * and

as far as I am able to judge by the information of all history of that kind, and by any other evidences left us, the Christian world, since the days of the Apostles, had never a Synod of more excellent divines (taking one thing with another) than this Synod and the Synod of Dort were." But we cannot accept the council as such in its official character as an authoritative council. The best explanation of the matter is that this was another instance in the history of the Church in which God caused the "wrath of man to praise him and restrained the remainder thereof." He overruled the storm of political passion in England and the partisan strategy of the Long Parliament to bring out of it this noblest of all the doctrinal symbols of the Reformation—the noblest, because produced in a country wherein the earlier symbols, under the reviving influences of God's grace, had trained an evangelical ministry and people in the knowledge of the gospel until they saw eye to eye the great doctrines of salvation.

6. While the secular authority accepted and ordained for the most part the symbols of the Westminster Assembly, so far as they related to other gospel doctrines than the doctrine of the Church, and the functions and authority of the Church; and while it even accepted in abstract form the germinal doctrine of the Church—perhaps from oversight of the bearing of it—yet it is readily seen from these "Minutes" that the Parliament, so far from being ready to accept and ordain the concrete forms of the Assembly's doctrine of the Church, when it came to devising an order of Church government and discipline, watched the Assembly with jealous eye and aimed with despotic power to crush out any attempt to erect a free Christian commonwealth according to the ordinance of Christ.

7. It will be said, indeed, that the Scottish Church, through her supreme courts, not only endorsed the calling of the Westminster Assembly, but appointed commissioners to confer and advise with it through the whole course of its deliberations. Nay, the enemies of Presbyterianism are wont to assert that the Assembly itself was a strategical contrivance of the Scottish Church to proselyte England to Presbyterianism. As to the latter insinuation, the history of the connection of the Scottish Church with

the movement for the Assembly at Westminster shows most conclusively, that, in the first place, the Westminster Assembly had been in session a month before the proposition for coöperation came before the General Assembly of Scotland, and in the second place, that the overture for coöperation was brought by Sir Harry Vane, the younger, Stephen Marshall, a Presbyterian, and Philip Nye, an Independent minister, as a delegation from the Westminster Assembly. And with them came a declaration from both Houses of the English Parliament making known to the Scottish Assembly their purpose to reform religion in England, and desiring that ministers be sent by the Scottish Church to join with the English divines. And with these commissioners came also an official letter from the Westminster Assembly, asking the same thing. The primary issue involved was really whether Scotland would throw the weight of its military power into the balance in which, at the time, were trembling the destinies of the civil war in England. The king had taken Bristol, and everything indicated that he was about to sweep the forces of the Parliament before him. Henderson was Moderator of the Assembly, upon whom a great pressure had been brought to bear by the agents of the Parliament. And though he had previously declared that "Scotland should rest satisfied with her own Reformation, which the king had confirmed, and not meddle with the affairs of the English," yet now having given way under the excitement of the crisis, he made a powerful speech, inclining toward the alliance with England. But Guthrie was, at least, one man in the Assembly who saw the whole matter in its true light. He admitted that "the Assembly of Divines in their letter, and the Parliament in their declaration, were both clear and particular concerning their privative part, namely, that they should extirpate Episcopacy root and branch. But as to the positive part, what they meant to bring in, they huddled it up in many ambiguous general terms. So that whether it would be Presbytery or Independency or anything else, God only knew, and no man could pronounce infallibly. Therefore so long as the English stood and would come no farther, *he saw not how this Church, which held Presbyterian government to be *juris divini**,

could take them by the hand." He therefore moved that, "before any further step was taken, the Assembly should deal with the English commissioners present to desire the Parliament and the divines assembled at Westminster to explain themselves, and be as express concerning what they resolved to introduce as they had been in that which was resolved to remove." It is said the Assembly remained in profound silence for a good while after this vigorous and judicious speech, which evidently expressed the real thoughts of a majority. Even Henderson sat pensive and made no reply. But no one openly backed Guthrie, and the question went by default to leave the matter to the Moderator and the committee. It was one of the few errors of the great Henderson's public life, and there is reason to believe that he saw it and lamented it before his death.

