

LECTURE IV.

PREPARATION FOR AND SUMMONING OF THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY.

IN my last Lecture I gave you a sketch of the history of Puritanism under the earlier Stuart kings, up to the meeting of the Parliament which has since been by universal consent designated the Long Parliament. It met on the 3d November 1640, and continued till it was forcibly dissolved by Cromwell in 1652. It was brought together again after the death of the Protector, to resume its interrupted work, but failed to secure its permanence. On 6th November 1640, the Commons, following a precedent set in several previous parliaments, appointed a grand Committee of religion consisting of all the members of the House, and this not as a mere formality but with instructions to meet from week to week for serious business. Various petitions¹ were presented by the patriots and Puritans outside to quicken the zeal of their friends within the House for reform-

¹ E 159, *Speeches and Passages of this great and happy Parliament, etc.*, p. 161, 433, 436.

ation, and in particular, one signed by about 15,000 citizens of London, known as the Root and Branch petition, from the expression occurring in its prayer, that the hierarchy might be abolished 'with all its dependencies, roots and branches.' A counter petition was presented affirming that episcopal government, as it is in itself the most excellent; government, so it is the most suitable . . . to the civil constitution and temper of this state, and therefore praying it may 'always be continued and preserved in it, and by it, notwithstanding the abuses and corruptions which in so long a tract of time through the errors or negligence of men have crept into it.' The petitions were duly considered, and procedure taken on them without delay, though not at once to the extent the root and branch petitioners had desired. Nineteen grievances were tabulated, and evidence in support of them adduced in Committee, and a report thereon was presented to the House. Soon after the House of Lords, though far less under puritan influence than the Commons, also appointed a Committee to take into consideration all innovations in the church 'concerning religion.' The Committee consisted of ten bishops and twenty lay peers, under the presidency of Dr. Williams, Bishop of Lincoln and Dean of Westminster, who, like many other victims of Laud's oppression, had just been released from prison. It had power 'to

send for what learned divines their Lordships shall please for their better information.' The divines named expressly by the House were Archbishop Ussher, Dr. Prideaux, soon after made Bishop of Worcester, Dr. Ward, Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, Dr. Twisse of Newbury, and Dr. Hackett. Those added by the Committee were Drs. Sanderson, Holdsworth, Brownrigg, Featley, Burgess, White, Marshall, Calamy, and Hill—all sound Protestants, and men of moderate views—whose names appear subsequently in the list of the Assembly of Divines. The Conference of the Lords' Committee with these divines lasted for six days, during which they had solemn debates in the famous Jerusalem Chamber, and were always entertained by Williams 'with such bountiful cheer as became a bishop.' First they took into consideration the recent innovations of doctrine, and it was complained that all the tenets of the Council of Trent, had by one or other been preached and printed except those regarding the king's supremacy, which the state had made it treasonable [to question]; that good works were made to co-operate with faith for justification; that private confession, enumerating particular sins [to a priest] was inculcated as needful to salvation, that the oblation of the elements in the Lord's Supper was held to be a true sacrifice; that prayers for the dead, monastic

vows, Arminian and Socinian errors, were inculcated. Secondly, the Committee inquired into matters of conformity [to the ritual] and discovered that candlesticks were placed in parish churches on the altars so called, that canopies with curtains, in imitation of the veil before the Holy of Holies, were drawn around the altar; that a *credentia* or side table was made use of during the Lord's Supper; that a direct prayer was forbidden before the sermons, [where aforetime the minister had been at liberty to pray extempore, or use a precomposed prayer of his own, instead of, or in addition to the bidding prayer,] and that ministers were forbidden to expound at large the catechism to their parishioners, [and enjoined simply to teach them its very words]. And thirdly, they consulted about the Book of Common Prayer; whether some legendary Saints ought not to be expunged from the Calendar, the Apocryphal chapters from the lessons, and some things from the rubrics and offices of baptism, marriage, and burial.¹

¹ The following additional statement made by Dr. Hill—the last-named of the consulted divines—in his sermon before the House of Commons on 1st July 1642, goes as near to the heart of the matter as an earnest Puritan could wish, and yet it might all have been indorsed by the most conservative reformers. He compares the recent state of England to that of Jerusalem at the time when Ezekiel in vision saw the image of jealousy set up in the temple of the Lord, and thus enumerates the corruptions which had been suffered and should be removed: ‘1st, In the schools of the prophets, the nurseries of the church, do not petitions inform you that divers have there chattered away truth for errors? Were

