

PRAYER

QUIZ

1. What was the name of the Parliamentary army once it had been reorganized? the New Model Army
2. Were the Scots allied with King Charles I in the first civil war or the second? the second
3. In what year did the Westminster Assembly convene? 1643
4. Of Episopals, Independents, and Presbyterians, which group had almost no representation in the assembly? Episcopalian
5. From what country, other than England, were commissioners sent, who worked with the Westminster Assembly? Scotland
6. BONUS: How many Baptists were directly involved in the Westminster Assembly? none!

TIMELINE

- 1509 King Henry VIII ascends the throne of England
- 1526 Tyndale's complete New Testament in English is printed
- 1534 The Act of Supremacy officially separates the Church of England from the pope
- 1547 King Edward VI ascends the throne
- 1553 Queen Mary I ascends the throne
- 1558 Queen Elizabeth I ascends the throne
- 1560 Geneva Bible is published
- 1588 Spanish Armada is defeated
- 1603 King James I ascends the throne
- 1604 In the Hampton Court Conference, King James agrees to a new Bible translation
- 1611 Authorized or King James Version is published
- 1625 King Charles I ascends the throne
- 1628 The Petition of Right Is Passed
- 1640 The Long Parliament Convenes
- 1642 The English Civil War Begins
- 1643 The Westminster Assembly Convenes

READING ASSIGNMENT

"Confessing the Faith in 1644 and 1689" from beginning to just before the bold heading "The Second London Confession" (optional, of course, to read the whole thing)

<https://www.reformedreader.org/ctf.htm>

BIBLE

Acts 15:1-31

## LESSON

(most of this information is from the article by William Symington)

Westminster refers to Westminster Abbey in London, where the assembly had its meetings. Of course by that time it had not been an abbey for a century, but it was a grand, complex building.

The Assembly was convened for the first time on Saturday, July 1, 1643, and it continued to hold regular meetings until February 22, 1649, when, instead of being formally dissolved, it was resolved into a committee for conducting the trials leading to the ordination of ministers. In this capacity it sat until March 25, 1652, when an end was put to its existence by the dissolution of the Long Parliament which had called it into being.

150 members; 69 members in first meeting

The assembly was called by Parliament, the civil authority. The assembly did not have power to govern the church, only to advise Parliament.

The bishops and others in favor of Episcopacy withdrew early in the proceedings, except "Dr. Daniel Fealty of Lambeth, who continued to sit until he was expelled for prematurely revealing the proceedings of the Assembly." There were no decided Episcopalians; the subject of Prelacy held no place in the discussions

The parties were Erastians, Independents, and Presbyterians.

### Erastians

-few in number, about 5

-greatly skilled

-positions from Thomas Erastus of Heidelberg

-the Jewish state and church were one, and the Christian church is formed on the exact model of the Jewish

-the civil government enforces church discipline

### Independents

-small in number, about 10

-some eminent in learning and talent and of great and undoubted piety

-Congregationalism

-known as "the dissenting brethren"

-not one professed anti-paedo-baptist in the Assembly "though their sentiments began to spread wonderfully without doors." (Daniel Neal)

### Presbyterians

-overwhelming majority

-church officers form higher councils that govern the churches

### Scottish Commissioners

## **Revision of 39 Articles**

Parliament requested the assembly to revise the 39 Articles of the Church of England. The Assembly started work on this, but then put it aside when the Scottish commissioners arrived. This work was not completed

## **Taking the Solemn League and Covenant**

The Assembly, the Commons, and the Lords all took the Solemn League and Covenant

The League had for its object, not merely to secure "the preservation of the reformed religion in the Church of Scotland," but "the reformation of religion in the kingdoms of England and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, according to the word of God, and the example of the best reformed churches, and to bring the churches of God in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, Confession of Faith, Form of Church Government, Directory for Worship, and Catechising."

