

Topics

- Introduction to Church History 1600-1800
- The British Church: The Anglicans
- Grace Abounding: The Puritans
- For Christ's Crown & Covenant: The Scottish Presbyterians
- God's Free Mercy: The Church in the Netherlands
- The Westminster Assembly
- Calvinism in the New World
- Protestant Orthodoxy
- The Path of Life: Brother Lawrence and Blaise Pascal
- The Great Divide: Enlightenment and Romanticism
- A Warmth From the Fire of God in the Heart of Germany: Pietism and Bach
- The Inextinguishable Blaze: The Evangelical Revival in Great Britain
- The Great Awakening in America
- From the Awakening to the Revolution: Davies to Witherspoon
- Summary

James 3:1 - Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. (ESV)

Outline

- Opening Thoughts
- When?
- Where?
- Why?
- Who?
- What?
- Influence

Opening Thoughts

“The devil has a great spite at the kingdom of Christ, and he knoweth no such compendious way to crush it in the egg, as by the perversion of youth and supplanting family duties.”

“A family is the seminary of Church and State; and if children be not well protected there, all miscarrieth: a fault in the first concoction is not mended in the second; if youth be ill bred in the family, they prove ill bred in Church and Commonwealth;”

“Upon all these considerations, how careful should ministers and parents be to train up young ones whilst they are yet pliable, and, like wax, capable of any form and impression, in the knowledge and fear of God;”

“... we should entreat all Christian families to take more pains in this necessary work, and to get better acquainted with the substance of Christianity. I know not what work should be fitter for their use, than that compiled by the Assembly at Westminster” - Mr. Thomas Manton’s Epistle to the Reader

“When I was a seminary student my wife and I attended an adult Sunday School class taught by one of my favorite seminary professors in a local Presbyterian congregation. Although it was in a Presbyterian church, the class was composed of many highly intelligent young adults who though evangelical Christians would probably have not termed themselves as Reformed in doctrine. Over several months the teacher conducted us through a systematic survey of the Christian faith simply by means of a steady exposition of Scripture. My wife and I realized early on that without saying so, he was following the outline of the Westminster Confession of Faith. The rest of the class were enthusiastically absorbing his teaching and, without being conscious of it, were being persuaded to Reformed theology right out of the Scriptures.”

*- Dr. William S. Barker, in a Forward to a modern reprinting of *The Westminster Standards**

The Westminster Assembly – When?

- 1643 (July 1) - 1653
 - Major work concludes with completion of the Catechisms in 1648
 - Final plenary session – February 22, 1649 (1,163 meetings over 5 ½ years)
 - Small committee examining prospective ministers continues to 1653
- Assembly transpired during a time of turmoil
 - Political – English Civil War
 - ❑ Monarchy (King Charles I) vs. Representative Government (Parliament)
 - ❑ Parliament becomes the dominant power and calls the Westminster Assembly in 1643
 - ❑ Charles executed in 1649
 - Religious
 - ❑ Hierarchy of Bishops under the King vs. Church free to establish its laws, doctrines, and practices
 - ❑ Multiple “denominations”
 - ✓ Anglicans
 - ✓ Mainstream Puritans (Presbyterians and Congregationalists)
 - ✓ Radicals (Baptists and Quakers)
 - ✓ Radical Fringe (Diggers, Levelers, Fifth Monarchy Men)
 - ✓ Roman Catholics

The Westminster Assembly – Where?

- Westminster Abbey, London
 - Assembly begins in the Henry VII Chapel
 - Brrr! – Let's move to the Jerusalem Chamber and do most of our work there



Westminster Abbey



Lady Chapel or Henry VII Chapel



The Jerusalem Chamber

The Westminster Assembly – Why?

- Objectives of the Long Parliament
 - Create a new government
 - Create a new church – **Westminster Assembly called to help**
- Objectives of the Westminster Assembly
 - Define the form of **Church Government**
 - Define the form of Public Worship (**Liturgy**)
 - Defend and clarify **Doctrine**

*“An Ordinance of the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament, for the calling of an Assembly of learned and godly Divines, and others, **to be consulted with by the Parliament**, for the settling of the **government and liturgy** of the Church of England; and for vindicating and clearing of the **doctrine** of the said Church from false aspersions and interpretations.”*

– Preamble to the Ordinance calling the Westminster Assembly, June 12, 1643

*And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them.– **Ezekiel 43:11***

The Westminster Assembly – Who?