The Committee sat till the middle of May, when it broke up without concluding anything. Laud, by that time in confinement, looked on its appointment with alarm, but moderate men like Lord Falkland viewed it with favour, and thought that had it continued its labours, it might have been the means of effecting many needed reforms, perhaps of saving the church and the monarchy. But what the issue would have been, says Fuller, is only known to Him who knew what the men of Keilah would have done with David had he remained among them till Saul came down. It was the last chance for the moderate men ere the

Whitaker and Reynolds then *in vivis*, they would blush to see Bellarmine and Arminius justified by many, rather than confuted. 2d, Remnants of former corruptions left in cathedral churches . . . called mother churches, but they have rather proved step-mothers, engrossing the maintenance which should provide the word of truth for other souls. What pity it is that cathedral societies which might have been colleges of learned presbyters, for the feeding and ruling city churches, and petty academies to prepare pastors for neighbour places, should be so often sanctuaries for non-residents, and nurseries to so many drones! 3d, Cast your eyes on the hundreds of congregations in the kingdom where millions of souls are like to perish for want of vision; truth is like to perish from among them, by soul-destroying non-residents, soul-poisoning innovators or soul-pining dry-nurses. 3. Improve your power to help forward the word of truth, that it may run and be glorified throughout the land: 1st, Provide that every congregation may have an able trumpet of truth; 2d, especially that great towns may have lectures—markets of truth; 3d, afford any faithful Paul and Barnabas encouragement, yea power, if Sergius Paulus desire to hear the word of God, to go and preach, though Elymas the sorcerer should be unwilling. Such ambulatory exercises have brought both light and heat into dark and cold

Revolution attained its full height, and the chance was thrown away by the imprudence or panic of the Bishops, who were strongly represented on the Committee. The tide was now sweeping in with full force and bearing all before it. Strafford and Laud had been impeached and committed to the Tower. The former was speedily attainted and beheaded, the latter was left to languish for a time in that durance to which he had consigned many quite as worthy men. The Irish rebellion had broken out, and deeds of fiendish cruelty had been perpetrated against the unoffending Protestants—deeds which only savages or madmen could have

corners ; 4th, What if there be some evangelical itinerant preachers sent abroad upon a public stock to enlighten dark countries ?'

The last proposal is especially worthy the notice of those who think that the idea of the evangelistic mission of the church is a discovery of the 19th century, instead of being one which has cropped up generally in periods of earnest revival, and notably in that with the history of which we are now concerned. Even before this sermon was preached there was exhibited in the High Court of Parliament (E. 181, No. 26), a petition of W. C[astell], . . . for the propagation of the Gospel in America and the West Indies, which petition was approved by seventy able English divines, (including among others the names of Brownrigg, Sanderson, Featly, Stanton, Caryl, Calamy, Byfield, White, Marshall, Burroughs, Cawdrey, Whitaker, etc.) also by Mr. Alexander Henderson and some other worthy ministers of Scotland, (including Blair, Baillie, Gillespie, etc.). Extracts from this remarkable petition will be found in Appendix, Note E. Nay even an additional endowment scheme was propounded about the same time, and there issued from the press a pamphlet (E. 179) entitled *Proposals for Good Works*, urging *inter alia* the provision of additional maintenance for ministers and lecturers, and the erection and endowment of new churches in the over-grown parishes in the suburbs of London.

devised and executed. The Scotch Commissioners were on the spot, urging on those whose old horror of Popery had been intensified by the recent massacre, to get quit of every so-called remnant of Popery in their Service-book, and of every trace of it in their doctrinal teaching and church constitution, and finally suggesting that a larger and more formal meeting of divines should be speedily called to accomplish these things, and, if it might be, to undertake the grander mission of drawing up common standards for the churches of the three kingdoms, and of bringing them into closer and more kindly relations with each other.¹ They themselves had felt that even in Scotland they must not fall back purely and simply on the *status quo*, as it existed before the recent innovations were pressed on them, content with their old

¹ E. 157, No. 2, *Arguments given in by the Commissioners of Scotland unto the Lords of the treaty, persuading conformity of church government as one principal means of a continued peace between the two nations, 1641.* 'Our desires concerning unity of religion and uniformity of church-government as one especial means to conserve peace in his Majesty's dominions.' With many professions that they do not wish to dictate to another free, independent, and larger kingdom in such a matter, they yet urge with all possible earnestness those considerations which should persuade to this. 'It is to be wished that there were one Confession of Faith, one form of Catechism, one Directory for all the parts of the public worship of God . . . and one form of church-government in all the churches of his Majesty's dominions. . . This doth highly concern his Majesty and the weal of his dominions, and without forcing of consciences seemeth not only possible but an easy work . . . We do not presume to propound the form of government of the church of Scotland as a pattern for the church of England, but do only

Confession and Catechisms, and Book of Common Order, but that further safeguards must be devised and additional securities taken against the danger of any recurrence to that policy which had wrought them such havoc and woe.