## **Preparing the Directory for Public Worship**

The Directory for Public Worship came next. When complete, it was passed by the Assembly and sanctioned by Parliament, in place of the Book of Common Prayer.

### ***Of the Assembling of the Congregation, and their Behaviour in the Publick Worship of God.***

WHEN the congregation is to meet for publick worship, the people (having before prepared their hearts thereunto) ought all to come and join therein; not absenting themselves from the publick ordinance through negligence, or upon pretence of private meetings.

That all the people meet so timely for publick worship, that the whole congregation may be present at the beginning, and with one heart solemnly join together in all parts of the publick worship, and not depart till after the blessing. [This sentence from the section on the Sabbath day.]

Let all enter the assembly, not irreverently, but in a grave and seemly manner, taking their seats or places without adoration, or bowing themselves towards one place or other.

The congregation being assembled, the minister, after solemn calling on them to the worshipping of the great name of God, is to begin with prayer.

The publick worship being begun, the people are wholly to attend upon it, forbearing to read any thing, except what the minister is then reading or citing; and abstaining much more from all private whisperings, conferences, salutations, or doing reverence to any person present, or coming in; as also from all gazing, sleeping, and other indecent behaviour, which may disturb the minister or people, or hinder themselves or others in the service of God.

### ***Of Singing of Psalms.***

IT is the duty of Christians to praise God publickly, by singing of psalms together in the congregation, and also privately in the family.

In singing of psalms, the voice is to be tunably and gravely ordered; but the chief care must be to sing with understanding, and with grace in the heart, making melody unto the Lord.

That the whole congregation may join herein, every one that can read is to have a psalm book; and all others, not disabled by age or otherwise, are to be exhorted to learn to read. But for the present, where many in the congregation cannot read, it is convenient that the minister, or some other fit person appointed by him and the other ruling officers, do read the psalm, line by line, before the singing thereof.

### ***Touching Days and Places for Publick Worship.***

THERE is no day commanded in scripture to be kept holy under the gospel but the Lord's day, which is the Christian Sabbath.

Festival days, vulgarly called *Holy-days*, having no warrant in the word of God, are not to be continued.

Nevertheless, it is lawful and necessary, upon special emergent occasions, to separate a day or days for publick fasting or thanksgiving, as the several eminent and extraordinary dispensations of God's providence shall administer cause and opportunity to his people.

As no place is capable of any holiness, under pretence of whatsoever dedication or consecration; so neither is it subject to such pollution by any superstition formerly used, and now laid aside, as may render it unlawful or inconvenient for Christians to meet together therein for the publick worship of God. And therefore we hold it requisite, that the places of publick assembling for worship among us should be continued and employed to that use.

### **Preparing a Psalter**

The psalter prepared was said to be excellent, was adopted by the kirk in Scotland, and is still in wide use today.

## **Debating Church Government**

Church government was long debated point by point.

-Prebyterian proposition put forth.

-other parties argued against

-Presbyterians answered

-Erastian controversy hard-fought, with Parliament siding with the Erastians

-Erastianism defeated in wording of confession: "The Lord Jesus, as king and head of his church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of church-officers, distinct from the civil magistrate."

-This was a huge accomplishment toward religious liberty. The church was to be governed by itself, not by the civil government.

-Not a complete break with government rule over church.

The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven: yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire; that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed; and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide, that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God.

## Preparing a Confession of Faith

Confession was completed and submitted to Parliament, which asked for scripture proofs to be added in the margin.

### Statement of religious liberty

20.2 God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in any thing contrary to His Word; or beside it, in matters of faith or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.

