

# The Westminster Shorter Catechism

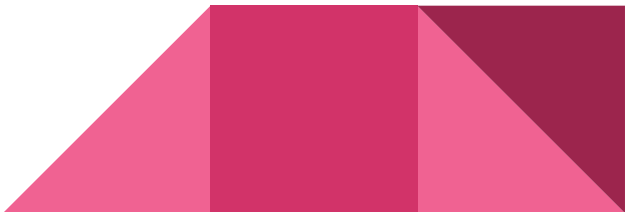

Introduction  
06/03/2020

# Bibliography

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- Ward, Rowland S. *A Short Introduction to the Westminster Assembly and its Work.* Tulip Publishing, 2019.
- Watson, Thomas. *A Body of Divinity.* Reformed Church Publications, 2009.




# The Westminster Shorter Catechism is:

- Practical instruction in Christian doctrine.
    - a. Who is God?
    - b. Who am I?
    - c. What is my relationship and responsibility to God?
  - Guide in understanding the essentials of the Reformed faith.
  - Place to begin the study of God's work in Redemptive history.
  - Historical testimony of God's faithfulness to his Church.
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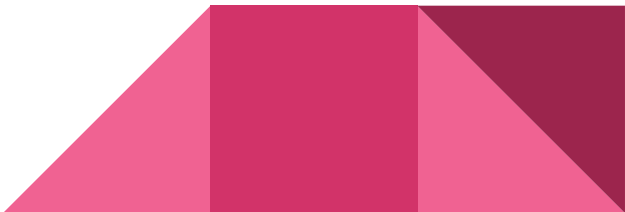



# The Westminster Shorter Catechism is not:

- Inspired
  - Infallible
  - Inerrant
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# but, it was written by men who:

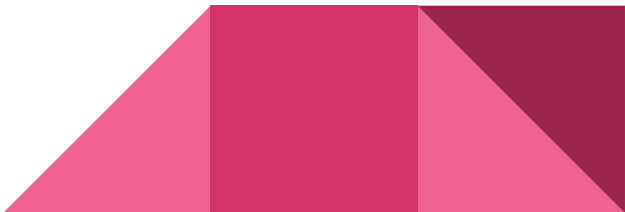
- were godly
  - were committed to the Word
  - were well studied
  - did their work for love of neighbor and the glory of God
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# History of the Westminster Confession<sup>1</sup>

- Historical setting (1640s)
  - period of upheaval and conflict
  - Parliament vs Charles I
- Sources of conflict
  - form of government
  - religious freedom
- Who would dictate church life and practice?
  - the state?
  - the church?
- Ramification
  - church without bishops would lead to a nation without a king
  - civil war between parliament and the king

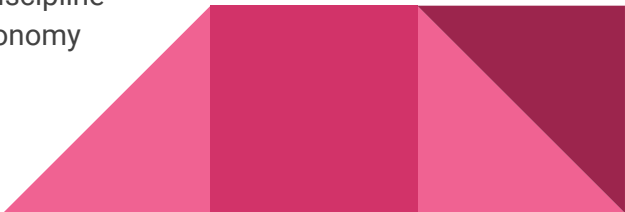


# History of the Westminster Confession

- Groups
    - Roman Catholics - met in secret
    - Anglicans - status quo
    - Presbyterian and Congregationalists - puritans (purify the church)
    - Baptists, Quakers, and some fringe groups
  - Formation of the Westminster Assembly
    - called by Parliament in 1643
    - new or reformed church
    - began meeting on July 1, 1643
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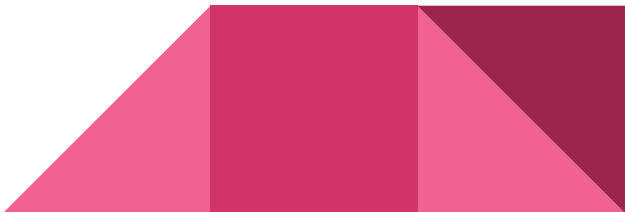

# History of the Westminster Confession

- **Members**
    - chosen by parliament
    - 121 English puritan ministers - active
    - 6 Scottish commissioners - from the Church of Scotland
    - 30 laymen (House of Lords and House of Commons)
  - **Commonalities**
    - calvinists and theologically aligned
  - **Differences**
    - church polity - the government of the church
    - Episcopalians - loyal to the king; many did not attend
    - English Presbyterians - prescribed vs acceptable
    - Erastians - state supreme over the church in matters of church discipline
    - Independents/Congregationalists - national church but local autonomy
    - Scots - not voting but influential
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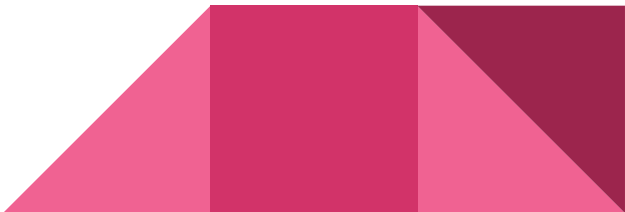


# History of the Westminster Confession

- Work of the Assembly
    - focus on preaching and prayer
    - some work on refining the 39 articles
  - Work of Reformation
    - church government
    - worship
    - confession of faith
    - catechisms
  - Reformation
    - according to the Word of God
    - Reformed church examples in Scotland and abroad
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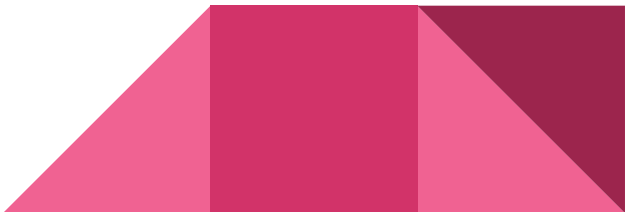


# History of the Westminster Confession

- church government
    - Form of Church Government
    - “grand debate”
    - Presbyterian
  - worship
    - Directory of Public Worship
    - “guide” for ministers
  - confession
    - Confession of Faith
    - statement of faith
    - covenant theology
    - Parliament required proof-texts
  - catechisms
    - Larger - for ministers in teaching
    - Shorter - new beginners or children
    - Church of Scotland introduction - “those of weaker capacity”
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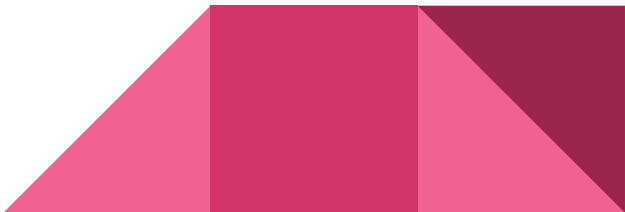


# History of the Westminster Confession

- completion
    - major work -1648
    - last session - 1649
  - small committee
    - until 1653
    - examine prospective ministers
  - Westminster undone
    - no king - 1649-1660
    - 1660 - Charles II
  - work
    - never really used in the Church of England
- 



# History of the Westminster Confession

- however ...
    - adopted by the Church of Scotland
    - adopted by English Congregationalists in with revisions (Savoy Declaration)
    - adopted by New England puritans in different forms
    - adopted by English Baptists with revisions (London Confession)
    - adopted by American Baptists (London Confession)
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