They were already indeed looking to Henderson to lead them in the preparation of new standards ; but he, either from the felt difficulties of the task, or from his intense desire to draw into closer union all to whom the cause of Protestant truth, and constitutional liberty, in Church as well as State, was dear, preferred that the work should be done on a wider theatre and grander scale than Scotland could offer. All I know of the history of this great man inclines me to believe that if there was a truly patriotic leader among them, one more free from narrowness and provincialism than another, or more prepared to allow free play for considerable diversities of thought and modes of administration in a com-

represent in all modesty these few considerations according to the trust committed unto us.' These considerations in brief were (1), that their government was the same as that of the reformed generally,—Beza's testimony in its favour being quoted ; (2) yet they had all along been harassed by the bishops of England ; (3) The reformed churches hold their government to be *jure divino*, while most of those who plead for episcopacy grant that it is only *jure humano* ; (4) The church of Scotland was bound by covenant to her form, while England was perfectly free ; (5) Thus ' will the design of King James be carried out in a *legitimate* way, and the king not only have peace and his due place in all the churches of his own dominions, but his greatness shall be enlarged abroad by his becoming the head of all the Protestants in Europe.'

prehensive Presbyterian Church, it was he,—in fact that the closer union of the churches in Britain was chiefly valued by him as a step toward securing the closer union of all the Reformed Churches. But his noble ideas were at times dwarfed and pared down; sometimes by the blindness and narrowness of lesser men among his own countrymen, sometimes by the jealousies aroused against him in the south as an alien and a Scot, and even he was but dimly conscious of the immense difficulty of the task before him, arising from the divided state of opinion in England, and the bitter animosities of the various parties to each other. Already in the year 1640 it had begun to be felt and expressed that the friends of the Reformation in both countries must make common cause if they would hope to succeed in securing it against the insidious policy of Laud and his abettors. In a letter, brought down by Henderson to the Scottish General Assembly, from a number of 'their gracious brethren of the ministry at London and about it,' the expression had been used that 'the Churches of England and Scotland seemed to be embarked in the same bottom, to sink or swim together;' they had the same enemies, and must unite in defence against their assaults. In the Grand Remonstrance which the House of Commons began to prepare in the autumn of 1641, and had finished before the first

of December, they declared that while they had no wish 'to abolish all church-government and leave every man to his own fancy for the service and worship of God, or to let loose the golden reins of discipline,' they yet desired that some changes should be made on the arrangements previously subsisting, and that there might be 'a general Synod¹ of the most grave, pious, learned and judicious divines of *this island* (not of England only), assisted by some from foreign parts professing the same religion with us, to consider all things necessary for the peace and good government of the Church.' If they still hesitated to

¹ 'We are poisoned in many points of doctrine, and I know no antidote, no recipe, for cure but one—a well-chosen and well-tempered Synod and God's blessing thereon: this may cure us; without this, in my poor opinion, England is like to turn itself into a great Amsterdam, and unless this council be very speedy the disease will be above the cure.'—*Speech of Sir Edward Deering* (E. 197, p. 105). About the same time appeared—*Heads or Reasons for which a General Council ought to be called together in England*. The reasons were that (1) Matters of chief debate necessary to be decided (lest atheism and libertinism increase) may be cleared; (2) Fundamentals of Christian truth and faith may be fully and invincibly settled by common consent; (3) The public profession of divine worship may be brought to some religious uniformity so far as is expedient for the amiable correspondence of several churches one with another and so fit for the edification of all Christians; (4) The means of propagating the gospel and kingdom of Christ towards those that are yet in darkness may be agreed upon and set apart for the advancement of God's glory' (E. 206, No. 14). In E. 170 various petitions are printed, praying for the calling of an Assembly of Divines of the three kingdoms to explain the doctrine and reform the government of the Church, that truth 'may hew out a way to peace and unity.'

give more definite expression to the wish which lay nearest to the heart of Henderson that Scotland should be formally invited to send deputies to the Synod and its purpose be enlarged, that Common Standards might be prepared by it for the churches of the three kingdoms, it is clear that by this time they had resolved the Assembly should be something more than a mere English Synod, something like what Cranmer long before had so eagerly desired. If what was resolved on by it should be enacted in the first instance for England only, it was meant it should be so after counsel with others and should form a model which other churches might view with favour as fitted for the guidance of a thoroughly reformed church, and likely to conduce to more intimate and friendly relations among them all. But open expression had been given to the wish that Scotland should take formal part in the proposed Assembly at latest in the communication addressed by them to the General Assembly which met in July 1642. For in reply to that communication the Assembly ventured to refer to what Scotland had done, in earlier and in more recent times, to bring about a closer union between the reformed churches, and 'anew urged on their English brethren that the work of reformation should begin with uniformity of church-government.' There was no hope, in their opinion, of unity in religion or of one Con-

