SMPC Adult Sunday School	12-28-2025
The Divines of the Reformation – Volume 2	Various Sources

Introduction

- It should not be lost on us that God uses means, despite man's selfish or evil intent, to result in achieving His purposes – His perfect and infinite decree. God orders the events of men for His Glory alone.
    - **Ephesians 1: 10-11**
- Previously, I attempted to break out the period of the reformation into various time periods including what was occurring on the European Continent and on the British Islands. I will continue to do that here and start off with the "pre-Westminster" period.
- So, I will use the Westminster Standards as the focal point in history.
- Fesko calls part of **this period the "dark ages" of the Reformation (1560 – 1640),** which is the period between Calvin's death and until the start of the Westminster Assembly. Fesko calls it the dark ages because contemporary theologians don't often consider this period important.
- Given this fact, there was an explosion of confessions that were written by various Divines.

Westminster Standards – What exactly are they?

- The **Westminster Confession of Faith** was a subset, if you will, of the **Westminster Standards**. This **Westminster Standards** were documents produced to reform and establish correct Christian doctrine and Government in the Church of England and in so doing establish a unified "position" among the three Kingdoms – England, Scotland, Ireland – on these many aspects based solely on the Word of God.
- This document was produced out of what is known as the Westminster Assembly, a group of theologians (i.e., "Divines") in 1643-1652 (some say 1643 – 1649). During this time, the English Civil War was taking place which was instigated largely concerning religious and civil differences – Mainly Protestant versus Roman Catholic (papist) and the feeling that the English Reformation did not Reform enough and separate from Catholicism.
- The English Parliament called the Assembly on June 12, 1943
    General Parties of the Assembly
    - Episcopalians or Anglican
    - Presbyterians
    - Congregationalists or Independents
    - Erastians
    - The Scottish Delegation
    - Puritans
- Produced out of the Westminster Assembly called by the Long Parliament in (1643 – 1649/1653).
- A number of documents concerning the Faith and Practice of the Reformed Faith, all meant to be subordinate to scripture, including:
- **Form of Church Government – Deals with Church Polity**
    - **Directory of Worship**
    - **Confession of Faith**

- **Shorter Catechism**
- **Longer Catechism**
  - **Note:** There was supposed to be one Catechism as instructed by the Parliament, but various Scottish divines became disappointed by the work and, following debate, recommended that the Catechism be split into two, with one being easier and the other being comprehensive. "It is too hard to serve milk and meat in one dish".

III. Pre- or Proto-Westminster Reformation (c. 1600 - 1643)

- **Boundary:** This period leads directly up to the Westminster Assembly (1643) and is characterized by the flourishing of **Protestant Scholasticism** and the **rise of Arminianism**.

Divine	Dates	Location	Notable Contribution
Franciscus Junius	1545–1602	Leiden (Netherlands)	Key figure in Dutch Reformed Scholasticism. Focused on the nature of Scripture and God's work in history.
Jacobus Arminius	1560–1609	Leiden (Netherlands)	Introduced the critiques of rigid Calvinism (predestination), leading to the **Arminian** movement and prompting the Synod of Dort (1618). Was a student of Theodore Beza.
The Synod of Dort (Event)	1618–1619	Netherlands	A major international conference of Reformed divines (including representatives from England) that codified the Reformed response to Arminianism, resulting in the **Canons of Dort**. This set the theological standard for the Westminster Divines. Three Forms of Unity.
William Perkins	1558–1602	Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge	Often called the **"Father of Puritanism"** (as an influence), he was a conformist minister who taught at Cambridge. His theology was the backbone of English Calvinism. Author of "A Golden Chain".
James Ussher	1581-1656	Archbishop of Amagh/ Ireland	Archbishop, Scholar, Chronologist. Author of the Irish Articles of Religion.
William Ames	1576-1633	Christ's College / Cambridge	Wrote "The Marrow of Theology". Consultant at the Synod of Dort. Provided for pedagogical structure of the confession. Student of Perkins.
John Ball	1585-1640	Brasenose College, Oxford	Treatise of the Covenant of Grace – A work on Covenant Theology

James Ussher: The Learned Divine (1581–1656)

Identity and Theological Context

- **Role:** He served as the **Archbishop of Armagh** and Primate of All Ireland from 1625 until the English Civil War forced him into exile in England. Vice-Chancellor of Trinity College, Dublin
- **Theological School:** Ussher was a highly learned, though moderate, **Calvinist Anglican**. This is a crucial distinction. While he was a prominent figure within the established (Anglican) Church of Ireland, he held strong Calvinist views, **aligning him theologically with the Puritan wing of the Church of England**, rather than the stricter anti-Calvinist Caroline Divines.
- **Political Context:** He was a **Royalist** and a supporter of the monarchy. **Editors Note:** This is most likely the primary reason why he was not included or did not wish to attend the deliberations of the assembly.

Key Contributions and Connections

1. The Ussher Chronology

This is Ussher's most enduring and widely known contribution, though it often overshadows his theological work.

