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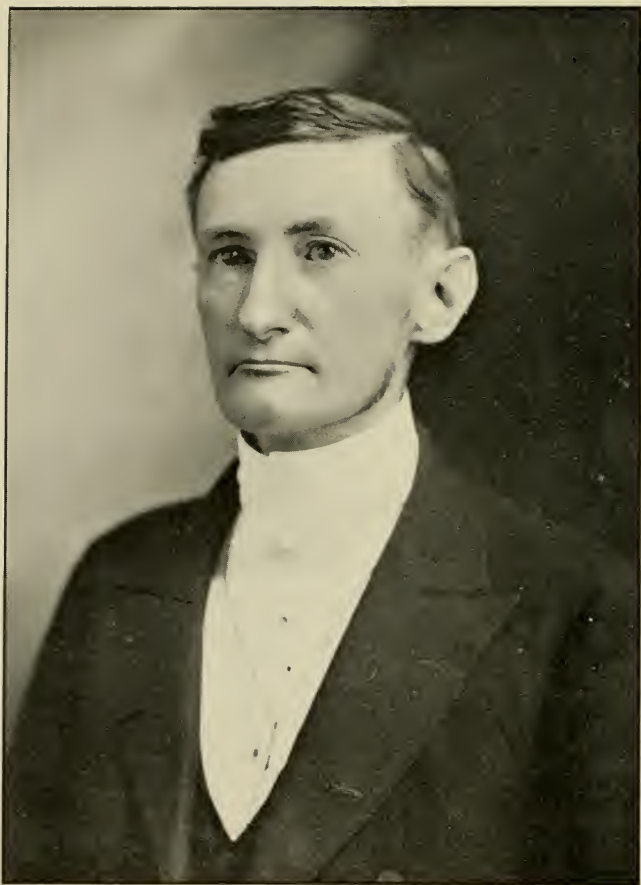


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VI.

CHURCH POLITY AND WORSHIP--EMPHASIZING
THEIR RELATION TO WORSHIP.

BY

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ANALYSIS.

Introductory references to Dr. B. M. Palmer.—The topic stated as given.—This theme covers polity and worship and their underlying doctrine.—The sufficiency and sovereignty of God the unifying principle of the Confession and Catechisms, the Form of Government and the Directory of Worship.—The conception of God in the Confession and Catechisms.—The fundamental principle of church government the sufficiency and sovereignty of God in Christ.—Christ the alone King and Head.—This in opposition to the papacy and to Erastianism.—This sovereignty of Christ variously realized.—In his gathering into one his elect.—In his ordaining the Bible as the alone law of the kingdom.—In his prescribing therein a government, in the hands of officers, distinct from the civil magistrate.—In his making things not commanded forbidden.—Doctrine of “circumstances.”—This sovereignty further realized in worship.—Christ the Master of all assemblies.—Ordains all sacraments and ordinances.—Inspirer of prayer and praise.—Author of all effectual preaching.—His Spirit the only Vicegerent.—Sovereignty finally realized in subduing all enemies, in destroying death, in coming in glory, in reigning as Theanthropos forever.—Corollaries.—First, beware of that taproot of sorrows, complications of church and state.—Second, God himself, by his Spirit armed with his word, and by his amazing providence, had inwrought his sufficiency and sovereignty into the Westminster Standards.—Doctrine, polity and worship one sublime doxology.

VI.

CHURCH POLITY AND WORSHIP—EMPHASIZING THEIR RELATION TO DOCTRINE.

MODERATOR, FATHERS AND BRETHREN OF THE ASSEMBLY: You will lend me your sympathy when I say that I find the responsibility of this hour almost crushingly oppressive. It were a matter of grave import, at any time and under any circumstances, to stand in this historic place, to look into the faces now upturned to mine, and to open the lips in this venerable presence. But beyond these not unusual considerations, there are others of moment connected with the discharge of the duty of the hour, to which I may briefly advert.

A few weeks ago there fell beneath my eye the programme of exercises in celebration of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Westminster Assembly. Glancing over it I saw that a very prominent topic of discussion had been assigned to that eminent and honored servant of the church, the Rev. Dr. B. M. Palmer, and, to my unfeigned astonishment, that my own name had been written beneath his as that of his alternate. I had just had time to congratulate myself that the kindness thus shown me by your Committee of Arrangements might be gratefully accepted without any burden of responsibility, when the thought of these easy honors was quickly dispelled by the receipt of a letter from Dr. Palmer, which was full of sadness for myself and of disappointment for you. The distinguished principal stated that it would be impossible for him to attend this meeting of the Gene-

ral Assembly; that his vision was so indistinct as to make it inexpedient for him to prepare the paper expected of him; that he desired this summer to make one last effort to recover his failing eyesight, and that if this should not be successful, he would resign himself to the will of the Lord, and preach on in the dark until it should please God to open his eyes "to the celestial glories of the upper day." Upon receiving this letter I at once wrote to Dr. Palmer, entreating him to prepare the address by dictation, and assuring him that I would covet no higher honor than that of reading it in his name. But there came a quick response, again asking that I should relieve the principal of the whole responsibility of the address. So positive was the declination, couched in language of that gracious encouragement to myself which has always characterized this eminent man in his dealings with his younger brethren in the ministry, that with "fear and trembling" I consented to place my neck beneath the yoke intended for him, sorrowing, most of all, that we must to-day miss the majesty of his lofty thought, nor have our souls uplifted and thrilled by the sound of his eloquent voice.

