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Ein Prediger muss nicht allein *wei-*  
*den*, also dass er die Schafe unter-  
weise, wie sie rechte Christen sollen  
sein, sondern auch daneben den Woel-  
fen *wehren*, dass sie die Schafe nicht  
angreifen und mit falscher Lehre ver-  
fuehren und Irrtum einfuehren.

Luther

Es ist kein Ding, das die Leute  
mehr bei der Kirche behaelt denn  
die gute Predigt. — *Apologie*, Art. 24

If the trumpet give an uncertain  
sound, who shall prepare himself to  
the battle? — 1 Cor. 14:8

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*passive, sicut Verbum Domini certum est active.* Thus Paul, 2 Tim. 1:12: 'I know and am persuaded.' (III:1887.). . . May God give us, who are called to be your teachers and assistants in the study of theology, grace and help that we do not leave you in suspense in these questions but set your feet upon firm ground." (*Schrift und Bekenntnis*, Nov.-Dez., 1928.)

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## The Historical Background of the Westminster Assembly

By THEO. HOYER

The Presbyterians are this year observing the tercentenary of the Westminster Confession. The Westminster Assembly, the body which formulated the chief Confession of the Presbyterians, was called into being by an ordinance of Parliament, June 12, 1643, for the avowed purpose of establishing a form of church government, "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." To this end it was "thought fit and necessary to call an Assembly of learned, godly, and judicious Divines, who, together with some members of the Houses of Parliament, were to consult and advise of such matters and things." The summons contained 151 names; 10 from the House of Lords, 20 from the House of Commons, and 121 divines. Six Scottish commissioners, four ministers, and two elders met with them.

The first task of the Assembly was a revision of the 39 Articles; but when they came to the 15th article, they were instructed to stop and begin to draw up an entirely new Confession of Faith. They prepared and presented to Parliament five documents: The Westminster Confession (The Confession of Faith), the Larger and the Shorter Catechism, the Form of Government, and the Directory for the Worship of God. They were never adopted by Parliament in their full form; but they were adopted by the Church of Scotland and so became the basis of the constitution of all the Presbyterian

churches of the British Isles and of the United States and of the British colonies throughout the world.<sup>1</sup>

Object of this article is not the work of this Assembly, but its historical background. There are several things that make this Assembly unusually interesting, in fact, puzzling; various matters in connection with the Assembly must be explained if we are to understand the situation. Westminster is a part of London, lying on the western bank of the Thames; there the government offices are, and there England's laws are made. England's Church was Anglican, i. e., Episcopalian, for more than a hundred years; it seems strange that the chief creed of the Presbyterian Church should be adopted there in the heart of Anglicanism. There never was more friendship between Englishmen and Scots than between Jews and Samaritans; the Romans built two walls to keep the Picts and Scots out of England; the Britons invited the Angles and Saxons across the Channel to defend their land against the Scots; Robert Bruce defeated England for Scotland's independence; the difference in the Reformation in both countries increased the hostility and provoked several wars; when James I became king of both countries, the two Parliaments refused to unite — they remained separate until Queen Anne. Isn't it strange that divines of the English Church formulate the chief confession of the Scottish Church? The explanation is ecclesiastical in part, and in part political.

In 1643 the majority in the House of Commons was, not Presbyterian, but Puritan. How had that happened? There are chiefly three roots to the Puritan movement in England: 1. Opposition to the rites and vestments inherited from the Old Church; 2. Desire to improve preaching in the Anglican Church; and 3. Striving for greater lay influence in the Church.

The Anglican Church was, of course, organized on the old medieval principle of unity: A united Church in a united kingdom. It is natural, therefore, that the Church laws were drawn up in a spirit of compromise, with the desire to please everybody; and also natural the result that many were not pleased just because of the compromise. As long as the conflict with Rome was on, the quarrel over details was kept down. But with the final victory of Protestantism in the early

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<sup>1</sup> S. W. Caruthers, *The Everyday Work of the Westminster Assembly*; from the Introduction by Thom. C. Pears, Jr.

years of Elizabeth's reign, the internal strife broke out in earnest.<sup>2</sup>

While these Puritan crusaders were few in numbers, there soon came other forces which encouraged the growth of this Old Testament spirit of militant religion, directed against Rome and all that savored of Rome. Stories of what the Inquisition was doing, especially with English sailors; the enormities perpetrated by Alva right across the Channel in the Netherlands; the crowning horror of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew in France showed Englishmen what Rome had in store for them, could it ever manage to regain a foothold. Add to that the fact that Mary Tudor and her executions were not yet forgiven, that there was in their midst a Catholic pretender to the throne, Mary Stuart, the center of innumerable plots against Elizabeth, and it is not difficult to understand that a violent hostility against all that reminded them of Rome was developed in the English Church. This hostility was fanned when the Act of Uniformity (1559) was very leniently and laxly enforced against Catholics (for fear of a revolt of Catholics); against dissenters, however, it was enforced with greater strictness.