fession of Faith, one form of worship, and one Catechism, till there was one form of ecclesiastical government. They accepted the invitation given, and assured the Parliament that they would gladly do their part in this great crisis, and indeed had already appointed Commissioners to prosecute the work of uniformity with England and to endeavour to agree upon Common Standards for the churches of both kingdoms. The views of the Scotch gained the powerful support of Pym, in an able speech he made on 30th September at a Conference¹ of the two Houses for union of the three kingdoms in one Directory or Form of Prayer, Catechism, etc., and that able and judicious divines, not only from Scotland but also from other reformed churches, should be asked to join the Assembly. Several months before this date the Houses had actually begun to make arrangements for the meeting of the proposed Synod or Assembly of Divines. A 'gracious message' (E. 290) had come from the king, 14th February 1641, intimating that 'because his Majesty observes great and different troubles do arise in the hearts of his people concerning the government and liturgy of the Church, his Majesty is willing to declare that he will refer the whole consideration to the wisdom of his Parliament which he desires them to enter into speedily.' This almost

¹ Journals of House of Commons, vol. ii. p. 789.

necessitated the Parliament calling such an assembly of divines as they had been contemplating. Accordingly, on the 19th April 1642, the House of Commons ordered that the names of such divines as shall be thought fit to be consulted with in the matter of the Church be brought in to-morrow morning. On the following morning the divines recommended for nine of the English counties, and on succeeding days those for the rest of the counties, as also for the city of London, the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and the Channel Islands, were approved; and on the 25th the list was deemed completed. Two were appointed for each county in England, for each of the Universities and for the Channel Islands, one for each county in Wales, and four for the city of London. The general opinion has been that the divines were recommended by the members of Parliament representing each county and the boroughs within it (the House in one or two instances, however, insisting on a vote being taken on the names proposed), and the balance of evidence seems to me to favour that opinion. It seems likely that some further communication had been made to the king before the 9th of May, when the first bill for calling the Assembly was formally brought into the House or before it passed the third reading; for, as I have said elsewhere, 'in a pamphlet bearing date 16th May 1642

and entitled, "His Majesty's resolution concerning the establishment of religion and church-government," it is stated that he "hath consented that the main matters of difference which have occasioned all these distractions shall be framed and discussed by a number of grave, wise, and religious divines which shall be thought fit by the Houses of Parliament: *every county electing two* for this so grave and weighty a business, that so all things being according to God's true Word scanned and examined by the judicious and religious judgments of these worthy persons the truth may appear; light and instruction may be given unto authority, and by their power an uniformity of government and worship agreeable to God's Word may be settled in the Church.' This resolution of his Majesty does not seem to have been persevered in, or to have borne any practical fruit,—the fortune of war being then in his favour, and the counsels of the more moderate of his advisers being overborne. The bill, after passing the House of Commons, was amended in the House of Lords by the addition of fourteen divines named by the Upper House. These were generally moderate or conservative men; several of them were royalists, and one a pronounced Arminian.

The list was forthwith published and has appended to it the following significant declaration by the Houses, of date 9th April 1642: 'The Lords

and Commons do declare that they intend a due and necessary reformation of the government and liturgy of the Church, and to take away nothing in the one or other but what shall be evil and justly offensive or at least unnecessary and burthensome : And for the better effecting thereof speedily to have consultation with godly and learned divines : And because this will never of itself attain the end sought therein, they will therefore use their utmost endeavours to establish learned and preaching ministers with a good and sufficient maintenance throughout the whole kingdom, wherein are many dark corners and miserably destitute of the means of salvation, and many poor ministers without necessary provision.¹ They, as well as the ministers, had set their hearts on something higher and better than any change in the external forms of government and worship as necessary to insure the reformation they desired, and the reclamation of the careless, the ignorant, and the godless. They believed the consciences of such could only be effectually reached by the earnest preaching of the gospel salvation—not by any mechanical drilling in forms, however venerable and imposing.

The bill as amended had passed both Houses by the first of June, and only waited the king's assent to make it law, and insure the meeting of the Assembly in the following month. The king's

¹ E. 144, and also 146.

assent being withheld, a second and a third bill were brought in before the close of the year; but all was in vain, for the king would not pass either of them. At last, as Mr. Masson tell us, 'hopeless of a bill that should pass in the regular way . . . the Houses resorted in this as in other things to their peremptory plan of *ordinance* by their own authority. On 13th May 1643 an Ordinance for calling an Assembly was introduced in the Commons, which Ordinance after due going and coming between the two Houses reached its maturity on the 12th June, when it was entered at full length on the Lords' Journals.' It was printed on the 13th and again on 20th June. The Ordinance is given at length in most editions of the Confession of Faith, and I need not occupy your time by quoting it here, as in its final form it is reprinted and prefixed to these lectures, along with a full list of the members, and a somewhat more detailed account of them than is there supplied.

