

The Catechism: Larger and Shorter, finished by 1648, gave the capstone of a study of the confession with an attempt to make it practical on elemental levels.

The Confession of Faith, 1546-47, was a heavy document that touched on the heart of most theological issues. It is pronouncedly Calvinistic but broad enough to allow a lot of liberty in many areas. Some of this liberty was intentional but a lot of it was the result of the pressure of parliament. The writers had to please the legislators and the legislators were taking a broader view of the church.

The Sum of Saving Knowledge was actually the work of David Dickson but a capsule concept of the Gospel message issued with the confessional statements as a sort of "here's what we preach" manifesto.

These items are known as the Westminster Symbols and have been the background of English-speaking presbyterian/congregational bodies ever since. Ironically, although forged in England, they never had much influence there as Anglicanism forcefully returned. But in Scotland and the United States they would exercise great force in the development of reformed expressions of faith. The literature constitutes a gold mine of study materials but they did not set with the English people of the time very well. They represented too much of a departure from what was known and accepted. When the Commonwealth collapsed the Westminster standards lost their force in England as well.

III.1.e Commonwealth

The Commonwealth 1648-1660

In a word, the history of the Commonwealth is the later history of Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658). Cromwell was a hard-headed individual who, 'in pursuit of what he believed to be right, could be fairly ruthless. He was uniform in his policies and disposition. But what he believed was believed totally and his method of dealing with those who were defiant was severe, although much in keeping with the life of those times. He was an evangelical independent, very Calvinistic, but very much opposed to an establishment of religious view...even his own!

Early in 1644 he rebuilt the Parliamentary cavalry, forming the famous "Ironsides Brigade" and from it