The Puritan movement began with dissatisfaction with vestments and ceremonies of the Church; they were too close a copy of Rome. This goes back as far as John Hooper (the "first Puritan") under Edward VI. Then the "Marian exiles" who had spent these years in Geneva and other Calvinistic centers came back and fanned the opposition to robes and rites. These extremists became known as Puritans, men who wanted to purify the ceremonial of the Church.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism*, pp. 7, 8: "Naturally there were not a few to whom Elizabeth's handling of the religious problem was far from acceptable. . . . Two important groups of her subjects regarded her Church at best only a temporary compromise, and at worst but one removed, if that, from the Church of Antichrist. Catholics who wished to restore the Church to its former transcending position, could hardly acknowledge an arrangement which they were bound to regard as error and sin. Protestant reformers, no less determined to restore the Church, but the Church purified according to their own ideas, could not content themselves with a reformation which reformed so little. Elizabeth, to their dismay, did not reform the Church, but only swept the rubbish behind the door. The Puritan movement may be said to have sprung out of the shock of that disappointment."

<sup>3</sup> The name was used as early as 1563, applied to the party of Cartwright in Cambridge; 1567 to sectaries in London who by others are called Anabaptists and Browings (Brownists). Haller, *l.c.*, pp. 9, 379, Note 3.

That was the first step: opposition to Catholic rites and vestments. Next came the protest against episcopal efforts to enforce such rites, and against the royal supremacy behind the episcopate. By 1564 Elizabeth became alarmed, because many bishops were evidently lax in efforts to stop the drift toward Puritanism and to enforce uniformity. She had Humphrey, President of Magdalen College, Oxford, and Sampson, Dean of Christ Church, arrested for refusal to wear the surplice; their defense was: Scriptural warrant was necessary for all matters of ecclesiastical importance; and the surplice was important because of its doctrinal implications. Elizabeth was riled because they attached so little weight to the authority of the Church—of which she was “supreme governor”! She ordered an investigation in 1565, which showed such great variety of practice that in 1566 a compromise was ordered in the “Advertisements”: Only the surplice was required. Yet 37 priests in London alone refused. Much disturbance in London and many appeals to Zurich and Geneva, which brought from Bullinger a reply that showed his weariness and irritation at being pestered so much: They would more edify the Church of Christ by conforming than by leaving the Church on account of the vestiarian controversy. In the end the licenses of objecting priests were revoked, and some leaders went to prison when they denied the Queen’s authority to enforce the wearing of vestments.

By this action the Puritans were driven into secrecy. They began to hold conventicles. In 1567 one such conventicle in Plumbers’ Hall, London, was raided where they used the Genevan Order instead of the Book of Common Prayer; a score of members was imprisoned; they were released within a year; but the opposition widened, spread from vestments to rites, to doctrine, and especially to church government. At first they attacked only certain views and aspects of episcopacy, chiefly its authority; when the bishops began to enforce the “Advertisements,” they attacked the episcopacy itself; when the crown supported the episcopate, they denied the royal supremacy and supported Presbyterianism.

With these meetings in Plumbers’ Hall separatism begins in England, though even then this was not the intention. In the view of the Puritans, episcopacy was not an essential

part of the Church, and so its repudiation in their minds involved no idea of separation from the Church. They considered themselves entitled to remain members of the Episcopal Church in order to make the church Presbyterian; surely not an honest course. It was not one-sided, however; the general opinion on the other side was that even the conscientious objector should not leave the Church, because high political expediency demanded religious uniformity.

Meantime another movement had been going on. Not the least of the changes inaugurated by the Protestant Reformation was the change in the object of ministerial activity and a consequent change in the qualifications required for that office. Luther said in the Preface to the Small Catechism: "Therefore look to it, ye pastors and preachers; our office is a different thing now from what it was under the pope." Then it had consisted chiefly, almost exclusively, in the administration of the Sacraments; it had now become a teaching profession; no longer is the sinner carried to heaven by the Church through the action of the Sacraments, but religion is a personal matter between the individual sinner and his God; he himself must walk the way to heaven; no Church, no priest can carry him there. Hence, he himself must learn to know that way, and his pastor is to be his teacher; and before you can teach, you must learn to know.