The subject assigned to Dr. Palmer as principal, and coming to me as his alternate, is given in these words, "Church Polity and Worship—Emphasizing their Relation to Doctrine."

After careful reflection I have concluded that it is expected of me not to discuss in detail the practical operations of church government, nor the particular ordinances of divine worship, but rather, to discover and signalize those general principles which the Westminster Assembly laid as the foundation stones of the whole polity and worship of the church of God, and especially, to hold up to view any one cardinal scriptural truth which may

bind all the parts of our Standards together in organic unity. I believe that the whole system of doctrine, of polity, and of worship is one. The single proposition which I shall endeavor to illustrate and enforce is this: The pervading and unifying doctrine of the Westminster Standards is that of the sufficiency and sovereignty of God, whose good pleasure is the source of the church's being, whose will is her law, and whose glory is her end.

I. Adverting briefly to the Confession of Faith: The able and distinguished theologian who has preceded me, with a power of analysis and a force of statement peculiarly his own, has already sufficiently emphasized the theocentric character of that venerable symbol. I shall, therefore, content myself with simply calling attention to its language of wonderful sublimity, wherein it asserts, with almost superhuman power, the conception of God enshrined within the reverent souls of those men whose work we honor now after these two hundred and fifty years. Taking the shoes from off our feet and bowing the heart as in solemn worship, let us hear these divines as, with Bible in hand, they point to the sacred page and tell us what is God: "There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection; a most pure Spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions; immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty; most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute; working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; and withal, most just and terrible in his judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty."

“God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness in and of himself, and is alone in and unto himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory in, by, with, and upon them; he is the alone Fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things; and hath most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever himself pleaseth. In his sight all things are open and manifest; his knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to him contingent or uncertain. He is most holy in all his counsels, in all his works, and in all his commands. To him is due from angels and men and every other creature whatsoever worship, service, or obedience he is pleased to require of them.”

“God, the great Creator of all things, doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by his most wise and holy Providence, according to his infallible foreknowledge and the free and immutable counsel of his own will, to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.” And so speak the Catechisms: “God is a Spirit, in and of himself infinite in being, glory, blessedness, and perfection; all-sufficient, eternal, unchangeable, incomprehensible, everywhere present, almighty, knowing all things, most wise, most holy, most just, most merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.” The climax of conciseness is attained in that reputed adoring outburst of Gillespie’s prayerful soul: “O thou, who art a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in thy being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.”

Where was ever found as noble a conception of God in the minds of uninspired men? Whenever the lovers of all that is rich and stately in the liturgies of other churches would press upon us their claims of admiration, may we not point to our own Standards, and ask where, in any tongue, may be purer or loftier words than these in which the best scholarship of the best period of English literature exalts Almighty God? And not only here in these quotations is this all-sufficiency of the one supreme Jehovah expressed. This is the heart and soul of every cardinal doctrine taught. The Bible is of value because it is the word of the infallible God. Sin is awful because it is defection from God. The highest end of Jesus Christ's life and death is the conservation of the glory of God. "The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." "Sin is any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God." Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit. Justification and adoption are acts, and sanctification is the work of God's free grace. The full happiness of the redeemed consists in being "made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity." Prayer must be "the offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will." Unbelief in God, God's word, God's Son, God's prescribed way of salvation, will condemn the soul through all the ages; but to awaken in God's likeness will be supernal and unending joy. Thus in the doctrinal Standards of the Westminster Assembly, God is everywhere, first, midst, last, and without end.

II. Passing out of the realm of doctrine into the domain of church government and worship, it is easy to see that here also God's sovereignty is the solid basis of

all scriptural, ecclesiastical polity. To this end does God bow the heavens and come down to earth in the second Person of the adorable Trinity, that he may be, not only the Saviour, but also the ruler, of the church. The chief corner-stone in the system of government proclaimed by the Westminster Assembly, and known as Presbyterian, is the vital and all-comprehensive truth that God incarnate, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the alone King and Head of the church. "It pleased God, in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, to be the mediator between God and man, the Prophet, Priest and King; the Head and Saviour of his church; the heir of all things and judge of the world." . . . "The Son of God, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon him man's nature," etc. . . . "Which Person is very God and very man, and yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man." . . . "On the third day he arose from the dead, with the same body in which he suffered; with which also he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth at the right hand of the Father, making intercession; and shall return to judge men and angels at the end of the world." So spake the Assembly through the Confession. And so, in that Assembly, rang out through the reports on church government such mighty praise to Christ as this:

