

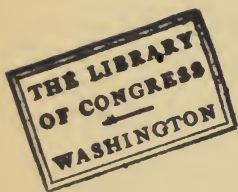
ADDRESSES
AT THE
CELEBRATION OF THE
Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary
OF THE
WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY
BY THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE
✓ PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U. S. A.

William
EDITED BY THE
REV. WM. HENRY ROBERTS, D. D., LL. D.
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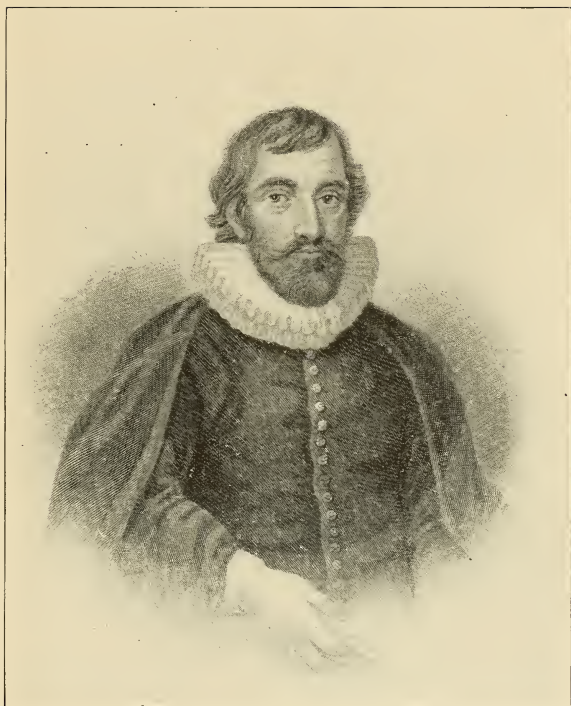
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Oct. 5. 98



Rev. Alexander Henderson.

Author of the Solemn League and Covenant, and Leader of the Scotch Commissioners.

ALEXANDER HENDERSON.
PRESENTATION OF PORTRAIT.

BY
W. C. GRAY, LL. D.

ADDRESS

BY THE
REV. WM. HENRY ROBERTS, D. D., LL.D.

PRESENTATION OF THE PORTRAIT OF ALEXANDER HENDERSON.*

BY DR. W. C. GRAY,
EDITOR OF THE INTERIOR.

MODERATOR AND GENTLEMEN OF THE ASSEMBLY:

AT the suggestion of your honored stated clerk I have taken the liberty of substituting a portrait of the great Scottish Reformer, Alexander Henderson, for the one promised of John Witherspoon. This is more appropriate because we celebrate to-day the great Calvinistic, not the American, Declaration of Independence.

And this, brethren, is also an expression of a thought which I have long entertained, that we make too little of the "living epistles" sent of God to us from age to age in the persons of our great

* Dr. W. C. Gray, in May, 1897, in supporting the invitation for the Assembly to meet at Winona Lake, Indiana, in 1898, stated that he would present for himself and others a portrait of John Witherspoon to the Assembly. It was suggested to Dr. Gray that the portrait of Henderson would be more appropriate to the occasion, and the suggestion was accepted by him on the condition that the stated clerk of the Assembly would deliver an address upon the subject of the portrait.

Christian heroes and saints. Those who have come to us since Christ taught and died, vastly outnumber those who were sent before. They have been more in number, and, I will venture to say, leaving aside the prophets and apostles with their divine commission, more illustrious in life, service, and character. The heroism of these great men was sublime, their self-abnegation, Christ-like. Not for glory did they brave death, not for honors did they toil, but because they were constrained by the love of Christ and of their fellow-men. I would that you, my spiritual fathers, would read more of these "living epistles" to your people from your pulpits.

Upon this canvas the form and features of one of the great benefactors of the Church are brought to view by the skilful brush of the artist. His higher self, his mind and soul, his character and services, are now to be portrayed by that prince of adopted Philadelphians, scholar and orator, Dr. William Henry Roberts.