It at once became evident that many of the priests were altogether unequal to the next task. Luther stated: "Many pastors are quite unfit and incompetent to teach" (*l. c.*). In England the same conditions were prevalent and only the more evident, because the change from Catholicism to (official) Protestantism was so sudden. In 1559 Jewel wrote of the sad plight of the Church, chiefly in regard to the clergy: "I cannot at this time recommend you to send your young men to us either for a learned or religious education, unless you would have them sent back to you wicked and barbarous."<sup>4</sup> Lever, 1560: "Many of our parishes have no clergymen, and some dioceses are without a bishop. And out of the very small number who administer the Sacraments throughout this great country there is hardly one in a hundred who is both able and willing to preach the Word of God." And the Earl

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<sup>4</sup> Zurich Letters, cited by Wakeman, *The Church and the Puritans*, p. 13.

of Sussex to Cecil, 1562: "The people, without discipline, utterly devoid of religion, come to divine services as to a May game; the ministers, for disability and greediness, be had in contempt; and the wise fear more the impiety of the licentious professors than the superstition of the erroneous Papists. God hold His hand over us, that our lack of religious hearts do not breed in the meantime His wrath and revenge upon us."<sup>5</sup>

In the consciousness of this unfitness for new requirements and the sincere desire to qualify for this new ministry lies the second root of Puritanism. There began within the Established Church a movement for a more learned ministry. By 1570 we hear of weekly meetings of clergymen in the more Puritan districts for exercises in preaching. These meetings, significantly, were called "Propheying" or "Prophecies," an allusion to 1 Cor. 14:22-24; or they were called exercises. Bacon (*Considerations on the Pacification of the Church*) describes such meetings: "The ministers within a precinct did meet upon a week day in some principal town where there was some ancient grave minister that was president, and an auditory admitted of gentlemen or other persons of leisure. Then every minister successively, beginning with the youngest, did handle one and the same part of Scripture, spending severally some quarter of an hour or better, and in the whole some two hours; and so, the exercise being begun and concluded with prayer, and the president giving a text for the next meeting, the assembly was dissolved. And this was, as I take it, a fortnight's exercise; which in my opinion, was the best way to frame and train up preachers to handle the Word of God as it ought to be handled, that hath been practised." Archbishop Grindal of Canterbury in 1576 approved of this idea of training the clergy already in office to such a point of efficiency that they would be capable of delivering sermons. Grindal, so they said at the time, was half a Puritan himself.

But this first step led on. "Primarily met to consider some passages of Scripture with a view to increasing their learning, the ministers there assembled came naturally to exercise among themselves a sort of disciplinary authority. Not only that, but some of them, frequently men forbidden by the bishops to preach in their own pulpits, took the opportunity

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<sup>5</sup> Wakeman, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

to argue against the Established Church and to rail against bishops and officers of State. The 'Exercises' became, in fact, a battleground for all the quarrels and disorders of the Church."<sup>6</sup> So, in 1577, the queen interfered and suppressed the Prophesyings.

But the ministers continued to meet, nevertheless, at each other's houses in a secret and informal way. In these conferences the men attending mutually admonished and advised each other; gradually a certain authority was exercised by this assembly; then connection was established with other similar bodies; they were called "classes." Again it could not be avoided that the government of the Church, particularly their relation to the bishops, became the subject of discussion. This was the more natural as all along, and increasingly, this and the vestiarian movement now tended to merge.

And now the soil was well prepared for the introduction of a foreign element. To some of the leaders it occurred that in these groups they had ready to hand the first link in a system of church government outlined before by Cartwright and Travers, which proposed to take authority in the Church from the bishops and place it in the hands of ministers and elders; generally speaking, the present-day Presbyterian order of church government, advanced by the two Cambridge divines as early as 1570. They were exiled for some time, which they spent in great part in Geneva; there they perfected their scheme, and Travers systematized it in his *Book of Discipline*. This, they held, was the divine plan for church government, more consonant with Scripture than the Episcopacy. Thus the classes were to be the lowest members of a sort of hierarchy, the representatives of a number of classes forming a provincial synod, and delegates from all the synods the General Assembly, which held the highest power.<sup>7</sup>

This hierarchical idea did not grow on English ground; it was native in Calvin's headquarters, in Geneva, and had by this time, 1583, become the church polity in Scotland. For several years the plan was permitted to grow in England; the Jesuit scare was at its highest at that time, and for the sake of peace and support both secular and ecclesiastical officials were inclined to wink at irregularities. It is true that as

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<sup>6</sup> Usher, *The Presbyterian Movement*, p. XIX.