- The Most Grave, Pious, Learned, and Judicious Westminster Divines
 - Pastors, Teachers, Chaplains – all Calvinist
 - 121 English Puritan Ministers selected by Parliament
 - 6 Scottish Ministers elected by the Church of Scotland
 - Assisted by 10 Members of the House of Lords and 20 Members of the House of Commons



Recommended Resource for Information on Individual Members -

Puritan Profiles: 54 Contemporaries of the Westminster Assembly by William Barker



William Twisse



Robert Baillie

- William Twisse – Prolocutor (Presiding Officer), died 1646
 - “Very learned, very good, beloved of all, but the unfittest of all the company for any action” – Robert Baillie
- Robert Baillie – Scottish Minister
 - Impatient
 - Writings provide valuable detail on events at the Assembly

I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. – **John 14:18**

The Westminster Assembly – Who?

- Episcopalians

- Hierarchical rule by bishops
- Minimal attendance among those invited – King did not approve of the Assembly
- Examples – Archbishop James Ussher, Daniel Featley
- Ussher's *Irish Articles of 1615* served as model for *Westminster Confession of Faith*
- Featley was expelled as a spy for the King

- English Presbyterians

- Rule by Presbyters and elders (session)
- Tend to be lesser known but did most of the work to create the Westminster Standards
- Examples – Stephen Marshall, William Gouge
- Jure Divino vs. Jure Human debate

- Erastians

- Neutral on church polity
- Church discipline in the hands of the state
- Examples – John Seldon, Thomas Coleman, John Lightfoot
- Supported by a majority in Parliament

The Westminster Assembly – Who?

- Independents / Congregationalists

- Rule by the congregation
- Desired a national church connected to the state but with local autonomy
- Examples – Thomas Goodwin and Jeremiah Burroughs

- The Scots

- Joined in late 1643 after the acceptance of the Solemn League and Covenant
- Non-voting members, but influential
- Examples – Alexander Henderson, George Gillespie, Robert Baillie

Q. What is God? – Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q4

A. God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice goodness, and truth – Westminster Shorter Catechism

“If all Episcopalians had been as Archbishop Ussher, all the Presbyterians as Stephen Marshall, and all the Independents as Jeremiah Burroughs, the divisions of the church might have soon healed” – Richard Baxter

The Westminster Assembly – What?

What went on there?

- Preaching and Prayer
 - Monthly fast days and prayer days
 - Thanksgiving and preaching
 - Nine-hour long services with two two-hour sermons and two two-hour prayer times not uncommon!
- Three-month long effort to revise the 39 Articles of Religion
 - Minor changes to prohibit non-reformed interpretation
 - Made it through 15 of 39 then directed to move on
- Creation of the Four Points of Uniformity
 - The Form of Presbyterian Church Government
 - The Directory for the Public Worship of God
 - The Confession of Faith
 - The Larger & Shorter Catechisms
- Four years of examining prospective Ministers (1649 – 1653)

The Four Points of Uniformity

| Output | Topic | Notes |
|--|-------------------|---|
| The Form of Presbyterian Church Government | Church Government | The longest and most difficult debate “Grand Debate” between Presbyterians and Congregationalists Presbyterians “win” but final document not as Presbyterian as some Presbyterians preferred |
| The Directory for the Public Worship of God | Liturgy / Worship | Word “Directory” [or guide] intentionally chosen – does not contain actual words of service like the Anglican Book of Common Prayer Covers topics beyond Sunday service (e.g., Pastoral preaching and visiting the sick) Prominently features the Regulative Principle |
| Confession of Faith | Doctrine | Drafted over a 1 ½ year period Parliament sent it back for Proof Texts – 5 more months 1500 Biblical Texts 33 Chapters – Holy Scripture through the Last Judgment Focus on Covenant Theology |
| The Larger Catechism & The Shorter Catechism | Doctrine | <u>Larger Catechism</u> - More exact and comprehensive (196 Questions & Answers with Scripture Proofs) - Directory for Ministers weekly teachings <u>Shorter Catechism</u> - Written for new beginners, children, “those of weaker capacity” - 107 Questions & Answers with Scripture Proofs |

“Westminster sums up Reformed theology from the days of Calvin down to the 1640s”

– Professor David Calhoun

The Westminster Assembly – Influence

- Work of the Assembly does not function in England in any significant or nationwide manner
 - The return of the King (Charles II) and Episcopal Anglican Church in 1660
- Other Influence
 - Adopted by the Church of Scotland in 1647
 - Savoy Declaration – English Congregationalists adopt the Confession of Faith with revisions on Polity (1658)
 - ❑ Spreads to New World where Puritans adopt it in various forms
 - London Confession – English Baptists adopt the Confession of Faith with revisions on Polity and Baptism (1677)
 - ❑ American Baptist churches adopt it as the Philadelphia Confession (1742)