"Jesus Christ, upon whose shoulders the government is, whose name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end; who sits upon the throne of his father, David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it, with judgment and justice, from henceforth, even

forever ; having all power given unto him in heaven and in earth by the Father, who raised him from the dead and set him on his own right hand, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be Head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all; he being ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things, received gifts for his church, and gave all officers necessary for the edification of his church and for the perfecting of the saints." "This Jesus Christ is the Mediator, the sole Priest, Prophet, King, Saviour, and Head of the church, and contains in himself, by way of eminency, all the officers in his church." Thus did these godly divines make Jesus the sole Head and King in Zion. Thus did they "bring forth the royal diadem and crown him Lord of all."

Looking backward from the eminence occupied by ourselves on this fifth jubilee of that Assembly, we ask : Could this simple truism of the sovereignty of Jesus Christ over his church ever have been denied? Could men ever have dreamed that Zion should be under any other Lord? Could it require any courage to proclaim this first and simplest principle of ecclesiastical polity? Ah! to *us*, here and now, it all seems simple, as the very alphabet of church government; but to those men, then and there, it was the enunciation of a principle that had been buried for centuries; and the declaration was a declaration of *war* against two of the mightiest usurpers that ever thrust themselves upon the Redeemer's throne. The one of these was Cæsar; the other was papal Rome.

More than thirteen hundred years had dragged their tedious length along since the reputed conversion of

Constantine. The pagan religion of Rome had always been in close and inseparable connection with the government of the state. The polytheism of that time, not without its varied poetical charms, had interlinked itself with the whole life of the people. Imaginary gods swept through the air, walked the groves, arose from the ocean, whispered in the breeze, thundered in the storm, shut or opened the caves of the winds, and made their homes on the loftiest mountains. They were worshipped at the firesides, consulted in matters of business, inquired of in judicial proceedings, and were absolutely identified with all affairs of state. By an insidious and easy transformation, the alleged conversion of the head of paganism effects a transition into an adulterous connection of church and state; and then, the Iliad of long and unutterable woes! Constantine becomes the head of the church. History sweeps on. The direful precedent is followed with fatal facility. The church lives on, often more dead than alive, in the unholy union. King after king claims to sit in the place of Jesus Christ, and Henry VIII. does not scruple to declare himself the Supreme Head of the Church in England. Even the virtuous and amiable Edward assumes the same high and awful title. Mary Tudor and Elizabeth, appalled by the thunders of John Knox, hesitate as to the title, but dare the deed. James gladly receives the decision of the twelve judges of the Star Chamber: "The king, having the supreme ecclesiastical power, can, without Parliament, make orders and constitutions for church government." Charles even more audaciously would wear the crown of the Redeemer. When, therefore, the doctrine of the sole kingship and headship of Christ is at last clearly and authoritatively declared, kings may read the doom of civil despotism over the church. The outwork-

ing of this mighty principle will be slow, as its burial out of human sight was endured for a millennium; but even if a new world must be required for its full development, that principle, so full of God's energy, shall prevail. The Lamb's wife will yet walk the earth free of Cæsar's chain.

The papacy, the other usurper, was no less ancient; was, possibly, even more powerful. The false idea of an enforced outward, organized unity of the church, with its visible earthly head, looms before us in distinct outline, even in the third century of the Christian era. It is but a little later until the Roman prelate demands to be recognized as the centre of this unscriptural Catholic unity. The error takes root and grows until the pontiff arrogantly calls himself the Vicar of Jesus Christ, claims unlimited power, and sitting as God, boasts himself that he is God. A thousand years elapse, and still the monstrous usurpation grows more powerful and ever more corrupt. Kings bow the knee to this Dagon, or stand shivering at his door to receive absolution from his lips, as from Jesus Christ himself. He not only lords it over God's heritage, but sways the sceptre over the bowed heads of the kings and princes of the earth. The worn and wasted remnant that have not bowed the knee, have been crying for centuries, "O Lord, how long?" And now the sword of the Spirit is unsheathed. The truth of God is hewing its way, right and left, and marching to a grand consummation, in opposition to all the lightnings and thunders of the Vatican. And here, by this learned and powerful body of divines, the crown rights of King Jesus are boldly proclaimed, and all Rome is defied. Sternly the God-fearing Assembly, under oath to be true to its convictions, points to its blood-stained banner and bids the pontiff read: "The Lord

Jesus Christ is the only King, the only Head in Zion.”

The leaven of this vital and all-embracing truth wrought mightily in every direction, and gave shape to all the subordinate principles embraced in the Assembly's development of the polity of the church. To the exhibition of the various and stupendous ways in which this one cardinal doctrine of Christ's sovereignty was drawn into realization, let me now proceed to invite your attention.