8. It is remarkable that, though this effort to combine Presbyterianism with English Puritanism proved so signal a failure, resulting only in the acceptance of the Westminster compromise by the Scottish Church in place of the noble standards already existing in that Church, with an utter failure of England, the other party to the compromise—that Presbyterians have seemed to have a tendency to fall into the same trap in every generation since. The American Fathers in their "Plan of Union" with New England fell into the same error on a smaller scale. And the mongrel Presbyterianism which still prevails in some sections of the Presbyterian Church of America, a Presbyterianism of expediency merely, mingling with its ideas the ideas of New England Congregationalism, falls into the same error with the Scottish Fathers of the Westminster era. They do not see the profound significance of Guthrie's saying, "How can the Church which holds Presbyterian government to be *juris divini* take by the hand" those that do not so hold; nor do they perceive that Presbytery is really as wide apart from Independency as from Prelacy.

It is true that the state of parties in England at the opening of the Long Parliament seemed to justify the opinion that the way was open for the establishment of Presbytery. Each of the two great English parties in Church and State was subdivided into two classes of moderate men and of fierce men. The Epis-

copal party was divided into two classes—one, to which the king and court belonged, holding that prelatical bishops were essential to religion, since without them there could be neither ordination nor administration of sacraments. Another class, while it venerated Episcopacy as an ancient and expedient form of Church government, held that it was not essential to the existence of the Church, and was therefore willing to modify but not to abolish Episcopacy. The majority of both Houses of Parliament were probably at first of this opinion. Of the Puritan party, one class was disposed to Presbytery with a free Church; the other, of fierce Independents resolved on abolishing both monarchy and all church authority, with whom very naturally were allied the great Erastian lawyers, such as Vane and Selden, who would place all Church authority in the Parliament. With these also combined the smaller parties of Anabaptists and other fanatics, and the large body of profane men who cared nothing for the Church and resisted the yoke of ecclesiastical discipline.

The outworking of the political and ecclesiastical problem from such elements is well known. When the order of the king prevented a large number of the moderate Episcopalians from entering the Westminster Assembly, and the court party had been driven from Parliament, Presbyterianism was largely in the ascendancy in the Assembly, but Independency and Erastianism the governing power in Parliament. Hence the Independents, a small but very able body, did everything they could to retard the action of the Assembly, and when that action could no longer be hindered, through their allies in Parliament, met the Church theory of the Assembly there with a most determined opposition. As the cause of the king waned and they had no longer any need of the assistance of the Scotch army, the Independents became bolder in their measures of hostility. In spite of their engagement in the Solemn League and Covenant to promote "*uniformity of religion*" in the two countries, they at length threw off the mask and laughed at the Solemn League and Covenant as an old almanac. As the revolution advanced, the "party of progress" and of the "thorough" school, under the guise of zeal for the reformation of religion, succeeded against a majority of Parliament and a

majority of the people—who were a staid, order-loving people—gained command of the army, abolished the House of Lords, murdered the king, turned out the House of Commons, subdued Scotland, whose alliance they had courted so eagerly, and drove the Scottish Assembly, whose influence they had invoked so earnestly in 1643, by an armed soldiery out of their Assembly house with the fierce word of command “to convene their Assemblies no more.” Then at last the Presbyterianism of Scotland found that the benumbed serpent which Henderson and his compeers had with more benevolence than prudence taken into their bosom, once they had rescued it from the verge of death, darted its venom into the blood that had warmed it into life.

These final results could not of course have been dreamed of, much less have formed any part of the scheme of the no-churchism—whether of Independency or of Erastianism—at the era of the opening of the Westminster Assembly. But it might not be difficult to show the connection as seed and outgrowth between these results and the germinal insincerity and treachery that had played so large a part in the discussions in Parliament touching the Westminster Assembly’s doctrine of the Church as developed in its frame of a church order and discipline. It is very evident from these “Minutes,” and from the contemporary Journals of Parliament and other records, that while the Parliament sought anxiously to gratify the Scottish Presbyterians and thereby hold fast to the Scottish army, and also sought anxiously to keep with it the very earnest religious sentiment of the English people, and while therefore it affected great zeal to reform religion and promote uniformity of church doctrine and order in the three kingdoms, there was from the first a determination among the leaders of the House of Commons that no Church of Christ as an autonomy, with liberty to exercise all the functions of a spiritual government, should be allowed within the British realm. We have already seen that the House of Commons refused to accept the 30th and 31st Chapters of the Confession, touching Church Censures, and Synods and Councils, together with the 5th and 6th sections of Chapter 24, “Of Marriage and Divorce,” and the 4th section of Chapter 20, “Of Liberty of Conscience,” all of which