### Influence on our own 1689 confession

And forasmuch as our method and manner of expressing our sentiments in this doth vary from the former (although the substance of this matter is the same), we shall freely impart to you the reason and occasion thereof. One thing that greatly prevailed with us to undertake this work was (not only to give a full account of ourselves to those Christians that differ from us about the subject of baptism, but also) the profit that might from thence arise unto those that have any account of our labors in their instruction and establishment in the great truths of the Gospel, in the clear understanding and steady belief of which our comfortable walking with God, and fruitfulness before him in all our ways, is most nearly concerned; and therefore **we did conclude it necessary to express ourselves the more fully and distinctly; and also to fix on such a method as might be most comprehensive of those things we designed to explain our sense and belief of; and finding no defect in this regard in that fixed on by the Assembly**, and, after them by those of the congregational way, we did readily conclude it best to retain the same order in our present Confession; and also when we observed that those last mentioned did in their Confessions (for reasons which seemed of weight both to themselves and others) choose not only to express their mind in words concurrent with the former in sense concerning all those articles wherein they were agreed, but also for the most part without any variation of the terms, **we did in like manner conclude it best to follow their example in making use of the very same words with them both in these articles (which are very many) wherein our faith and doctrine are the same with theirs**; and this we did the more abundantly to manifest our consent with both in all the fundamental articles of the Christian religion, as also with many others whose orthodox Confessions have been published to the world on the behalf of the Protestant in diverse nations and cities. And also to convince all that we have no itch to clog religion with new words, but do readily acquiesce in that form of sound words which hath been, in consent with the Holy Scriptures, used by others before us; hereby declaring, before God, angels, and men, our hearty agreement with them in that wholesome Protestant doctrine which, with so clear evidence of Scriptures, they have asserted. Some things, indeed, are in some places added, some terms omitted, and some few changed; but these alterations are of that nature as that we need not doubt any charge or suspicion of unsoundness in the faith from any of our brethren upon the account of them.

- 1) It follows the same form
- 2) It is the very same wording in most places

## Preparing a Catechism

Catechism were drawn up, two instead of one

Gillespie: "The framing of this," says Gillespie, "the Assembly have been very laborious in, and have found great difficulty how to make it full, such as might be expected from an Assembly, and upon the other part how to condescend to the capacity of the common and unlearned. Therefore they are a-making two distinct catechisms, a short and plain one for these, and a larger one for those of understanding."

Shorter

This was baptized, "Keach's Catechism," published 1693

Q. 67. *Which is the sixth commandment?*

A. The sixth commandment is, Thou shalt not kill.

Q. 68. *What is required in the sixth commandment?*

A. The sixth commandment requireth all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life, and the life of others.

Q. 69. *What is forbidden in the sixth commandment?*

A. The sixth commandment forbiddeth the taking away of our own life, or the life of our neighbor unjustly, or whatsoever tendeth thereunto

Larger

Q. 134. *Which is the sixth commandment?*

A. The sixth commandment is, *Thou shalt not kill.*

Q. 135. *What are the duties required in the sixth commandment?*

A. The duties required in the sixth commandment are, all careful studies, and lawful endeavors, to preserve the life of ourselves and others by resisting all thoughts and purposes, subduing all passions, and avoiding all occasions, temptations, and practices, which tend to the unjust taking away the life of any; by just defense thereof against violence, patient bearing of the hand of God, quietness of mind, cheerfulness of spirit; a sober use of meat, drink, physic, sleep, labor, and recreations; by charitable thoughts, love, compassion, meekness, gentleness, kindness; peaceable, mild and courteous speeches and behavior; forbearance, readiness to be reconciled, patient bearing and forgiving of injuries, and requiting good for evil; comforting and succoring the distressed, and protecting and defending the innocent.

Q. 136. *What are the sins forbidden in the sixth commandment?*

A. The sins forbidden in the sixth commandment are, all taking away the life of ourselves, or of others, except in case of public justice, lawful war, or necessary defense; the neglecting or withdrawing the lawful and necessary means of preservation of life; sinful anger, hatred, envy, desire of revenge; all excessive passions, distracting cares; immoderate use of meat, drink, labor, and recreations; provoking words, oppression, quarreling, striking, wounding, and whatsoever else tends to the destruction of the life of any.