Dr. Roberts responded to Dr. Gray, saying :

It gives me sincere pleasure to accept, in the name of the General Assembly, the portrait of Alexander Henderson, presented for himself and others by our distinguished friend, the gifted editor of the Interior. The presentation emphasizes our unity in support of the common faith, our loyalty to the great Head of the Church, and adds a deeper and more lively interest

to this historic commemoration. May this incident in the celebration be but one of many which shall bring us yet closer together as brethren of the same household. I now proceed to the delivery of the address upon the subject of the portrait.

ALEXANDER HENDERSON.

BY THE

REV. WM. HENRY ROBERTS, D. D., LL. D.

THE Presbyterian Churches, in whatever land located, have been highly privileged of God in the gift from him of men competent for the great emergencies of their history. Peculiarly has this been true of the Church of Scotland, the Church of which Alexander Henderson was a minister. First of its leaders must ever stand John Knox, and next to him the subject of our thought, of whom it was said, in the Scotch Assembly of 1647, in an address by Baillie, one of the Commissioners to the Westminster Assembly, that his career made it obligatory on "the Presbyterians and on their posterity to count him the fairest ornament, after Mr. John Knox, of incomparable memory, that ever the Church of Scotland did enjoy." Placed thus next to John Knox in relation to the history of British Presbyterianism, it is appropriate on this occasion briefly to sketch his life, and to exhibit his intimate connection with the history of those great standards of faith and practice, which it is our privilege to maintain, as well as to commemorate.

Alexander Henderson was born in the year 1583, at Creich, in Fifeshire, Scotland. The Hendersons of Fordel claim him as a cadet of their family. He graduated at St. Andrews' University in 1603, and by the year 1610 was a professor therein and also questor of the Faculty of Arts. His reputation for learning and philosophy was completely established at the early age of twenty-seven. Shortly thereafter he became minister of the parish of Leuchars, in the Presbytery of St. Andrews, and was at the time of his installation a supporter of Episcopacy. The religious controversies then prevalent in Scotland, however, quickly brought him face to face with the undying conflict between the Presbyterian and Episcopal, the popular and the autocratic forms of Church Government. While debating the issue between the two, an event befell Henderson which became the turning-point of his life. The Rev. Robert Bruce of Kinnaird, one of the distinguished Presbyterian ministers of the period, administered communion one Sabbath in a parish adjoining that over which Henderson was pastor. The latter attended the preparatory service, and, under the fervent preaching of Bruce, underwent, according to his own testimony, that great inward change which we know as regeneration. From the hour of his conversion, like others of the great evangelical leaders, he at once abandoned Episcopacy, and threw himself heart and soul into the cause of the Reformation. The evangelical faith is always antagonistic

to hierarchical pretensions, and there is an intimate relationship between the doctrines of grace and true liberty.

So distinguished and able a minister as Henderson became speedily a leader of the Presbyterians. The times were critical, and the man called of God had appeared. About 1625, Charles I. began his efforts to force upon Scotland the Episcopal worship and ceremonies practised in England. Melville and Calderwood, the old leaders of the Reformation, had been banished from the kingdom. Henderson, instead of being overawed by their fate, came boldly forward in defense of liberty. The struggle went on for several years, and came finally to a crisis in St. Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh, on Sunday, July 23, 1637, by the act of Jenny Geddes, who threw the stool upon which she had been sitting at the officiating priest, as he began the reading of the English Liturgy. This act of a Scotch matron was the beginning of the struggle for constitutional and Christian freedom, not only for Scotland but for the world. Not the first time, by the way, that women have played an influential part in the cause of civil and religious liberty. Men and women of all classes of society, and the great majority of the nobility of Scotland, at once took sides against the king and the bishops. The monarch refusing to call a General Assembly, Presbyterians quickly found another method of co-operation. Every county, presbytery, and borough

