

# History and Survey of the Westminster Confession of Faith

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Part 1: History, Context, and Rationale  
Class 10: The Reformation in England, Part 2  
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Elizabeth I

1559 Restored the Act of Supremacy to ward off Popery and to stiff-arm John Knox

1562-3 Convocation held to conduct the revision, reduction and publication of the Forty Two Articles (cf. 1552) as the Thirty Nine Articles of the Anglican religion. Elizabeth rashly requires uniformity and conformity.

**Articles I-VIII: The Catholic Articles:** The nature of God, manifest in the Holy Trinity, with scripture, and the essential creeds.

**Articles IX-XVIII: The Protestant and Reformed Articles:** The topics of sin, justification, and the eternal disposition of the soul. Of particular focus: justification by faith.

**Articles XIX-XXXI: The Anglican Articles:** The institutional church, the councils of the church, worship, ministry, and sacramental theology.

**Articles XXXII-XXXIX: Miscellaneous:** Clerical celibacy, excommunication, traditions of the Church, etc. Article XXXVII renounces the authority of the Bishop of Rome.

1566 Nonconformists determined to be separate and distinct as Puritans from the Church of England.

- Wearing of required clerical vestments
- The assumed superiority of bishops over presbyters, along with the whole cadre of cathedral office-bearers
- The lack of church discipline
- The lack of liberty in the wording of prayers, the many repetitions and responses in worship
- The use of apocryphal books.
- The credible ability of the ordained minister to preach.
- They condemned church-festivals and saints' days
- Cathedral worship, chanted prayers, extraneous music
- Using the sign of the cross in baptism, baptism by midwives, replacement of parents with godparents, rite of confirmation, kneeling at communion, bowing at the name of Jesus

- 1572 1<sup>st</sup> Presbytery in England established
- 1582 Independent/Congregationalist churches formed
- 1595 Arminianism creeps in from the Netherlands
- 1603 Elizabeth I of England dies; James VI of Scotland becomes James I of England, Scotland and Ireland, uniting the two crowns.
- 1603-1714 The Stuarts (from now on, the French spelling), remain Protestants but openly tolerant of Catholics until James II comes to the throne who is a convert to Catholicism.  
Such royal toleration creates a long-standing tension between king and Parliament throughout the century. The kings of England also gripped the principle of the Divine right of kings which Parliament rebels against in facing Charles I and determines that a republican government is preferable.
- 1611 Authorized Version of the Bible is published.
- 1616 Many Puritans flee to Holland and became more enamoured with the Congregational system of church government.
- 1618 James' King's Book of Sports flagrantly rejects the Sabbatarianism of the Puritans. James attempts to require the book to be read from English pulpits.  
"Thinking men cannot be slaves" (Hetherington)
- 1620 Pilgrim Fathers set sail for America in the *Mayflower*
- 1625-1649 Charles I - He rules under the principle of Divine Right of Kings, exercises autocratic authority, and continues the oppression against the Puritans and clashes repeatedly with Parliament. He appoints William Laud as Archbishop of Canterbury.
- 1633 Charles I reissues his father's book, calling it The King's Magesties Declaration to His Subjects concerning Lawful Sports to be Used.
- 1637 Charles tries to force his Prayer Book - "the whole mass of prelatric rites and ceremonies" encompassed in the Book of Canons and a Liturgy - on the Scots, who resist by composing and signing the National Covenant at Greyfriar's churchyard in Edinburgh, which directly challenged the royalty's philosophy of "the Divine right of kings", calling them to be subject to the Parliaments of their countries.

“It is, ‘almost impossible to over-estimate the damage done by the Laudians.’ ... The specter was not so much the danger of persecution as the fear of popery. Charles was being manipulated by unscrupulous papists both home and abroad, who were plotting to overthrow the Reformation.” (Letham)

Anti-immigration laws meant to keep people from fleeing the kingdom keeps young Oliver Cromwell from sailing to America.

1638 Scotland signs the National Covenant

1640 “Short Parliament” only lasts three weeks.

“Long Parliament” summoned, which lasted until 1660.

- Parliament passes a bill declaring that it could only dissolve itself.
- It denied Charles I the taxes he required.
- The King’s Book was condemned and burned.
- Accused and arrested Laud for treason (beheaded in 1645).
- The Court of High Commission and the Star Chamber were abolished.
- Entertained a “rash of petitions” calling for the end of Episcopacy.
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“Episcopacy had to be destroyed,  
the established Church reconstituted.”

1643 First English Civil War begins

## **New Covenant Presbyterian Church**

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