The purposes for which the Ordinance declares that the Assembly was called were 'for 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 as should be found most agreeable to the Word of God, 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.' It authorises the members to discuss such of these matters as shall be proposed to them by both or either of the Houses of Parliament, but prohibits them, without consent of the Houses, from divulging the same by printing, writing, or otherwise. It provides that Dr. Twisse of Newbury shall be Prolocutor, that a sum of four shillings a day shall be allowed to each of them to defray their expenses, and that all and every of them shall be free of any penalty for non-residence or absence from their cure; and finally, that they shall not 'assume or exercise any jurisdiction, power, or authority ecclesiastical whatsoever, or any other power whatsoever, other than is herein particularly expressed.'

On account of the concluding restrictions some have doubted whether the Westminster Assembly was really entitled to the name of a Synod ecclesiastical at all. But it may be said in reply to their doubts, 1st, That it was at least entitled to rank as an advisory Synod of the kind specified in its own Confession of Faith, chap. xxxi. § 2; as much so, at any rate, as the ministers who, at the request of the Scottish Parliament, drew up the Old Scotch Confession and the First Book of Discipline in 1560-1, or the divines who, in Edward VI.'s reign, drew up the Forty-two Articles; 2d, That in respect of the limitations imposed by the Ordinance, it only resembled an

English Convocation which cannot proceed to business without the sanction of the crown, nor claim authority for its decisions till they have been approved by the sovereign. Even in regard to the method adopted in selecting the members of the Assembly it did not want an able defender in the author of a remarkable treatise entitled '*Consilium de reformandâ Ecclesiâ Anglicanâ*.'¹ This author maintained at considerable length, that, while in ordinary circumstances the clergy were rightly left to elect their own representatives in Synods, yet in cases where the clergy were largely corrupted, and the object was to reform the corruptions that had crept in among them, it was quite competent for the magistrate in the exercise of his own judgment to select the members from the sounder part of the clergy,² and that in circumstances such as those in which the English Church then was, the magistrate, in claiming to

¹ Suggestum amplissimo coetui autoritate augustissimi Consensus Regis et Regni ordinum, indicto, ad consultandum de rebus gravissimis in religione.—Londini 1643 (E 56, 12).

² 'Cum enim illustrissimi senatores observassent Archiepiscopi Laudi ejusque sectatorum artibus non in uno loco Angliæ suffectos viros de religione male sentientes et Papismo addictos prudenter cavent ne ab ejusmodi deputantibus ejusdem farinae deputati subnascantur. . . . An altarcicola qui citari debet ad Synodum, rationem redditurus malesanzæ doctrinæ in vulgus a se sparsæ, allegabitur ut Synodi fiat membrum?' The folly of the other way had been sufficiently evinced by the results of the recent and then exploded Convocation of 1640. The course followed, the author has shown, was not unprecedented, and therefore not so revolutionary as some would make it.

choose the members claimed nothing but what was consonant with right reason, and clearly confirmed by usage, and what had actually been practised in the reigns of three most powerful sovereigns, Edward VI., Elizabeth, and James I. The author of this treatise evidently belonged to the most conservative school of reformers, and cautioned the Parliament to have regard to the best interests of the country, and not to attempt changes which the nation generally was not ripe for, and would not permanently bear. On this ground he ventured to advocate the continuance of a liturgy with some provision for free prayer, and of a moderate Episcopacy, in which the bishop should not be of a different order but only of a different degree from the presbyters,—should be their mouth or executive rather than their head or sovereign ruler,—and should neither ordain, nor depose, nor excommunicate without their assent. He did not favour the introduction of lay elders.

More than one treatise advocating similar views was published soon after the Assembly had begun its sittings, notably one by Bishop Hall on a lower platform than that he assumed in the Smectymnan controversy. But whether for good or evil, the question of the continuance or discontinuance of Episcopacy may be said to have been virtually determined by the Parliament in the preamble of the Ordinance calling them together, and never

really to have been a subject of formal debate in the Assembly itself.