in the kingdom appointed a representative, who constituted, with the nobility, and with Henderson and Dickson, a General Council. It was arranged that these Commissioners, as they were called, should meet as a body only on extraordinary occasions, and that ordinary executive power should be vested in four committees or tables, consisting each of four individuals, one table of noblemen, another of gentlemen, a third of burgesses, and a fourth of ministers. A member from each of these four tables constituted the chief table, possessed of supreme authority. Of this chief table, Henderson, as the leading minister of Scotland, soon became the dominating spirit. Side by side with the king's government, therefore, there came promptly into existence in Scotland a new representative government, and its orders were everywhere obeyed with far more promptitude than those of the most despotic of tyrants. Through the five tables or boards all Scotland could be set in motion within forty-eight hours, and more than once was so set in motion, in support of the principles of the Reformation.

Having thus organized the Presbyterian forces, it was natural that some steps should be taken which would bind them indissolubly into one. The Episcopal authorities, with the sanction of the king, endeavored to foment differences between the Presbyterians. There were three parties among the latter, one called the Eastern, the second the Western, and

the third the Highland. Edinburgh was the center of one, Glasgow of another, and Aberdeen of the third. Between them there was much friction. Henderson, however, knew the people with whom he was dealing. He realized then, what has been witnessed often since in the history of the Presbyterian Churches, that, however they may differ upon many things, there is one thing which unites them firmly together, loyalty to sound doctrine. Henderson, therefore, proposed through the tables to the Reformers, that, as they were declared outlaws and rebels by their sovereign, they should join in covenant with their God. The covenant as written by him consisted of three parts: first, the old covenant of 1560, containing the Confession of Faith; second, the acts of Parliament sustaining the Confession of Scotland against popery; and third, special clauses applicable to the prevailing circumstances. It was worded so as to set forth not only the determination of the signers to "resist all contrary errors to the uttermost of their power all the days of their lives," but also pledged them not "to suffer themselves to be defeated or withdraw from their union."

Wednesday, February 28, 1638, became in connection with this covenant, known as the Solemn League and Covenant, one of the most memorable days in the history of the world. Presbyterians had crowded to Edinburgh to the number of sixty thousand. A fast had been appointed in the church of

the Grey Friars. At two o'clock on that day the venerable edifice, and the large open space around it, were filled with Reformers from every portion of the country. Henderson constituted the meeting by prayer. The Earl of Loudon stated the occasion of the gathering. The covenant was then read. Objections, which were few, were heard, and about four o'clock the venerable Earl of Sutherland stepped forward and put the first name to the memorable instrument. After his signature had been appended, it was carried the rounds of the whole church, and was then taken out to be signed by the crowd in the church-yard. Here it was spread upon a flat tombstone, and many wrote after their names the words, "till death," and some, ink failing, opened their veins and signed with their own blood. In testimony of their sincerity, the signers, after the subscription had been completed, confirmed it by an oath. Grandly solemn must the scene have been, when, the signatures having been completed, that vast assemblage of nobles, gentry, ministers, elders, and burgesses, with uplifted hands, with tears streaming down their faces, called upon God to witness to their loyalty to the Solemn League and Covenant. Well might Henderson say, "that this was the day of the Lord's power, wherein the arm of the Lord was revealed, the day of the Redeemer's strength, on which the princes of the people assembled to swear their allegiance to the King of Kings."

The signing of the Solemn League and Covenant at Greyfriars' Church was followed by the signature of copies of it in every portion of Scotland. The effect upon the hierarchical party was decisive. They found that the people were practically a unit for the Presbyterian Reformation. The king at first determined to use force, but soon became convinced that it would be a useless thing so to do. The Reformers or Covenanters followed up their advantage by petitioning the king to call the General Assembly. To this he finally consented, and on November 21, 1638, the first General Assembly in twenty years met in St. Mungo's Cathedral in the city of Glasgow. To this Assembly gathered all the chief lords of the Council and barons of Scotland, who sat in the body armed, and who, in more than one sense, were ruling elders. Along with them, and a number of other elders, were seated the ministers from the several Presbyteries, to the number of about one hundred and forty. The body was presided over at first by the Lord High Commissioner, the Duke of Hamilton, appointed by the king to represent him, and was opened with prayer by the Rev. John Bell, the oldest minister of the bounds. The High Commissioner endeavored in every way possible to prevent action on the part of the Assembly, even to the extent of opposing the choice of a moderator, but in vain. Alexander Henderson was duly elected, and under his skilful leadership the Constitution of the Church