<sup>7</sup> Haller, *l. c.*, pp. 10, 11.

early as this the House of Commons raised some objections to existing regulations in the Church. Earlier in her reign, Elizabeth, fearing that, had resolved not to call Parliament again: she had convened it three times; that was enough for one reign. But by 1572 she needed money and had to call Parliament; and the Commons at once proposed "a bill for rites and ceremonies" in place of the Book of Common Prayer. The queen sent a message that no bills were to be received unless first "considered and liked" by the clergy. In 1576 the Commons tried again to transfer authority in the Church to more democratic bodies; the queen quashed the move by telling them she had required the bishops to consider the matter. This leads us to the third root of the Puritan movement as it was later on constituted.

There was an almost continuous fight of the Commons for greater authority of the laity in the government of the Church. It is only the continuation of the age-long opposition to the powerful hierarchy on the part of the sects, going back to post-Apostolic days. Gradually the episcopal jurisdiction in the Church became almost as sore a point to the Commons as the papal jurisdiction had been. On the other hand, all such attempts to "meddle with matters neither pertaining to them nor within the capacity of their understanding" riled the queen; even if she liked what they did, she did not want them to do it, as, e. g., when they proposed a new version of the 39 Articles; Elizabeth said, she liked them well enough but meant to have them executed in virtue of the royal supremacy and not of parliamentary statute. There was, of course, an additional point why the episcopate was disliked. The bishops received far more income than even the lay ministers of the crown; with the doubtful exception of the earls, they were the wealthiest class of the kingdom — a fact, by the way, that also excited the cupidity of the queen, so that she never altogether backed up the bishops.

Elizabeth's policy was, wherever possible, not to take any definite stand; to deal with opposition by ignoring it, dividing and so disarming it. The more Puritanism was winked at, the more it spread; but it spread by developing differences within its own ranks. Elizabeth's policy was to ignore variations of opinions as long as they were politically harmless, give scope to all sorts of men to fall in love with their own strange ideas,

espouse fantastic dreams, collect bands of earnest souls — to go and eat forbidden fruit as long as they did not upset the apple cart — to let them bark as much as they please, only watch that they do not bite. As early as 1568 Puritans began to split up.

When the leaders of the Puritan groups, about 1584, awoke to the fact that they already had the basis for Travers' Presbyterian scheme, they began the plan of putting it into operation. Their first plan was to move the government to substitute it for the episcopacy. The method adopted was to send petitions to State officials signed by as many and as influential men as possible. A flood of such petitions in a never-ending stream was directed on Parliament, the queen, Cecil, and other great lords and the royal gentry.

The attempt failed, chiefly because Bancroft, bishop of London, unmasked it as a plan to introduce the Presbyterian form of church government though it paraded as merely a modest desire to curb the power of arrogant bishops. Furthermore, Bancroft proved that the move was not backed by as great a number of people as the petitions to Parliament seemed to indicate; on the contrary, the whole movement was shown to be the result of propaganda put forth by a relatively small number of the gentry. After some arrests and trials, 1590 to 1593, the whole movement was tacitly dropped; some definitely accepted the Established Church; some definitely separated and later on organized independent churches; some, no doubt, merely conformed for the time being, but waited for the new opportunity which the death of Elizabeth and the accession of a new sovereign would give them; they hoped and believed that James would be more favorably inclined toward Protestantism.

This faction, then, was responsible for another attempt to displace the episcopacy, in 1603. The situation in the Church had evidently not greatly changed since 1570 and 1590. Trevelyan says: "The parish clergy, who two generations before had passed from Catholic to Protestant, or from Protestant to Catholic, with every change of government, were still very generally of the same type of careless shepherds, anxious only to retain their seats at the shearers' feast, devoid of learning or enthusiasm to fulfill their duties, which they often relegated to substitutes, too, like themselves. The Church service was

read on Sunday as a State test; attendance proved loyalty; and non-attendance involved a fine. Sermons were rare; house visitation and religious instruction were neglected.”<sup>8</sup> Usher, in his *Reconstruction of the English Church*, gives convincing statistics that “the majority of the clergy were without degrees and, in consequence, presumably ignorant, unable to preach, and incompetent” (I, p.218); moreover, that “the condition of both universities was such that a degree was not infallibly the result of learning and application to studies while resident” (I, p.208). A letter of Archbishop Whitgift to Burghley is cited: “And so the university giveth degrees and honors to the unlearned and the Church is filled with ignorant ministers being for the most part poor scholars.”

