

able to the Word of God, and made them her "Standards," as setting forth her views in regard to what the Bible teaches; and ever since that time the Presbyterian Churches throughout the world, descended from that Scottish mother, have always adopted these "Standards"; with the exception of one or two parts, such as that in the Confession which teaches the power of the Civil magistrate in the Church of Christ.

In England on the other hand their work bore little fruit. Shortly after the Long Parliament had approved of the different statements prepared by the Westminster Assembly, Cromwell, with Independency, came into power, and infant Presbyterianism disappeared. When Royalty once more held sway Episcopacy was restored; and thus it came to pass that while the Westminster Assembly was almost wholly English and Episcopal, consisting chiefly of clergymen of the Church of England, and appointed by Parliament for the purpose of establishing the Doctrine, Government, and Worship, of the Church throughout the Kingdom, Scotland and her descendants are those that have profited by its labors.

It is principally with the Doctrinal part of the work of the Westminster Assembly, as contained in the Confession of Faith and the Catechisms, that we have to do: and more especially with the Shorter Catechism, as that is the "Standard" best known and most used; and in closing this brief sketch of the Westminster Assembly it may be well to refer to two points in connection with that part of their work.

I. One notable feature of the Catechism, as well as of the other "Standards," is the way in which it keeps itself in the background and points the reader to the Word of God and to God Himself.

A beautiful instance of this is in the very beginning of the book "What is the chief end of man?" "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." Then follows "What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him;" and the grandly simple answer,— "The Word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the *only* rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him."

This attitude of the Standards towards the word of God, their complete self-effacement, together with the fact that as a rule

the people who most highly prize the "Standards" are those who best know and love their Bibles, is sufficient answer to the baseless charge sometimes made that they tend to take the place of the Bible. They are helps to the study of that Bible, and as helps they are the best summaries of Bible truth extant.

II. A second feature of the Catechism, too often overlooked, is that it makes prominent the kindly gracious side of the character of God.

The use of words changes with time. When we speak of God's kindness to men, we use the word "Love." When men 250 years ago spoke of the same thing they used the word "Grace." To the Westminster Assembly "Grace," or favor, of God to man expressed all that "Love" does when used by us, and even more. It expressed love in action, looking graciously upon its object.

As an illustration of the prominence given by these men to this aspect of the character of God, take the answers to four successive questions: "Justification is an act of God's *Free Grace*, wherein He pardoneth all our sins," etc. "Adoption is an act of God's *Free Grace*, whereby we are received into the number and have a right to all the privileges of the Sons of God." "*Free Grace* receiving us as *Sons*, How could love be better expressed?" "Sanctification is a work of God's *Free Grace*, etc."

Then take the answer to the next question, "The benefits that accompany or flow from Justification, Adoption, and Sanctification are *assurance of God's love*." It is not merely assurance of our own salvation and safety, but a higher, grander thing, "assurance of God's love," and resting content in that.

Let one more example suffice,— "The preface to the Lord's Prayer which is "Our Father which art in Heaven," teacheth us to draw near to God with all holy reverence and confidence, as *children unto a father*, etc." What more beautiful or tender picture of God's goodness and the believer's relationship to Him, could be given?

Let our young people study fairly, honestly, lovingly, the work of these good men of the Westminster Assembly, and they will grow thereby into a grander conception of the goodness and love of God, and will realize how utterly without foundation are the statements sometimes made against our "Standards," that they do not speak of the Fatherhood and Love of God.