was in all particulars restored to that which it had been under John Knox, and the bishops whom the king had established in Scotland were deposed from office. The deposition of the bishops took place on Tuesday, the 13th of December, in the presence of a great multitude, being preceded by a sermon by Henderson upon the text, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool." After the sermon, Henderson, with great solemnity and gravity, pronounced the sentence of deposition. In the performance of this act he had the unique honor of being the one Presbyterian moderator, who, with due forms of law, deposed from the places which they had usurped in the Church of Scotland, two archbishops and twelve bishops. Of these bishops, eight were excommunicated as well as deposed. Thus was the Church freed from the bonds of ecclesiastical tyranny, and thus was signally vindicated its power to govern itself, under Christ, the supreme Head.

The struggle begun in Scotland spread gradually to other portions of the kingdom of Great Britain. In England and Wales, Puritanism had been accomplishing its beneficent revolutionary work. The Presbyterians had become a powerful party in the Church of England, and the Long Parliament was controlled by them. They had also been materially aided by the warlike acts of the Covenanters of Scotland, who in defense of their liberties had invaded

England, and had inflicted serious defeats upon the forces of King Charles. In this condition of affairs, Henderson, as the leader of the Church of Scotland, an Assembly moderator with a victorious army at his back, was appointed one of the Commissioners to negotiate a treaty with the king. As a result, on the first of October, a truce was established between the warring parties, and from Ripon, the place of meeting, the Scotch Commissioners went to London and brought charges against Laud, the Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1641, the Scotch General Assembly again met, and Henderson was made a second time moderator. By this time he had become the leader, not only in the Church, but also in the State. His was the influence of moral force and of strong and equable character. At the Assembly of 1642, which met at St. Andrews, Henderson was appointed to answer a letter from the Parliament of England, and in the reply which he prepared he emphasized the necessity of having one Confession of Faith, Catechism, and Directory in both nations. To this proposal of Henderson's the Parliament of England consented, and announced their resolution to call an assembly of divines, and to require some ministers from the Kirk of Scotland to assist at the deliberations. Henderson was therefore the author of the proposition which resulted in the calling of the Westminster Assembly, and in that body, the Commissioners from the Church of Scotland were, Henderson as the leading minister, with Douglas,

Gillespie, Rutherford, and Baillie, and, in addition, ruling elders, the Lords Cassillis, Maitland, and Wariston.

At the Westminster Assembly great honor was paid to Henderson. To him was assigned the framing of the first draft of the Directory for Public Worship. He took part in the Assembly for a sufficient length of time to see the Liturgy overthrown in England, as it had been in Scotland, and the Presbyterian Church made the Established Church of England. These changes were effected after a recommendation from the Westminster Assembly by the Parliament. Henderson also persuaded both the Westminster Assembly and the English Parliament to accept the Solemn League and Covenant. Both bodies met for the purpose in St. Margaret's Church, London, the Covenant was explained at length by Henderson, was read article by article, and then two hundred and twenty-two members of Parliament signed the instrument, as did also the Assembly and many of the audience. Thus were England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland welded into unity in maintenance of the true faith and of the cause of liberty. Henderson intended also to visit the Reformed Churches of the Continent, and was the chief writer of a manifesto sent by the Westminster Assembly in the interests of the common faith, to the Churches of Holland, France, Germany, and Switzerland. He returned to Scotland for a brief period, and was present at the Scotch Assembly of