1. The sovereign Jesus himself gathers his elect into the one body of which he is the Head. “The catholic, or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that has been, are, or shall be, gathered into one, under Christ, the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” “The visible church consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children, and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.” “Unto this catholic visible church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life to the end of the world; and doth by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto.” The King of Glory finds those whom the Father hath given him, carnal, sold under sin, in awful rebellion against God and his Christ. These he subdues into willing subjects; yet, only by love, and through the effectual and irresistible workings of the Holy Ghost sent forth to apply the word of God. Thus the king pierces to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, and soul and spirit, and becomes a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Sending the rod of his strength out of Zion, he rules in the midst of his

enemies; makes his people willing in the day of his power, in the beauties of holiness, and more than the womb of the morning; he drinks of the brook in the way and lifts up the head. Set as a king upon the holy hill of Zion, he exultingly exclaims, "I will declare the decree; the Lord said unto me, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession'" In the view of the Westminster Assembly, here was the true bond of Christian union; not rigid and compulsory conformity to a body bound hand and foot in the fetters of cast-iron formalism, nor allegiance to a corrupt or a capricious and tyrannical monarchy, nor blind and superstitious devotion to the person, and submission to the will of papal or prelatial despot, but the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, as the whole body gathered into one by the will of its living Head, joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase to the edifying of itself in love, thus growing up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ.

2. This sovereignty is also realized in the fact that, to this body, thus gathered into one, the King gives his own word as the exclusive law of being, of belief, and of daily life. The Westminster Assembly believed that the Bible was the very word of God, sufficient and perspicuous; its teachings and commandments to be received on the authority of the King, loyalty to whom required implicit faith and prompt and unquestioning obedience just so soon as the true meaning of the word could be ascertained. The "thus saith the Lord" was to be decisive and final. Before this rule of faith and practice the fancies of a supposed inward revelation were

vain, and the traditions of the church itself were divested of power to bind the conscience. The supremacy and sovereignty of Zion's King were to be made real to her through the very words of the Holy Ghost, the only Vicegerent of his Majesty sent to earth. The members of the Assembly seated themselves as if at the very foot of the throne, and within the shadow of a self-imposed oath, read to them afresh every week, promising and vowing in the presence of the Almighty God to maintain nothing in point of doctrine but what they believed to be most agreeable to the word of God. "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or, by good and necessary consequence, may be deduced from Scripture, unto which nothing is at any time to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men." "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself." "The Supreme Judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined . . . can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture." The conscience is to be left "free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his word, or beside it, in faith or worship." The King's own "Himself hath said it" is the exclusive rule, positive and negative. The Assembly uncovers and holds up to view the weighty principle, long afterward used so powerfully by our own Dr. Thornwell in his celebrated argument with the distinguished theologian of Princeton, that, whether in faith, government or worship, the substantial article or action, if not expressly commanded, is forbidden. Yet, even here the wisdom and conservatism of the Assembly exhibit themselves in the explanatory, if not qualifying, statement: "Never-

theless . . . there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed." These "circumstances," as Gillespie (quoted by Girardeau) shows, must be (1), "only circumstances; no substantial part; no sacred, significant thing;" (2), "must be such things as are not determinable by Scripture;" (3), "must be accompanied with some good reason and warrant given for the satisfaction of tender consciences." Or, as Dr. Thornwell, and after him Dr. Peck, clearly states: "Circumstances are those concomitants of an action without which it cannot be done at all, or cannot be done *with decency and decorum.*" Precisely what discretion is implied in the phrase I have italicized, this is not the place, nor am I the person, accurately to determine. It seems sufficient to state the principles clearly known, and to urge that their observance must stand or fall with the church's loyalty to her living Lord. Their application at that day wrought wonders, and turned the world in the church upside down. Burdensome liturgies, imposed by human authority and ministering to human indolence and ignorance, were banished. The whole hierarchy of archbishops, bishops, chancellors, commissaries, deans, deans and chapters, archdeacons, priests, acolytes, trembled and tottered as the King spake through his word. The paraphernalia of will-worship and of holy vestments, which from the days of Elizabeth, and as far back as Edward, had so grieved the simple Puritan faith, were "determined to be taken away." The King, through his servants and with the sword of the Spirit, hewed them down and proclaimed with all authority: "God is

a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." The Bible was the sole law of the kingdom.

3. Shall we now advance a step further and say : This sovereignty of Christ is also realized in the fact that, in the Scriptures given by the King to his church, he hath appointed for her "a government," in the hands of officers chosen and qualified by himself and "distinct from the civil magistrate." Out of this complex proposition, I shall briefly educe three of its important elements.

