

iples. The Presbyterians had, therefore, in carrying their measures to encounter the determined opposition of the Independents on the one hand and of the Erastians on the other. This state of parties in the Assembly necessarily protracted the business and subjected every principle peculiar to each to searching investigation. In order to preserve harmony and secure co-operation, mutual accommodation, to a certain extent, was acted on, but not so far as to abandon or sacrifice any essential or important truth. The subjects which most of all excited these disputes were, the form of church government, discipline, and the relation of church and state. On all these the Presbyterians were triumphant; though in reference to the power of the civil magistrate in ecclesiastical affairs, the line of demarcation was not drawn sufficiently distinct. The vagueness or indefiniteness which characterises this portion of their work, has been the source of much dissension in the Presbyterian church.

Owing to these protracted discussions, the Assembly progressed but slowly with the work until the end of the year 1645. After that time the committees proceeded vigorously and simultaneously with the Confession of Faith and the Catechisms.

On the 3rd of December, 1646, "The Confession" was presented to Parliament by the whole Assembly in a body, under the title of "The humble advice of the Assembly of Divines, and others, now by the authority of Parliament sitting at Westminster, concerning a Confession of Faith." On the 7th, Parliament ordered 500 copies to be printed for the members of both Houses, and that the Assembly do bring in their marginal notes to prove every part of it by Scripture. It was supposed that the Parliament made this request so as to postpone as long as possible the adoption of the Confession. This task the Assembly in a short time accomplished, and laid it before the Parliament on the 29th April 1647. The thanks of the House were given to the Assembly for their labours in this important matter, and 600 copies were ordered to be printed for the use of the Houses and the Assembly, and no more, and that none presume to print the same till further orders." On the 22nd March, 1648, a conference was held between the two Houses, to compare their opinions respecting the Confession of Faith, the result of which is stated by Rushworth. The Commons, this day, 22nd March, at a conference, presented the Lords with the Confession of Faith, passed by them with some alterations, viz: that they do agree with their Lordships and so with the Assembly in their doctrinal part, and desire, the same to be made public, that this kingdom and all the reformed churches of Christendom may see the Parliament of England differ not in doctrine." The alterations referred to consisted in changing a few of the words and phrases.

On the 5th November, 1647, the shorter Catechism was presented to the House of Commons, and on the 14th April, 1648, the larger Catechism was presented. The great work for which this Assembly was convened was now completed. Before the Scotch Commissioners returned they were publicly thanked by the Assembly for their valuable assistance.