1645, which approved the Westminster Directory of Public Worship. Then he went back for a few weeks to Westminster, and took part in the work of completing the version of the Psalms known as Rous's, from the name of its author, Francis Rous, a native of Cornwall, England. The last important public act in the life of Henderson was the conduct of a disputation with King Charles I., upon the points which separated the king from the Covenanters. This disputation was conducted in writing at Newcastle, England, in 1646. The papers containing it are extant, and the answer to the claim made by some persons at the time, that the king's arguments were the stronger, was, that if such was the case, then as the king's arguments were authorities from the fathers, who were fallible men, his triumph was over the Word of God. Immediately after the conclusion of this disputation, which bound the king and Henderson yet closer in ties of a personal friendship which had long existed, Henderson's constitution broke down. Never a robust man, the mental anxieties and fatigue of public life made him the easy prey of disease. He passed from earth to heaven on the 19th of August, 1646, at the age of fifty-three years.

But what a record is that of his life. How it emphasizes the value of unremitting devotion to the cause of truth. Savingly converted by the earnest preaching of the Word of God, he was faithful to that Word in every hour. How his life sets forth also the

power of a patient, clear-sighted, prompt, and firm mind. In the furnace of controversy, Henderson never departed from the gentle courtesy which becomes the servant of the Lord. In the great emergencies of the conflict between truth and error he saw what ought to be done and did it. When a course of action was once determined upon, he followed it strenuously and persistently until the result was secured. As the head of the Boards of the Scotch ecclesiastical Republic; as the moderator who ruled with a hand of steel in a velvet glove; as the destroyer in Scotland of a church government alien to the faith and spirit of the people; as the penman of the Solemn League and Covenant; as the proposer of the Westminster Assembly; as the leading Commissioner of the Church of Scotland in that great body; as the friend of the king; as the unifier of the forces of righteousness and order in Church and State, he stands a man whose like either Church or State have seldom known. His fellow commissioner, Baillie, pronounced upon him a tender eulogium in the Scotch Assembly of 1647, saying, among other things, "May I be permitted to conclude with my earnest wish that that glorious soul of worthy memory, who is now crowned with the reward of his labors for God and for us, may be fragrant among us so long as pure and free Assemblies remain in this land, which I hope will be till the coming of the Lord."

In a land but little known during his lifetime the memory of Alexander Henderson is to-day gratefully remembered and lovingly acknowledged. His hope for the unity of the Churches of God is not yet fully realized, but the liberty for which he strove and the faith for which he contended, have flourished greatly in this continent west of the Atlantic! The men of the Revolution of 1776, almost without exception, were believers in the principles of Westminster, and the churches which they founded and maintained were in full harmony with those great Standards. In this land, further, the popular government which Henderson loved, and which finds its roots in the Calvinistic system, has come to full development. Do you ask for one monument of Henderson and his collaborators, look upon this Republic, free, united, prosperous. Do you ask for another, look upon the Presbyterian Churches of this land, loyal to the core, despite all oppositions, to the truth of God. May the Presbyterians of this land be as true as the fathers to the Calvinistic system, recognizing always, as the men of Westminster recognized, these great truths:

1. That the glory of the Presbyterian Churches has been, is, and will be, steadfast adherence to the system of doctrine which they believe to be contained in the Holy Scriptures, and undeviating loyalty to Christ as the sole Prophet, Priest, and King of his Church.
2. That the Word of God is the supreme law of man, and that an open Bible means not only the rule

of righteousness in every life, but also a free Church and a free State in every land.

3. That evangelical religion is both the source and strength of true liberty and progress. The truth of God is in order to goodness, and the only hope for the redemption, secular and spiritual, of this sin-cursed world, is found in that Gospel by which men "are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, which liveth and abideth for ever."

Thus realizing duty, thus compassed about with the great cloud of witnesses, let us in this later age of the world be true to all the glory of the past and all the hopes of the future. Let us press

"On! straight onward, for the right!
On! let all the soul within you
For the truth's sake go abroad;
On! let every nerve and sinew
Tell on ages, tell for God."