The reason for this state of affairs lay chiefly in this, that the State controlled the Church. Usher (p. 240): “It lay in the queen’s unwillingness to consider ecclesiastic capability superior to political loyalty as a test of fitness for clerical office.” As long as the government “cared little if the clergy was ignorant, so long as it was loyal, and were not disposed to place the latter in jeopardy on the chance of improving the former,” men would be appointed who were politically safe, though ignorant; in fact, learned men were always apt to become troublesome. Then, the presentation of a clergyman usually lay in the hand of the most prominent laymen; and they again in numerous cases regarded political or personal or family interests higher than the welfare of the Church and so foisted numbers of unfit men upon the ministry of the Church. And after such men were once in office no bishop could remove them, even if he wanted to do so, as long as the incumbent was wise enough to steer clear of sedition and treason; expediency commanded that they be left unmolested.

There was, then, sufficient reason, in 1603, for the demand voiced in the Millenary Petition for the establishment of a learned ministry able to teach. This was repeated at the Hampton Court Conference called by James I in 1604; the Puritans stressed the need of a learned and preaching ministry; and James appointed commissions of inquiry how best to obtain a preaching clergy.<sup>9</sup> On other points they differed

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<sup>8</sup> Trevelyan, *England Under the Tudors*, p.63.

<sup>9</sup> F. C. Montague, *History of England from the Accession of James I to the Restoration*, p.11.

greatly; some moderates wanted the Episcopate retained with some lay control of the Church; these were, no doubt, in the majority; some wanted Presbyterianism; a third group were the later Independents, separatists, Congregationalists. Taking them all together, their number must have been considerable; in fact, if you count in all those who were dissatisfied with conditions in the Church, perhaps the statement of Montague is correct (*op. cit.*, p. 15): In 1604 "the majority of the Commons were what was then termed Puritans, not indeed Puritans such as afterwards fought in the Civil War, opposed to the principle of government by bishops and to the Book of Common Prayer, but Puritans in the sense of desiring that ministers who scrupled at certain ceremonies should be indulged and that measures should be taken to secure a resident and a preaching clergy."

But then came various actions on the part of James and chiefly of Charles which rapidly increased the Puritans in the Commons and made them a real political party. James probably had the good intention of being tolerant; but when at the Hampton Court Conference one of the Puritans, Raigold, let the cat out of the bag and betrayed that what they wanted was the introduction of the Presbyterian discipline in England, then James "broke out into a flame" (Neal) and declared: "If this be all your party have to say, I will make them conform, or I will harry them out of this land, or else worse." So he antagonized the Puritans; the tension became greater and greater. In 1618, to play a trump card against the Puritans, the king issued the Declaration of Sports, authorizing Sunday sports for all those who had first attended service in the parish church. In Scotland, at the same time, the king on a visit, had an organ in his chapel, and carved figures of patriarchs and Apostles; his privy council had to kneel at Communion, and Dean Laud when he preached wore a surplice. In the meantime, James aroused the hostility of every Parliament he called. It was the misfortune of the Stuarts that during their reign the fight for constitutionalism in England came to a decision, and the Stuarts, with their claim of the divine right of kings, lost out; and from both sides the Church was drawn into the battle; the king would use his headship of the Anglican Church for political purposes, and his political opponents again would elect Puritans to the House of Commons.

Under Charles I (1625—1649) the division between the two parties in the Church widened day by day. Halfhearted persecutions had the usual effect: It did not weaken the Puritans, but made them ever more militant; many of them now regarded the Church as thoroughly corrupt, and the episcopacy as contrary to the Word of God. On the other hand, in opposition to the Puritans there arose a party among the Anglicans which they termed Arminian, but which was really the beginning of the Anglo-Catholics; they held that government by bishops was not merely a lawful form of church government, but the only form which had divine sanction; without bishops there could be no true Church, and without apostolic succession, no true bishops.

Charles inherited a cantankerous, rebellious Parliament and an unfortunate part in the Thirty Years' War; he married a French Catholic wife (Henrietta, sister of Louis XIII) who antagonized all Englishmen, especially the Puritans; Charles himself would probably have turned Catholic had he dared. He started his career with two strikes against him; and he certainly did nothing to improve this unfortunate beginning. He made William Laud bishop of London, then archbishop of Canterbury, and practically his prime minister, a man hated by Parliament and everybody in the Church except the pronounced Anglo-Catholics. Laud's own religious preference may be gathered from the fact that the Pope offered him the cardinal's hat in August, 1633; he did not take it, but it shows what Rome thought of him. Laud was very intolerant; and the king's sentiment was perhaps revealed in this, that he had Laud prepare a list of divines and distinguish them with the two letters O and P: Orthodox and Puritan. From the very beginning everybody saw who was marked for preferment and who for persecution. Both Laud and the king were so devoid of imagination that they did not know when they were driving men to fury. And the Puritans had a full measure of the unreason, the rancor, the scurrility, which then were only too common in theological debate, and their temper was not improved by a repression that grew more severe day by day. Orders were given to read the Book of Sports from every pulpit; numbers of Puritans refused and were suspended. William Prynne wrote his *Histriomastix: A Scourge of Stage Players*; actresses had just been introduced from France; but