- **The Work:** He calculated the date of creation in his work, *Annales veteris testamenti, a prima mundi origine deducti* . Calculated creation occurred on **October 22, 4004 BC**.

2. Liturgical and Theological Bridge: The Irish Articles

In 1615, Ussher was the primary author of the **Irish Articles of Religion**.

- These articles were strongly **Calvinist** in tone, covering doctrines like predestination and election in terms stronger than the English Church's **Thirty-Nine Articles**.
- **Connection to Westminster:** The Puritan divines who drafted the Westminster Confession were generally pleased with the Irish Articles because they confirmed the Calvinistic interpretation of English theology. A compromise of sorts.

What are the Irish Articles of Religion?

The **Irish Articles of Religion (1615)** were a major confessional document for the **Church of Ireland** (the Anglican/Episcopal church established in Ireland). They are significant because they definitively positioned the Church of Ireland as a **strongly Calvinist and explicitly Reformed** church, distinguishing it from the often more ambiguous or moderate position of the Church of England's official confession.

Theological Differences: Irish Articles vs. The 39 Articles

The Irish Articles were not only influenced by the English **Thirty-Nine Articles** (they incorporated much of their content) but also by the continental Reformed confessions (like the **Second Helvetic Confession**) and Puritan documents like the **Lambeth Articles (1595)**. Their defining feature was their **unambiguous Calvinism**.

Feature	The 39 Articles (Church of England)	The Irish Articles (1615)

Calvinism	Contained one brief, moderately worded article on Predestination (Article XVII), which was open to both Calvinist and moderate Arminian interpretation.	Included **multiple, highly detailed articles** on predestination and reprobation, explicitly teaching the strict Calvinist doctrine that God elected some to life and reprobated (left) others to death by his "good pleasure."
Apocrypha	Affirmed that the Apocryphal books were to be read for "example of life and instruction of manners," but not to "establish any doctrine."	Explicitly and forcefully **disclaimed the divine inspiration** of the Apocrypha and declared the canonical books of the Bible to be the *sole* rule of faith.
Covenant Theology	Did not explicitly define the covenants (a systematic Reformed structure).	Clearly articulated the concept of the **Covenant of the Law** (or Covenant of Works), which became a core element of subsequent Reformed theology.
Pope	Referred to the "Bishop of Rome" as **having no** jurisdiction in England.	Explicitly and forcefully **denounced the Pope as the Antichrist** (reflecting a common Puritan belief).
Breadth	A summary document (**39** articles).	A complete, systematic statement of doctrine (**104** articles).

Historical Significance and Fate

1. **Puritan Endorsement**
2. **Precedent for Westminster**
3. **Replacement**

IV. Westminster Divines (1643–1653)

The Westminster Assembly did not produce new theological movements, but rather *codified* the principles developed by the Mid-Reformation divines and the Synod of Dort.

Divine	Dates	Role	Contribution to Westminster
George Gillespie	1613–1648	Scottish / Presbyterian	Brilliant debater who strongly shaped the doctrine of **presbyterial church government** (Jus Divinum) in the Standards.
Samuel Rutherford	1600–1661	Scottish/ Presbyterian	Major contributor to the **Westminster Confession of Faith** and author of *Lex Rex* (a foundational work on constitutional limited government).
Thomas	1600	English/	An independent (Congregationalist) Divine who

Goodwin	–1680	Congregationalist	heavily influenced the language on the **Covenant of Grace** and **Assurance** in the Confession. Leader of dissenting brethren.
Jeremiah Burroughs	1599–1646	Congregationalist (Independent)	Member of the Westminster Assembly; known for *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*. One of the 5 dissenting brethren.

Unlike many of the other famous Puritans of that era, Rutherford was one of the **four main Scottish Commissioners** sent to London in 1643 to participate in the Assembly. He remained in London for four years, becoming one of the most active and influential figures in the creation of the Westminster Standards.

1. His Role and Influence

Scottish Commissioners were technically non-voting members, their influence was profound.

- **The Shorter Catechism:** Historical tradition often credits Rutherford with being a major influence on—or even the primary author of—the **Westminster Shorter Catechism**.
- **Defense of Presbyterianism:** He was a tireless advocate for the "divine right" of Presbyterian church government, frequently debating against the Independents (like Thomas Goodwin) and the Erastians (who believed the state should control the church).
- **Theology of Grace:** He was a key voice in ensuring the Confession maintained a strict Reformed (Calvinist) stance, particularly in opposition to Arminianism.

2. His Most Famous Work: *Lex, Rex*

While serving at the Assembly in 1644, Rutherford published his most controversial and enduring book, ***Lex, Rex*** (The Law and the Prince).[9]

- **The Argument:** The title's Latin meaning is **"The Law is King,"** a direct challenge to the idea that the "King is Law" (*Rex Lex*).
- **Significance:** He argued that the king's power is limited by the law and the people, and that the people have a right to resist a tyrant. This book.