(1), The Westminster Assembly believed that there is a form of government for the church prescribed in the word of God. As we well know, the Assembly was composed of Presbyterians, Independents, and Erastians. The first class, especially those from Scotland, avowed and urged the principle. The second, while at times apparently lax in the application of it, yet steadily united in appeals to it for the defence of their peculiar tenets. The third class, basing its arguments largely upon extraneous considerations, yet also urged, with persistency and with ability, the relation between the Jewish and Christian churches, and the combined civil and ecclesiastical polity of the one as authority for the same combination in the government of the other. Upon the whole, the prevailing view of the Assembly was that Christ hath revealed for his church, in his word, a government.

(2), But when the question arose, what is this scriptural government? then, as might have been anticipated, came "the battle of the giants." Even in expectancy of this inevitable issue, long before it came, its overshadowing influence was felt. The debate of those days when this question was pending is historic. We read it, not without sorrow over human weakness, but far more

with profound recognition of the conscientiousness and the ability which it evoked. Those men were under oath to be true to God's word. For the greater part, they were staunch to their convictions; and for this we shall forever honor them.

It was a foregone conclusion that the government announced should be Presbyterian, *i. e.*, simply by elders of the people; *in primo actu*, the power residing in the whole church as the life is in the whole body, but the exercise of the power being in the hands of elders called of Jesus Christ, the King, and invested by him with authority to rule under the law, which it is theirs not to make, but to declare and to enforce. The power of the whole being in every part, and over the power of every part, is realized through representative Assemblies, each accountable to Jesus Christ, the only King.

I have said that it was a foregone conclusion that Presbyterianism should be the outcome of that Assembly. The reason is plain. The Reformers had bent themselves to the study of the Bible, and with amazing coincidence they had come to a very common conclusion. Having examined the Scriptures with an honesty of heart and a culture of mind and a devoutness of soul never surpassed, the Reformers most generally had announced that the government of the apostolic church was Presbyterian. Even the Independents in the Assembly at times came to the very point of "accommodation" with this view, and it will be evident that their refusal at last was due more to their relation to Cromwell and to the Parliament, and their dread of an *imperium in imperio*, than to any other cause. Back of their hesitancy as to church courts was ever the influence of considerations growing out of the relations of church and state. From the Reformers in Holland, in Switzerland, and above all, in

Scotland, came the uniform result of scriptural investigation, and the Assembly but voiced the general views when it declared that Presbyterianism was the scriptural government of the church. From this side of the arc the pendulum started when it swung out across the centuries of apostasy and corruption, and to this side must it swing back again. I do not mean to affirm that the Westminster Assembly gave, in their fullest development, the principles involved in the doctrine of the eldership. It did give them in essential germinal completeness. More than two hundred years afterward, a son of our own church seized them, enstamped the image and engraved the superscription of his own sanctified genius upon them. Whoever, to-day, would see them in the blazing light of "logic on fire" may read James Henley Thornwell!

(3), But the Coryphæus over this whole company of debated propositions was this: the government of the church is in the hands of officers *distinct from the civil magistrate*. This brings us into the very thickest of the fray. The Assembly affirms the autonomy of the church under the only King; the world, the flesh, and the devil deny it.

I cannot adequately describe that long, patient, laborious contest. Time would fail to tell how the work of the Assembly was hindered and opposed by a few of its own body within, by the Parliament without, and by the collusion of both. When at last, in spite of all obstacles and hindrances, the Assembly's work was done, and submitted to the very body which had commanded its performance, that body delayed action. Again and again the Assembly urged it by respectful and dignified petition, and finally by representatives personally appearing before the Commons and mildly

but firmly insisting. This appearance was stigmatized by the House as a "breach of privilege." And then came a shameful spectacle, as the deputies of the Commons, appointed for the purpose, stood on the floor of the Assembly, and the civil power rebuked the church in language of stinging insult and arrogant domination, demanding that the Assembly set itself afresh to answer certain questions regarding the *jus divinum* of the church—questions the real object of which seemed to be to delay and ultimately defeat the Assembly's work. Says Dr. Mitchell in the Baird Lectures: "They had been threatened with a *præmunire* by the king before they began their work. They were now told by the deputies of that House whom they had risked so much to serve that they had incurred that penalty. They must have listened with pain to the speeches, but they listened in silence. No angry word escaped them. No course of action was hastily resolved on. They read the paper which the deputies had left, and quietly adjourned for the day." Sublimely calm, they patiently resumed their work. Observing a day of fasting and prayer, they took up the queries propounded and laboriously entered upon their discussion. The memorable address of Lord Warriston, at this juncture, rang out as if the very spirit of all the Covenanters had found in him a tongue. May I quote his words as given by Mitchell? Said he:

"Sir, all Christians are bound to give a testimony to everie truth when they ar called to it; but ye ar the immediat servants of the Most High—Christ's *precones* and heralds, whose propper function is to proclaim his name, preserve his offices, and assert his rights. Christ has had many testimonies given to his propheticall and priestly office by the pleading and suffering of his

saincts; and in thir latter dayes he seems to require the samyne unto his kingly office. A king loves a testimony to his crowne best of any, as that w^{ch} is tenderest to him; and confessors or martyres for Christ's crowne ar the most royal and most stately of any state martyrs; for although Christ's kingdome be not of this world, and his servants did not fight therefor when he wes to suffer, yet it is in this world, and for this end was he born. And to this end that we may give a testimony to this truth amongst others were wee born, nor should we be ashamed of it or deny it, but confesse and avouche it by pleading, doing, and suffering for it, even in this generation, w^{ch} seems most to oppose it and y^r by require a seasonable testimony." . . . "Sir, ye are often desired to remember the bounds of your commission from man and not to exceed the samen; I am confident you will make as much conscience not to be deficient in the discharge of your commission from Christ. But now, sir, ye have a commission from God and man (for the w^{ch} ye have reason to thank God and the Parliament) to discuss the truth that Christ is a king and hes a kingdome in the externall government of his church, and that he hes set down the lawes and offices and other substantialls y^e of. Wee must not now before men mince, hold up, conceal, prudentially wave anything necessary for this testimony, . . . not quit a hoefe, or edge away an hemme of Christ's robe royal." . . . "And now, sir, seeing the quæries ar before you, I am confident that whatsoever diversity of opinions may be amongst you in any particular, yee will all look to and hold out the maine, Christ's kingdome distinct from the kingdomes of this earth, and that he hes and might appoint the government of his own house and should rule the samen; and that none of this Assembly, even for the gaining

their desires in all the poynts of difference, would by y^r silence, concealment, and connivance weaken, communicat, or sell any part of this fundamentall truth, this sovereign interest of Christ, and that ye will all con-
curre to demonstrate the samen by clear passages of Scripture, necessarie consequences y^r fra, w^{ch} can no more be denyed or esteemed cold nor the letter itself, and by the universall constant practice of the apostles, w^{ch} ar as cleare rules unto us as any human lawes, inferences, and practises ar, or can be brought fōr any civile priviledges.”

The success of the Assembly in its labors to secure the autonomy of the church and the crown rights of the king was incomplete for the time, but was destined to be full. Compelled to admit a right of final appeal (in cases of discipline) to a parliamentary commission, we realize that the battle was then only partially won. But we realize, as well, that the Assembly imbedded in its Constitution those principles which were left lying as dynamite beneath the grim Castle of Politico-Ecclesiasticism, requiring only time to upheave and demolish it. The doctrine that “God alone is Lord of the conscience,” and that Christ’s government of his kingdom is in himself, and in those alone whom he hath appointed, was to march on, conquering and to conquer. It flamed out in Scotland in 1732, and again in 1752. Just two hundred years after the Assembly it burst forth with expanded glory, when in Scotland, in 1843, the Free Church repudiated all connection with the state, and her four hundred ministers left manses, glebes and edifices, and boldly marched forth to be God’s freemen. But the expansiveness of the principle required a new world for its development. In 1788, here in America, the remaining traces of Erastianism were eradicated from the Standards,

and God's church, cutting the tentacle of the octopus which for fifteen hundred years had bound and smothered her, finally stood forth the unfettered bride of Christ. The sublime sense of the immediate responsibility to Jesus Christ as the alone Lord of the conscience, and the love, not only of religious, but of civil freedom, which it invariably fosters, burned in the Scotch-Irish ruling elders so largely composing the men of Mecklenburg, whose Declaration of Independence near this very spot will be remembered as long as North Carolinians live to love and honor the history of their State.

But I must not venture into this broad domain which has been reserved for an address yet to come, but must hasten to say—

4. The Westminster Assembly realized the sovereignty of Christ over his church, not only in polity, but also in worship

As founded by our Lord and his apostles, the worship of the church partook of the simplicity of its government. Presbyterian in organism, its services of worship were such as plain elders of the people, ruling and teaching, might conduct and administer. So early as the second century, prelacy, by degrees, substituted Presbytery, and more and more the will of the king, as the master of assemblies and ordinances was ignored. Human inventions now take the place of divine institutions. The influx of influences of court custom becomes painfully manifest as soon as (about 323 A. D.) the Roman emperor becomes practically the earthly head of the Christian church; and the significant fact is that the corruptions of worship obtaining under Constantine, and for centuries afterward, have almost their counterpart in the formalism, the ritualism, the scenic splendor and pageantry, everywhere prevalent at the time of the Reforma-

tion. The tap-root of it all was the unholy alliance of church and state; that is to say, of the church and the world. The Reformers found the way to a return to apostolic simplicity of worship under Jesus, the King, ever barred by the earthly monarch and his court. They protested against the countless images, fasts, feasts, feast days, monasteries, nunneries, vestments, and set liturgies, as all "beside" the things commanded by the King. So intolerable had the burden become, and so thoroughly stifling to all spirituality the atmosphere by which public services were surrounded, that, whatever else the Assembly may have been uncertain about, they were avowedly resolved, as Parliament had already decided, that the countless uncommanded things of humanly imposed liturgical worship should be substituted by a simple directory, all of whose substantive provisions should be either expressly enjoined by the Head and Sovereign of the church in his word, or, by good and necessary consequence, be deducible from it. Accordingly, the Assembly, with comparatively little debate, and with great concurrence of all parties, adopted the Directory of Worship.