bear directly upon the question of church government and spiritual authority. And though, probably by oversight, allowing to pass the clause in Chapter 25, "Unto this catholic visible Church, *Christ hath given* the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God", and the clause in the 45th answer of the Larger Catechism, "Christ executeth the office of a king, in calling out of the world a people unto himself; and *giving them officers, laws, and censures*, whereby he visibly governs them"—yet when in the Form of Government the same *jure divino* doctrine was asserted, the statement was stricken out, and the rather tame and ambiguous statement of our Form of Government, Chapter 8, was substituted, "*It is expedient and agreeable to Scripture and the practice of the primitive Christians, that the Church be governed by congregational, presbyterial, and synodical assemblies.*" For it should be understood that our Form of Government accepts not the Westminster, but the Parliamentary statement here. And when the Assembly remonstrated vigorously against the mutilation, the Parliament silenced them with a threat of *præmunire*—whether intending the charge of introducing a foreign authority into the realm to have reference to their demand to set up Christ as Head of the Church, or the authority of the Church of Scotland in England, we do not undertake to say.

9. But the most remarkable instance of impertinent badgering and bullying of the Westminster Assembly by its master, the Parliament, will be found in connection with the discussion of the Assembly Directory of Worship in the matter of excluding the profane and scandalous from the Lord's Supper. The Parliament seem to have been determined to prohibit the exercise of any such power by the elderships, except in subordination to the secular authorities. The first demand was that the Assembly should enumerate by name the several things which exclude from the Lord's table. And strangely enough, the Assembly was entrapped into an attempt at this impossible task of enumerating what must be in the nature of the case innumerable. When the list of causes for exclusion was sent in, the Parliament in its profound wisdom annexed the proviso that commissioners should be appointed by the State in every parish, whose function

it should be to decide in case of sins not enumerated whether the church sessions might exclude from the Lord's table or not. When this monstrous proposition was enacted, the Assembly—which claimed that the spiritual rulers of the Church by divine right may debar the profane and scandalous—felt called upon to remonstrate. Though this article is already sufficiently extended, we cannot forbear citing from these Minutes and Dr. Mitchell's notes the extraordinary proceedings of Parliament in this matter.

Under date of March 20, 1645, *Mr. Marshall* called the attention of the Assembly to "an ordinance for church government which had been put out and is now in every man's hand, some things in which will lie heavily upon the consciences of many of our brethren if called to carry it into execution." It was "Ordered that *Mr. Marshall, Mr. Vines, Mr. Seeman, Mr. Newcomen,* to consider what point of conscience may press this Assembly to make their humble address to the Parliament by way of petition to that purpose, and make report to the Assembly."

Mr. Marshall reported the same day a form of petition, which was agreed to after amendment; and on 23d March, the petition, signed officially by the Moderator, assessor, and scribes, was carried up to the Parliament. In this petition, after expressing gratitude to God for what the Parliament has done heretofore, they say:

"That nothing but conscience of duty to God, to yourselves, and the souls of the rest of our brethren, the people of the Lord, could excuse us in any seeming backwardness to act according to your vote and ordinances leading thereto. Yet are we to our grief constrained at this time in all humility and faithfulness to represent to the Honorable Houses that there is still a great defect in the enumeration of scandalous sins—very many scandalous sins ordinarily committed in all places, and formerly presented by your petitioners, being still omitted: and that the provision of commissioners to judge of scandals not enumerated appears to our consciences to be so contrary to that way of government which Christ hath appointed in his Church, in that it giveth a power to judge of the fitness of persons to come to the sacrament unto such as our Lord Christ hath not given that power unto: and also layeth upon us a necessity of admitting some scandalous persons to the sacrament, even after conviction before the eldership, and to be so differing from all example of the best Reformed Churches, and such a real hindrance to the bringing of the Churches of God in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and

uniformity, and in all these respects so disagreeable to our Covenant, that we dare not practise according to that provision. * * * We do humbly pray that the several elderships may be sufficiently enabled to keep back all such as are notoriously scandalous from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper * * * it expressly *belongeth unto them by divine right* and by the will and appointment of Jesus Christ, which with the help of superior assemblies will prevent all the feared inconveniences," etc., etc.

At this day and under our American notions of the autonomy of the Church of Christ, nothing can seem more preposterous than that such a claim for the Church should ever have needed to be petitioned for to a Protestant Christian legislature. But it seems to have raised a storm in the Parliament—whether of real or affected passion we are not able to determine. After debating the matter in committee of the whole from the 1st to the 11th April, the House of Commons voted by 88 to 76 "that this petition thus presented by the Assembly of Divines is a breach of the privilege of Parliament." On the 16th April a committee of thirty-one, with Sir Harry Vane, Jr., and "the learned Selden" at the head of it, was appointed "to state the particulars of the breach of privilege in the petition." But before this committee could report—on the 17th April—the House thought fit for its own vindication against the Assembly, the city, and the Scotch, to issue "a declaration of their true intentions," etc. In this paper they assert that to admit the claims of the Assembly would be to grant "an arbitrary and unlimited power and jurisdiction to near ten thousand judicatories to be erected within the kingdom, and to set aside its fundamental laws, which devolve supreme jurisdiction on the Parliament; that experience manifests that the reformation and purity of religion and the preservation of the people of God in this kingdom hath under God been by the Parliament and their exercise of this power."