his book was said to reflect on the queen. So Prynne was sentenced to prison for life, a fine of 5,000 pounds; he was disbarred, deprived of his academic degree, pilloried, and both his ears were cut off. Later an addition was made to the sentence: Branded on cheek: S. L. (Seditious Libeler). Alexander Leighton, a Scot, wrote a furious tirade: *An Appeal to Parliament, or Sion's Plea Against Prelacy*; he was sentenced to pay a fine of 10,000 pounds, to be pilloried at Westminster, then to be whipped and have one ear cut off; at a future time to have the punishment repeated in Chevyside; then to be imprisoned for life. The Westminster part was carried out; then he was imprisoned till the Long Parliament began its sessions.

"It is difficult," says Montague, "for those who live in an age of freedom to measure the irritation caused by an ecclesiastical policy such as we have described. In the first half of the seventeenth century the theological passions stirred by the Reformation were still full of life. Although a few highly cultivated men had entered into possession of the larger intellectual world discovered at the revival of letters, the bulk of the nation had no interest outside their own petty personal concerns except that of religion, no literature other than the Bible and religious books, no chance of hearing moral or philosophical discussion save in sermons. Thus the whole energy of earnest minds was concentrated on theological problems. At the same time the public had no choice how they would worship or what doctrine they would hear. If the received ceremonies satisfied their religious emotion, if the sermon agreed with their religious belief, it was well; but if not, they could decline neither. Nothing could be more exasperating than Sunday after Sunday to behold against their will rites which they deemed idolatrous and listen to doctrines which they deemed foolish or blasphemous. The minute and rigorous enforcement of the Laudian system wrought up the whole Puritan population to a sullen rage which, on the first favorable occasion, must break out with terrible consequences."

And now the ranks of the Puritans began to swell by the accession of great numbers who joined them for political or other reasons of dissatisfaction. And there were many such reasons. From the very beginning Charles failed to get the support of Parliament. The first trouble was on participation in the Thirty Years' War. When the Bohemians in 1618 began

action against the emperor they had offered the iron crown of St. Stephen to the Elector Frederick of the Palatinate, because he was the son-in-law of James I; they hoped to get help from England. But James was at that time looking for a Spanish Catholic wife for his son Charles; he could not afford to wage war against the Austrian Hapsburgs while he expected favors from the Spanish Hapsburgs. But James' daughter wanted her husband to wear a royal crown, and under her influence Frederick became king of Bohemia despite James' warning to keep his hands off. He proved only a "Winter King" as the Jesuits called him; he was totally defeated by Tilly and driven not only out of Bohemia, but out of his own land; he did not stop running until he reached Denmark. That was too much for James that his son-in-law was deprived of his own land; he started negotiations with Christian IV of Denmark looking toward entering the war. Parliament (Commons) resolved to spend life and fortune to recover the Palatinate. In the meantime Spain had closed the doors to the wooing of bonnie prince Charlie, and in a huff he had married a French princess. But in the midst of these negotiations James died, and Charles had to carry on. He bound himself to pay Denmark 30,000 pounds per month plus a number of troops, and came to Parliament for an appropriation; they refused it (partly because they were beginning to see the king's preference for Catholics — Catholic bride; promise of toleration to Catholics given to France). Charles scraped up enough money to pay Denmark for a month and a half; that's all the support they ever got; and Tilly and Wallenstein annihilated the Danish armies.

From 1625 to 1629 three Parliaments were called; each one refused to grant supplies to Charles until he had complied with their demands and changed many policies; in anger he had dissolved them. Then for 11 years he ruled without a Parliament, getting money for expenses by more and more illegitimate means. Not only did this increase opposition, but the fact that no Parliament met, robbed the Puritans and other opponents of the crown of the only opportunity to voice their complaints.

So Charles was continually heaping up wrath against the day of wrath. Then came the Scottish wars, the so-called Bishops' Wars, which led to that hitherto unheard-of and

seemingly impossible thing, an alliance between Englishmen and Scotchmen against the English king, which, again, brought about the Westminster Assembly.