It would be impossible, here and now, to enter into any detailed comparison between that Directory and the liturgy it substituted. Its chief characteristics are simplicity, spirituality, freedom from the inventions of man, and unswerving loyalty to the commands of Christ the King. It makes Jesus the Master of all assemblies. The Sabbath is his, the Lord's day. Himself is to preside over every meeting of his saints, and his Spirit is to be invoked as the author of all true prayer and the inspirer of all acceptable praise. Most prominently did the Assembly elevate the preaching of the word, which had so long been slighted and even despised. The gos-

pel ministry was to proclaim the King's law and promulgate the King's gospel, ever with laborious preparation of head and heart and spiritually aroused conscience; and for all efficiency and power they were to hang dependent upon the King's own Spirit. The sacraments, divested of former superstitions, were no more to be worshipped, but were to be administered reverently, with decency and with order; and all power and efficiency were to be found, "not from any virtue in them nor in him that did administer them, but only by the blessing of Christ and the working of his Spirit."

If the Assembly's Directory increased liberty, it also augmented responsibility. If it took away the support of set and prescribed forms on which the indolent might lean and even sleep, this was done to the avowed intent that those who conducted public services might the more industriously prepare for them; and thereunto the more diligently stir up the gifts of God within them. Thus, in ordinances which Jesus had given, in sacraments which Jesus had instituted, in only services which Jesus had commanded, and with none but the simple forms which Jesus had made lawful, filled with Christ's spirit, with souls aglow with the love of Christ, worshippers were to draw near to God and ascribe praise, honor and glory unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever.

5. The Westminster Assembly believed and taught that this sovereign exaltation of Jesus Christ shall be increasingly glorious through time and resplendent forever. By the King's command, the gospel of the kingdom is to be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations. "Christ is to be exalted in his coming again to judge the world . . . in the full manifestation of his own glory, and of his Father's, with all his

holy angels; with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God." . . . "The self-same bodies of the dead which are laid in the grave, being then again united to their souls forever, shall be raised up by the power of Christ." "The bodies of the just, by the Spirit of Christ and by virtue of his resurrection as their Head, shall be raised in power, spiritual and incorruptible, and made like to his glorious body." . . . "The righteous, being caught up to Christ in the clouds, shall be set on his right hand, and, there openly acknowledged and acquitted, shall join with him in judging of reprobate angels and men; and shall be received into heaven, where they shall be fully and forever freed from all sin and misery: filled with inconceivable joy: made perfectly holy and happy, both in body and soul, in the company of innumerable saints and angels, but especially in the immediate vision and fruition of God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit to all eternity. And this is the perfect and full communion which the members of the invisible church shall enjoy with Christ in glory."

Then, having reigned over the kingdom of universal dominion, in heaven and in earth, until he hath put down all rule, and authority and power, with all enemies beneath his feet, and even death, the last enemy, destroyed, then cometh the end, when the kingdom of power shall have been delivered up to God, even the Father, and Jesus Christ, as Theanthropos, shall reign over the everlasting kingdom of glory, and "God be all in all." Unto him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father.

And now, Moderator and brethren of the Assembly, with whatever ability God hath given, I have discussed

before you this immense theme. In conclusion, may I not briefly urge two corollaries which the discussion has suggested and impressed?

1. More than thirty-five years ago, in the fair city of Augusta, Ga., on the threshold of a home which she was about to leave for her own separate work and destiny, stood the then youngest of all in the sisterhood of the churches of Jesus Christ. Sad, yet resolute, pensive, yet hopeful, the dark clouds of war hovering over her and an unknown future looming before her, that church called to her side the willing and able Thornwell, and bade him take his pen, mightier than the sword, and write in imperishable record her reasons for her separate existence. That address to all the churches of Jesus Christ is historic and known of you all. The point now to be emphasized is that the cardinal consideration imbedded in that immortal document is, that this church must be separate in order that she might be free from any and all entangling alliances with the state. Upon that solid rock she took her stand. Many storms have swept over her since that eventful hour, but that foundation is still immutably beneath her feet. And, to-day, looking backward over the unnumbered woes which, from Constantine to Charles I., and from Charles I. to the American General Assembly in 1789, have oppressed and crushed to earth the Lamb's wife; and remembering that it took nearly fifteen hundred years for her to emancipate herself from the shackles that fettered her, who can be surprised that the blood of the Covenanting martyrs in Scotland, of the Huguenots in France, of the Puritans in England, should find a voice to sweep to us across these two and a half centuries the admonition: "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God *the things that are God's!*" Can it be surprising

that those of us who know history should view with shuddering dread any step that tends to take from us the freedom from civil domination wherewith Christ and the long struggle of two hundred years have made us free?