It is to the doctrine of this declaration that Gillespie applies the knife so effectually in "Aaron's Rod Blossoming," and in view probably of this declaration he "vindicates Presbyterian government from the charge of domineering arbitrary power."

The Parliament sent down a committee to the Assembly to point out to that body its dreadful crime in sending such a petition. These Minutes, under date of April 30, 1646, contain memoranda of the several speeches of this committee, though

most of them very imperfect. We conclude with a few specimen sentences from each speech.

"*Sir John Evelyn.* The House of Commons having not long since received a paper * * * They did find things in it that did strike at the foundation and roots of the privileges of Parliament. * * * If divisions shall arise, you will, give occasion to all the world to say that as you were willing to serve the Parliament awhile, so you were willing to have them serve you forever after."

"*Mr. Fiennes.* Amongst those privileges (of Parliament) none more essential than this: that in them resides the power of making laws, and once passed all are to be subject unto them. Whosoever shall infuse anything to the contrary in the mind of those that should obey them, are guilty of a great offence. If an assembly shall, so soon as a law is made, set a brand upon it as contrary to the will of God and mind of Jesus Christ and our Covenant, what can more stifle it in the birth and make it of none effect? * * Did the Houses of Parliament give any colour of power to this Assembly to give any judgment of the National Covenant, especially in relation to making laws? Did it give authority to this Assembly to give their judgment after a law settled? * * * You are not to make use of the public character the Houses have put upon you to contradict their votes," etc.

"*Mr. Browne.* This day that's done that never was done to any Assembly or Convocation * * to send members of their own to give satisfaction to you. * * * This offence of yours is in respect of both a contempt of the court and of the persons, inasmuch as they are judged as to the Covenant."

"*Sir Benjamin Rudyard.* The matters you are now about, the *jus divinum*, is of a formidable and tremendous nature. It will be expected you should answer by clear, practical, and express Scriptures, not by far-fetched argument. * * * I have heard much spoken of the 'pattern in the mount', so express. I could never find in the New Testament such a pattern. * * * The civil magistrate is a church officer in every commonwealth."

Such are some specimens of the hectoring received by the Assembly from the committee of the House of Commons, sent down evidently to frighten the body. As if still not satisfied, the House spread on their Journals "A Narrative of the Matter of Fact concerning the Breach of Privilege," etc., from which, if there were room for further citations, it would be interesting to make extracts.

The committee of Parliament, after all this storming—evidently "fearing the people", if they went too far—left a paper contain-

ing nine queries as to the *jure divino* right of elderships, presbyteries, synods, etc., and the authority of elderships to exclude the scandalous from the sacrament. It was demanded that the votes on these points, "aye" and "no," should be recorded, and also the opinions in full of any dissenting member—the intention evidently being to let each member see that he would be held personally responsible for his vote. The Assembly appointed for themselves a day of fasting and prayer in reference to this great business. And during the whole month of May and June following the discussion of *jus divinum* absorbed all attention. The results are not recorded in the Minutes.

10. The impression made upon most genuine Presbyterians this side the Atlantic by an examination of this curious volume will be somewhat complex. It will add much to their reverence for the Westminster doctrinal standards, bating their doctrine of the Church. It will also increase their reverent affection for "the personal greatness of the men who composed the Council, as men of singular purity, learning, and genius. But it will diminish the respect for the official authority of the Westminster Assembly as a free Christian council. And above all, will it diminish their respect for the Long Parliament, and for the leaders of English thought in that era—Vane and Selden, and Milton and Cromwell—as champions of religious as well as political liberty. And it must excite devout gratitude to God that our lot is fallen in an age and country in which the secular power is compelled at last to *seem* to admit the right of the Church of God to organise under Christ's ordinance and exercise her authority without the hindrances which prevented the Presbyterian fathers both of the first and the second Reformation from giving perfect form to their ideas of the Church according to the "pattern in the mount."

We shall look forward with much eagerness for another volume of these remarkable records. We hope that in connection with that volume an index of subjects for both volumes will be published. We have found the labor of reference to this volume very great because of the lack of an index or table of contents.