Divines of the post-Westminster Era (1653–1700)

I. The Nonconformist (Puritan) Divines

These divines were the intellectual and spiritual inheritors of the Westminster Assembly's theology. Their period of influence was profoundly marked by the **Great Ejection of 1662**, when the Act of Uniformity forced approximately 2,000 Puritan ministers and scholars out of the Church of England, turning them into **Nonconformists** (or Dissenters).

Divine	Dates	Denomination/Key Context	Notable Contribution(s)
John Owen	1616–1683	Congregationalist / Vice-Chancellor of Oxford	Considered the Prince of Puritan Theologians. Wrote profound systematic works on the nature of sin (*Indwelling Sin*), the person of Christ (*Christologia*), and theology (*Mortification of Sin*). Highly respected even by his opponents. Author of Savoy Declaration (1658).
Richard	1615–1	Presbyterian/	Prolific practical writer and pastor. Authored the spiritual

Baxter	691	Nonconformist	classics, *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* and *A Call to the Unconverted*. Sought unity among Protestants but was a key figure in the Great Ejection.
John Howe	1630–1705	Congregationalist	A major philosophical divine known for his intellectual depth and elegant style. Chaplain to Oliver Cromwell. Wrote *The Blessedness of the Righteous*, demonstrating the compatibility of reason and faith.
Thomas Goodwin	1600–1680	Congregationalist	Westminster Divine who continued to write after the Assembly. Known for his treatises on the assurance of faith and his works on the doctrine of grace.
John Flavel	1627–1691	Presbyterian	A highly devotional and popular writer. His works, such as *The Fountain of Life* (sermons on Christ) and *Navigation Spiritualized*, focused on the pastoral application of Reformed doctrine.
Stephen Charnock	1628–1680	Independent	Known almost entirely for his posthumously published and monumental work, *The Existence and Attributes of God*, a classic of Protestant Scholasticism and a high-water mark of rational defense of theology.
Thomas Watson	1620-1686	Presbyterian / Nonconformist	Known for his work, *A Body of Practical Divinity* and *Doctrine of Repentance.*
John Cotton	1585–1652	Congregationalist	"Patriarch of New England" Puritanism. Not in the Assembly.
Thomas Hooker	1586–1647	Congregationalist	Founder of Connecticut; known for *A Survey of the Summe of Church-Discipline*.
Richard Baxter	1615–1691	Presbyterian	Sought unity; favored a modified (moderate) Presbyterianism. Not in Assembly.
Edmund Calamy	1600–1666	Presbyterian	Leading member of the London Presbyterian movement; ejected in 1662.
Thomas Manton	1620–1677	Presbyterian	Highly respected moderate Presbyterian; popular preacher.
Stephen Charnock	1628–1680	Independent	Often grouped with Congregationalists; known for *The Existence and Attributes of God*.
John Flavel	1627–1691	Presbyterian	Highly devotional writer and ejected minister.
John Bunyan	1628–1688	Baptist (Particular)	Author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*; famous for his imprisonment for Nonconformity.
William Kiffin	1616–1701	Baptist (Particular)	Wealthy merchant and influential London Particular Baptist pastor.

Understanding the Polity Terms

- **Presbyterian**
- **Congregationalist (Independent)**
- **Baptist (Particular)**
- **Episcopal (Anglican)**

Thomas Watson: The Last of the First Puritans (c. 1620–1686)

Key Context

- **Westminster Era:** Watson was educated at Cambridge and was a contemporary of the Westminster Assembly. He was ordained during the English Civil War era.
- **The Ejection (1662):** He was one of the roughly 2,000 ministers who were **ejected** from the Church of England in 1662 for refusing to assent to the *Act of Uniformity*. This act enforced the use of the new Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* and required full acceptance of the Church's episcopal hierarchy.
- **Writings:** After being ejected, he continued to preach privately in London.

Notable Contributions

Watson is celebrated for his remarkable ability to blend **deep Calvinistic doctrine** with **warm, devotional, and practical application**.

- ***A Body of Divinity* (1692):** His most famous work, which consists of sermons on the **Westminster Shorter Catechism**. It is one of the clearest and most accessible systematic treatments of Reformed theology written by a Puritan.
- **The Doctrine of Repentence.**

The Scottish Enlightenment and Moderates – Honorable Mention

Scotland was experiencing the Enlightenment, leading to a split between the conservative "High Flyers" (Orthodox Calvinists) and the "Moderates" (who often softened Calvinism in favor of moral philosophy).

Divine	Dates	Location/Denomination	Notable Contribution(s)
Thomas Boston	1676–1732	Scotland (Church of Scotland)	Leading defender of conservative Calvinism (known as **Marrow Theology**). Wrote **Human Nature in its Fourfold State**, a highly influential popular and devotional work of practical theology.

Thomas Boston (1676–1732) was a Scottish Presbyterian minister whose work bridged the gap between the high-scholastic theology of the 17th century and the "experimental" (experiential) religion of the 18th century.

- **The "Marrow Man**
- **Impact on Post-Westminster Theology**
- **Legacy**