2. The facts of history enable us to understand *why* the sovereignty of God should have been borne in upon the Westminster Assembly so as to transfuse every part of its doctrine, polity, and worship. By the coöperative power of two glorious instrumentalities the omnipotent Jehovah was making bare his arm before the almost bewildered gaze of the men of that day, while his voice proclaimed, "Not by might, nor by power; but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

The one of these agencies was the Bible. The Reformation was a revival. • Its author was the Holy Ghost. As always, the instrument was the word of God. The Almighty drew the sword of the Spirit, and with it flashed forth the brightness and splendor of his own power and glory. Nearly three centuries before the Assembly, Wycliffe, who died in 1384, had translated the whole Bible out of the Vulgate, and earned the posthumous glory of giving his body to be burned. Just one hundred years later, Tyndale was born, and made almost a fugitive on the face of the earth for his repeated attempts to publish parts of the word of God, until at Antwerp, in 1534, he issues his New Testament, nails his name to its masthead, and, as usual, is burned at the stake. But still the word of God is not bound. Tyndale's friend and co-worker, Miles Coverdale, in 1535, publishes his English translation of the whole Bible, whose version of the Psalms is in the Episcopal Prayer-Book unto this day; his work denounced by the Inquisition and condemned to the flames. Martin

Luther, after twelve years of toil, issues his great German Bible in 1532. The Genevan Bible comes forth in 1560; and our own King James' version in 1611. The long-smothered blaze of revelation was bursting out everywhere, and the light of God's sovereign word was so glorious as to make even persecution "pale its ineffectual fires," as Jerome of Prague dies undaunted at the stake, and Huss of Bohemia goes out of the world as in Elijah's chariot, praying in the Psalms of David and singing with a loud voice the *Christe Eleison*.

The other instrumentality working with the word was God's sovereign and stupendous providence. Steadily and surely the King of Glory was delivering the church from her two ancient oppressors, Rome and Cæsar. Never in earthquake, in whirlwind, or in fire, had the presence of the power and glory of God been more plainly shown than in his providential ruling of all the kings of the earth at this period of history. He puts enmity between the two mighty usurpers of Christ's crown. Henry VIII., bold, headstrong, fickle, and licentious, yet advanced the Reformation. Edward VI., guided by Cranmer and Somerset, and coming under the influence of even John Knox, was made to promote it. Mary Tudor, married to a mummy in all feeling except vindictiveness, and bitter under the outrageous insults heaped upon her divorced mother, would extirpate the faith and burn its every branch; but God, through her, sent disciples to Calvin and scattered the seeds of religion everywhere. Elizabeth thought that two or three preachers would be enough for a whole county, and James and Charles would "harrie them out of the land," but conventicles sprang up like magic, and ministers of the word, the like of whom had almost never before been seen, arose as if out of the very dust of the earth. And

if England had seen God's amazing power, Scotland more. From the common people to the lords, from the lords to the throne, arose the tide; and monarchy was powerless to say, "Hitherto, but no farther." Blood of eighteen thousand martyrs flowed, but every drop of it had a voice to cry from the ground and to preach the word. The very agonies of the dying were the birth-throes of eternal living. Driven from hope in man, to whom might the saints go but unto the sovereign God? When in old Greyfriar's churchyard the Covenanters dipped their pens in the blood gushing warm from their hearts to self-made openings in their veins, and so signed their allegiance to Jesus as King, we can see how, out of the suppressed groans and prayers, not loud, but deep, in that awful hour they must have looked for support to the sovereign God and his everlasting arm. Well may Froude say of these Calvinists: "They were splintered and torn, but no power could bend or melt them." And the reason Froude gives is good: "They dwelt, as pious men are apt to dwell, in suffering and sorrow, on the all-disposing power of Providence. Their burden grew lighter as they considered that God had so determined that they should bear it."

The members of the Westminster Assembly met after two centuries of all this mighty working of God's word and God's providence. Like Elijah at Horeb, they looked out upon the glory of the Lord sweeping before them in earth's convulsions, in tornado and in fire; and then, reverently opening their Bibles under the sanction of their awful oath, and saying, "Speak, Lord, thy servants hear," they blend their Doctrine and Polity into Worship, and all into Doxology: "The Lord is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and

though the mountains be whelmed into the midst of the sea.”

“ Allelulia ! the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth ! ”

- “ Lord of every land and nation,
Ancient of eternal days,
Sounded through the wide creation,
Be thy just and awful praise.
- “ For thy providence that governs,
Through thine empire’s broad domain
Wings an angel, guides a sparrow,
Blessed be thy gentle reign.
- “ But thy rich, thy free redemption,
Dark through brightness all along ;
Thought is poor and poor expression ;
Who can sing that awful song !
- “ Go : return, immortal Saviour ;
Leave thy footstool, take thy throne ;
Thence return and reign forever !
Be the kingdom all thine own !”