James' measures in Scotland had been hollow and ineffective, in fact, almost a joke to the Scottish people. He had imposed a mild episcopacy on the land; the people called the incumbents "Tulchan bishops"<sup>10</sup> since they were accepted to retain the royal favor. Charles, however, and William Laud were not satisfied with halfway measures. In 1633 orders were sent that the surplice must be worn; the king created a new bishopric; he appointed the archbishop chancellor of the realm. In 1636 a new Book of Canons was sanctioned by the king which had not even been submitted to Scottish bishops or Parliament; it made the king head of the Scottish Church, with the bishop next under him, and demanded acceptance of a new Prayer Book which was being prepared without Scottish help. When this was published, it proved to be a revised edition of the English Book of Common Prayer; in 1637 followed the edict that every minister must use this new book and buy two copies, under pain of outlawry.

To the Scots that was a return to the mass; Scotland was to return to all the superstition of Rome at the bidding of an insolent priest! When the new service was read for the first time at St. Giles in Edinburgh, a woman fired her stool at the Dean's head and almost hit him; the mob rose and had to be excluded by force; for the later service, guards had to be placed all around the church and the women excluded. In 1637 the Scots adopted the National Covenant to reject all innovations of religion that had not been approved in the free assemblies of the Kirk of Scotland. In 1639 the General Assembly of the Scottish Church abolished the episcopal office and everything connected with it and ended the royal supremacy.

So Charles had to go to war with Scotland. He had no money, but he did not dare call Parliament. He scraped together what he could, a discouraged army, while the Scots were in high spirits; so Charles capitulated without a battle, giving the Scots their free Parliament and their free Church —

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<sup>10</sup> Tulchan — a stuffed calfskin, which the thrifty Scots used to induce a stubborn fresh-milk cow to "let down" the milk.

terms which Charles did not keep. And that led to the Second Bishops' War.

To get money for this war, Charles had to call Parliament, April, 1640, the Short Parliament. The discontent of the English people was reflected in the elections. To be known as an opponent of the policy of the king in Church and State was the best recommendation for a candidate. The vast majority of the members was friendly to the Puritans, hostile to the Arminians. Instead of granting the king a subsidy for war with the Scots, Parliament, after sitting for days reciting all kinds of grievances, prepared a resolution to treat with the Scots and discuss their declaration. To prevent that, the king resolved to dismiss them; and the Short Parliament adjourned, having been in session three weeks, without passing a single bill. And the king again had to carry on his campaign without money. Again it was a total failure. The Scots took the entire north of England; the king had to seek an armistice and consent to call a new Parliament.

So came into being the Long Parliament, which sat, with intermissions but without adjournment, for 20 years. Most of the members of the Short Parliament were back again, but in a mood far more dangerous to the king. Yet the king could not dissolve it, for he simply could not exist any longer without an appropriation. At once the king's advisers, Stafford and Laud, were imprisoned; after a long trial Stafford was executed. The king was divested of all power to tax, had to call Parliament at least every three years.

Then they attacked the church government, and it was soon evident that there lay their chief grievance. But when a bill was introduced to abolish the episcopal government altogether, it became apparent that though they were all against bishops, when it came to the question what was to take the place of the present government, opinions went far apart. Only a few wanted a Presbyterian system as they had it in Scotland; but some voted for the bill because they feared the bishops would in the end lead them back to Rome. Meanwhile conditions in England were getting out of hand. All sorts of sects and cults began to spread, illiterate people preaching in the streets and starting new factions.

The rest of 1641 and the beginning of 1642 were filled with wrangling between the king and Parliament, partly polit-

ical, partly ecclesiastical. Even the House of Lords now turned against him. January 4 Charles tried his *coup d'état*. This attempt of the king to arrest five members on the floor of the House without warrant was the straw that broke the camel's back. Feeling ran so high against the king that he left London with his queen and children.

Civil War seemed so probable that both sides gathered forces, occupied fortresses, etc. A long interchange of documents followed, ending in the famous Nineteen Propositions, sum and substance of which was that Parliament, not the king, was sovereign in England. Since the king could not submit to that, the result was war.

It is not necessary here to follow the course of the war. Suffice it to say that in general the royal forces were victorious. This was alarming both to Parliament and to the Scots, who took no part in the war, but were greatly interested; for if the king was victorious in England, he would most certainly not allow the Scottish Kirk to remain Presbyterian. So it was that both sides sent out feelers to test out the other's willingness for an alliance. The Scots got wind of a rising of royalist nobles in England to help the king with the help of Catholic troops from Ireland; they promptly sent notice of this to the English Parliament. They in return resolved to consult with the Scots and asked them to send a number of representatives to the assembly of divines at Westminster, which met on July 1, 1643. There followed two new defeats of the parliamentary army, and Parliament went one step further and resolved to ask the Scots for an army. Two peers and four commoners were sent with this message; and as they were very certain that negotiations would turn largely upon ecclesiastical matters, two English ministers were sent along. Conferences began on August 8 in Edinburgh. It took some time before mutual understanding was established. The Scots would rather have gone to England as mediators than as allies of either party. When they found that the English Parliament wanted military aid, they resolved to use the opportunity to foist their own, the Presbyterian system of church government and discipline, on England. Parliament again did not object to the condemnation of episcopacy, but a good many of them favored a system of congregational independence which, they knew, would be rigorously suppressed if they adopted

the Scottish system; and they bitterly disliked the inquisitorial jurisdiction which the Scottish Church courts exercised, true to Calvin's model.