With all acknowledged limitations of its scope, however, the Westminster Assembly was in fact *a great 'power* or institution in the English realm in those unsettled times—existing side by side with the Long Parliament, in constant conference and co-operation'¹ with its leaders, generally influencing or moulding ecclesiastical legislation, and treated with unusual deference even when its remonstrances were unacceptable—maintaining a good understanding between the Parliament and the earnest citizens of London, who were its real arm of strength, and gaining and retaining a moral influence over the pious part of the people, which neither Cromwell's temporary supremacy nor the more lasting persecutions of the second Charles should suffice entirely to destroy. Taking it all in all, it was to leave its mark so deeply and permanently on a large portion of our Anglo-Saxon race, that, as Professor Masson has justly observed, it 'ought to be more interesting to them still than the history of the Councils of Constance, Basle, Trent, or any other of the great ecclesiastical Councils more ancient and œcumenical, about which we still hear so much.'²

In one important respect, as I have said else-

¹ *Life of Milton in connection with the history of his time*, vol. ii. p. 514.

² *Ibid.* p. 515.

where,¹ it resembled the celebrated council of Nicæa—the most ancient œcumenical of all. ‘Not a few of its members had been honoured to suffer on account of the truths to which they clung, and many of them had the courage afterwards to brave suffering, ignominy, and penury rather than renounce their creed and their views of church polity and discipline. Nay, they may be said, by the very act of their meeting, to have put their livings, if not their lives, in jeopardy;’ and so to have given the strongest possible proof of their deep sense of the necessity of the work to which, notwithstanding the prohibition of the king, and his mutterings of treason, they addressed themselves during these troubled years.

The Assembly was designed to include among its members adherents of all the chief parties among English Protestants, with the exception of that of Archbishop Laud, whose innovations and despotic government had been one main cause of the troubles that had arisen, both in church and state. Almost all the clerical members named upon it were in Episcopalian orders, most of them were graduates in Arts, not a few of them graduates in Divinity, either of Oxford or Cambridge. Three or four were bishops, five afterwards rose to be so, and several others were known to be favourable to the continuance of Episcopacy

¹ Introduction to *Minutes of Westminster Assembly*, p. xxxii.

and a liturgy, and some of them to side with the king rather than with the parliament. Many were known to favour Presbytery. A place was found among the members for some of the most prominent ministers of the French Church in England, for one of Dutch or German descent, for two or three Irishmen, and for some who, to avoid the persecutions of Laud, had left their native land for a time and acted as pastors to the congregations of English exiles and merchants in Holland. Invitations to send commissioners were addressed to the Church of Scotland, and, it is said also, to the congregational churches of New England.

If few of the royalist divines ventured to appear in their places, yet Dr. Featley and one or two more did attend pretty regularly for a time, and the doctor took a prominent part in the debates on the revision of the Thirty-nine Articles—debates probably as important in a doctrinal point of view as any that occurred at a later stage. If Ussher, the greatest of these divines, was ‘conspicuous by his absence,’ the Assembly at least gave the most unmistakeable proof of its high regard for him and of its earnest desire to comprehend within the reconstituted church those who shared his doctrinal views, by drawing its statements on so many of the most important doctrines from the Articles prepared by him in 1615 for the Church of Ireland.

Yet most various estimates have been formed of the merits of the divines and of the value of their work. Clarendon and several of the satirists of the age have spoken of them with contempt and scorn, and others have accorded them only faint praise. But Bishop Hall was not ashamed to address them as his *learned* and reverend brethren, nor the five dissenting brethren frankly to acknowledge their worth. Richard Baxter, who was perhaps as competent as any of their contemporaries to give an impartial verdict, does not hesitate to affirm that 'the divines there congregated were men of eminent learning and godliness, ministerial ability and fidelity; and being not worthy,' he modestly adds, 'to be one of them myself, I may the more freely speak that truth which I know, even in the face of malice and envy, that so far as I am able to judge by the information of all history . . . the Christian world since the days of the apostles had never a Synod of more excellent divines.' This, it has been well said by Dr. Stoughton, 'is high praise, but it comes nearer the truth than the condemnatory verdicts pronounced by some others. The Westminster divines had learning, scriptural, patristic, scholastic and modern, enough and to spare, all solid, substantial, and ready for use. . . . They had a clear firm grasp of evangelical truths. The godliness of the men is proved by the spirit of their writings

and by the history of their lives. Their talents and attainments even Milton does not attempt to deny.' Hammond admits the learning of many.

Hallam, no less competent a judge, admits that 'they were perhaps equal in learning, good sense, and other merits to any Lower House of Convocation that ever made a figure in England.' Indeed in two important respects we may say that they had the advantage of any Lower House. There were called in to the aid of the divines a number of the laymen distinguished among their fellows in Parliament as statesmen or scholars, and not unacquainted with Theology. And when under the Solemn League and Covenant the original purpose of the Assembly was extended there were associated with these English divines and laymen some of the most distinguished of the Scottish ministers and elders. Hence it is, I think, that their work has stood the test of time, and is still held in honour by the Presbyterian Churches.

As I have said elsewhere,¹ even the twenty names of special eminence with which a recent critic has credited them constitute a larger proportion of the whole than may at first sight appear, for they are the names of men who were regular in their attendance, and prominent in the discussions, and they form at least a third of those who

¹ *Minutes of Westminster Assembly*, p. xxxiii., etc., article 'Westminster Assembly' in Johnson's *Universal Cyclopædia*.

were so. But more may fairly be claimed for them and several of their companions than that critic is disposed to concede. Dr. William Twisse, the Prolocutor, was a man not only of subtle and speculative genius, but also of profound and varied learning. He was one of the most influential theologians of his day, held in honour by the Reformed Churches on the Continent as well as by those in Britain. Sir John Savile, who had sought the assistance of the ever memorable John Hales for his edition of Chrysostom, did not disdain to call in the aid of Twisse in preparing for the press Bradwardine's great work, *De Causa Dei contra Pelagium*. Bishop Hall—himself a royalist and resolute defender of the hierarchy—says of him, that he was 'a man so eminent in school divinity that the Jesuits have felt, and for aught I see, shrunk under his strength.' Yet with all his eminence he did not claim, nor, proud as his brethren were of him, did they consent to mould their Confession according to his peculiar views either as regards the order of the Divine decrees or the nature of justification, or as to the power of God to pardon sin without requiring any atonement for it. He had suffered greatly in the war from the royalist soldiers, and though Prolocutor of the Assembly, and held in honour by the Parliament, he died 'in great straits.'¹ Dr. Edward

¹ The satirists of the day are never weary of bantering the

Reynolds was a divine 'eloquent, learned, cautious,' and that may have been the reason why the Assembly devolved on a committee of which he was convener the adjusting of those much-maligned sentences in their Confession regarding predestination and preterition. He was one of the most active and influential members of the Assembly, and possibly we owe to him its directory for Thanksgiving after Sermon, as well as the General Thanksgiving added to the Book of Common Prayer after the Restoration. Dr. Edmund Calamy was a more liberal and cautious Calvinist still; and no one can read the minutes of the Assembly's debates on the extent of redemption without acknowledging that he was a genuine disciple of Ussher and Davenant, and feeling thankful that he and some others of the same school deemed it their duty to cast in their lot with their nonconformist brethren in 1662 when Reynolds and Wallis abandoned them. Lightfoot, Coleman, and Seaman were all distinguished oriental scholars, and Gataker was not only a distinguished Hebrew and Greek scholar, but also one of the first in Britain to write in defence of the opinion then

divines about their four shillings hire. But up to the time of Twisse's death this had been very irregularly paid, as also were the emoluments of the sequestrations they held in town. When some partial payments were made to the Assembly, Dr. Burgess and some others declined their share that there might be a little more for those in greater need.

much questioned, but now generally received, that the Greek of the New Testament was of a different character from that of the classical authors, and by its many Hebraisms, gave unmistakeable evidence for the nationality and training of the writers. He was the friend of Ussher and Selden, and after them was accounted the most learned man then in England. He was distinguished by the quaint richness of his style and the argumentative power of his controversial works. In the Antinomian Controversy, for his treatises on which he repeatedly received the thanks of the Assembly, Mr. Marsden says that he answered the leaders as Hooker answered his adversary, 'with the same profound love of truth, the same ponderous and varied learning, the same gentle spirit, . . . and the same devoted adherence to evangelical doctrine.' Arrowsmith, 'the man with the glass-eye,' and Tuckney, the kindly correspondent of Whichcot, Professors of Divinity at Cambridge, were not only clever college tutors, but, as several of their published works clearly indicate, men of high scholarship and considerable mental breadth, and force of character. With them must be conjoined Dr. Joshua Hoyle, the friend of Ussher, Professor of Divinity first at Dublin then at Oxford, admitted by Wood to have been 'profound in the faculty of divinity and in patristic learning,' and Dr. John Wallis, Savilian

Professor of Geometry at Oxford, whose attainments as a theologian and metaphysician were only cast into the shade by his greater attainments as a mathematician. He was the friend of Boyle, Gregory, and Newton, the untiring opponent of Hobbes and the Socinians, one of the authors as well as of the earliest expositors of the Shorter Catechism, and probably one of the last surviving officials of the great Assembly. The age was confessedly an age of great preachers. 'The pulpit of the metropolis,' as Marsden tells us, 'displayed a galaxy of light and genius such as it had never before, and perhaps has never since, exhibited. The printed sermons of the great Puritan preachers . . . sufficiently vindicate their reputation. They were no adventurers. They had been brought up in the Church of England; they were entitled to its best preferments; and they might have had them in their youth from Laud, in their grey hairs from Charles II., had not their own consciences forbidden.' In the first rank of these there fall to be numbered the following members of the Assembly:—Dr. William Gouge, 'the father of the London Puritan ministers,' and the author of a laborious commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, who shunned promotion as eagerly as others seemed to court it, and yet on whose preaching Ussher and other scholars then congregated in the metropolis were pleased from