At last both parties agreed on the Solemn League and Covenant, to this effect: The people of both countries bound themselves to uphold the true Protestant religion in the Church of Scotland, to reform religion in the Church of England according to the Word of God and the example of the best Reformed churches, and to bring both into the nearest conjunction and uniformity. Episcopacy should be abolished in England, the privileges of both Parliaments and the liberties of both kingdoms should be maintained, the king's authority should be preserved, and incendiaries and malignants should be brought to justice. That phrase — "according to the Word of God" — was inserted by the English commissioners, who dared not refuse the Scottish demand outright, but hoped that this addition might preserve some freedom to the English; but it meant nothing, because to the Episcopalian it meant one thing and to the Presbyterian something else altogether.

The Solemn League and Covenant was approved by the Scottish General Assembly and ratified by their Parliament August 17. The Westminster Assembly approved it, and the House of Commons extended its scope to Ireland. It passed both Houses, the Commons and the members of the Westminster Assembly swore to it on September 25; somewhat later the peers, too, who were still in London. The Scots took measures to raise an army, and the English promised to contribute 30,000 pounds a month for its support.

So the Scots by treaty had the right to require something of England that was absolutely impossible to accomplish, to force England and Ireland under the Presbyterian yoke; and this was to be done without harming the person or impinging on the authority of a king who hated the presbytery.

The debates of the Assembly were long and laborious. By 1644 already we hear that the Scots were bitterly hostile to the "sectaries" (the Independents), who were holding up the union because they knew that under Presbyterianism they would have even less chance to live than under the episcopacy. In Scotland the different clans fought each other — all reasons why the Scottish aid did not aid the English Parliament very much. The chances of this war were perhaps shiftier than

usual. But by 1646 the king was defeated. He had been dickering with the Scots, who had offered to restore him if he would accept the Presbyterian settlement. The queen urged him to promise that; "for, caring little by what road or under what direction heretics traveled to their appointed place, she was ready to redeem the crown by establishing the Presbyterian system."<sup>11</sup> But the king did not think so; he intrigued with the Scots, held out hope of his conversion; finally fled to the Scots, May 5, 1646. In the then following negotiations for peace the king was sent to London, and henceforth was a prisoner of Parliament.

By this time, too, it was evident that Presbyterianism could not so easily be introduced in England. While the Westminster Assembly had framed a Presbyterian organization which Parliament sanctioned in 1646, the strife between Presbyterians and Independents hindered its introduction; and when the Independents under Cromwell's lead won the final victory, all hope for Presbyterianism was lost. The Assembly drew up the Westminster Confession and submitted it to Parliament on December 4, 1646; prooftexts were added by demand of Parliament, and the entire book placed in the hands of Parliament on April 29, 1647. "Immediately on its completion the book was carried to Scotland, and, by an Act of the General Assembly of 1647, ratified by the Estates of Parliament February 7, 1649, it was constituted the official Creed of the Church of Scotland. Meanwhile action on it dragged in the English Parliament. It was not until June 20, 1648, that, curtailed of chapters XXX and XXXI, on 'Church Censures' and 'Synods and Councils,' and certain passages in chapters XX ('of Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience'), XXIII ('of the Civil Magistrate'), and XXIV ('of Marriage and Divorce'), it was approved by Parliament and printed under the title of 'Articles of the Christian Religion'; and not until March 5, 1660, after the interval of the Protectorate, that it was declared by the so-called 'Rump Parliament' to be 'the public Confession of the Church of England,' only to pass, of course, out of sight so far as the Church of England was concerned in the immediately succeeding Restoration" (Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and its Work*, p. 60).

Nobody seems to know with any degree of certainty how

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<sup>11</sup> Montague.

long the Assembly sat. Caruthers concludes that with September 20, 1648, all their authority ceased except that of examining preachers. By February 22, 1649, the Assembly as such seems to disappear; only a committee for the examination of preachers remains until October 26, 1649, when the minutes say that this last activity of the Assembly was transferred to a committee named by Parliament. So it may be said that on that day the Assembly died of sheer inanition.

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