time to time to attend ; Dr. Thomas Manton, the author of an equally laborious commentary on Psalm cxix., 'in whom clear judgment, rich fancy, and happy eloquence met ;' Stephen Marshall, whose impressive eloquence is said to have secured him greater influence with the Long Parliament than ever Laud enjoyed with the Court of Charles ; Calamy, who 'delighted in that experimental strain of discourse which ever touches the hearts of men,' and was greatly beloved by the merchant princes of the city ; Palmer, 'gracious learned little Palmer,' as Baillie somewhat familiarly terms him, who could preach to purpose in French as well as in English, was the best catechist in England, and one of the most earnest and faithful of its college masters—to whom are now ascribed the 'Paradoxes' long attributed to Lord Bacon ; Burroughes and Greenhill, 'the morning and the evening stars of Stepney ;' Joseph Caryl, author of a great commentary on the book of Job, and long popular with the learned audience of Lincoln's Inn ; and Dr. Thomas Goodwin, eminent as a theological writer and one of the most successful expository preachers of the age. These are not more shadowy to the cultured even yet than those our critic names, and in those anxious times many earnest spirits rejoiced in their light, and extolled them among preachers 'as the apple tree among the trees of the wood,' under whose

shadow they sat with great delight, and whose fruit they found sweet and pleasant to their taste. 'I could name,' says one who pleaded earnestly for them, though he did not cast in his lot with them, 'the Paul and the Apollos and the Peter that preached to the heart; the Barnabas and the Boanerges; the friends of the bridegroom that wooed and besought us and would not be denied till our souls had received Christ Jesus the Lord. Some of them are at rest in the Lord, and let their names be blessed, and others are in the cloud and storm and warfare, and to add bonds to their many afflictions is no small unkindness to religion.' To these, when the Solemn League and Covenant was entered into, there were added, as I said, the very *élite* of the Scottish ministers and elders:—Alexander Henderson, whose statesman-like abilities, sagacity, and culture, even royalists admit; Samuel Rutherford, one of their most impressive preachers and most learned divines, who was twice invited to a theological chair in Holland; George Gillespie, the prince of disputants, who, 'with the fire of youth, had the wisdom of age;' and the consequential, but much esteemed Robert Baillie, who has embalmed in graphic narrative both their serious debates and their lighter gossip; together with Johnstone of Warriston and the great Marquis of Argyll, who afterwards suffered on account of their principles; Loudon, the

Chancellor of the kingdom, and Chancellor of its principal university, the soldierly Meldrum, and the engaging young Lord Maitland, afterwards the confidant both of Sharp and Leighton. Robert Douglas, the silent, sagacious, masterful man, who was joined with them in commission, could not be spared from the duties of leadership at home, but he assisted and cheered them by his letters, maintained good understanding between them and the Church in Scotland, and in their absence came to occupy a place among his brethren almost as unique as that of Calvin among the presbyters of Geneva.

It was then no commonplace Assembly which the Parliament of England had indicted to meet at Westminster on 1st July 1643—no gathering of ignorant or imperfectly educated divines, of narrow-minded fanatics or one-ideaed enthusiasts, but of men fully competent for the work intrusted to them, and worthy of all confidence therein.

It included not a few who had already gained a name and fame for themselves, several who were yet to leave their impress on the age, or on posterity, and many who at least were to commend themselves and their work by holy, consistent, self-denying, laborious Christian lives. It was meant to be as comprehensive as the accepted theology of the Reformation would at all permit, as tolerant as the times would yet bear. If its members had

one idea more dominant than another it was not, as they are sometimes still caricatured, that of setting forth with greater one-sidedness and exaggeration the doctrines of election and preterition (for they did little more as to these mysterious topics than repeat what Ussher had already formulated), but that of setting forth the whole scheme of reformed doctrine in harmonious development in a form of which their country should have no cause to be ashamed in presence of any of the sister churches of the Continent, and above all in a form which would conduce greatly to the fostering of Christian knowledge and Christian life. That in some measure this idea was realised, impartial historians are now beginning to admit,¹ and we hope, in our remaining lectures, to show.

¹ 'It forms the most important chapter in the ecclesiastical history of England during the seventeenth century. Whether we look at the extent or ability of its labours, or its influence upon future generations, it stands first among Protestant councils.'—Schaff's *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. i. p. 728. See also Masson as already quoted, p. 115.