

History and Survey of the Westminster Confession of Faith

Dr. D. G. Barker, New Covenant Presbyterian Church, Abingdon, MD

Part 1: History, Context, and Rationale

Class 11: the Inclusion & Influence of the Scottish Divines

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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

Parliament calls for an Assembly of Divines

Whereas, amongst the infinite blessings of Almighty God upon this nation, none is nor can be more dear unto us than the purity of our religion; and for that, as yet, many things remain in the liturgy, discipline, and government of the church, which do necessarily require a further and more perfect reformation, than as yet hath been obtained;

and whereas, it hath been declared and resolved by the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament, that the present church government, by archbishops, bishops, their chancellors, commissars, deans, and chapters, arch-deacons, and other ecclesiastical officers, depending upon the hierarchy, is evil, and justly offensive and burdensome to the kingdom, a great impediment to reformation and growth of religion, and very prejudicial to the state and government of this kingdom;

and, therefore, they are resolved, that the same shall be taken away, and that such a government shall be settled in the church, as may be most agreeable to God’s holy word,

- *and most apt to procure and preserve the peace of the church at home,*
- *and nearer agreement with the church of Scotland, and other Reformed churches abroad;*
- *and for the better effecting hereof, and for the vindicating and clearing of the doctrine of the church of England from all false calumnies and aspersions,*

it is thought fit and necessary, to call an assembly of learned, godly, and judicious divines, who, together with some members of both houses of Parliament, are to consult and advise of such matters and things, touching the premises, as shall be proposed unto them, by both or either of the houses of Parliament, and to give their advice and counsel therein, to both or either of the said houses, when, and as often, as they shall be thereunto required: ...

Solemn League & Covenant
Background:

England

- It began with royal obstinacy,
ending with civil war
- Authority claimed by the crown
 - Henry VIII, Edward VI,
 - Mary I, Elizabeth I, James I (VI)
 - W. Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury
- Prelacy enforced, Acts of Supremacy,
- Puritans oppressed

- England's church was in total
confusion and disruption.
- England could no longer tolerate
King Charles I.
- England's struggle between Charles I
and Parliament
- England wanted a civil bond with
Scotland

Scotland

Theological from the start
The Wd of God is the
supreme auth.
Church led the govt.

decidedly Presbyterian
willing to honor the king
but not over the ch.
Hope for Presbyterianism
in England
Seeks a religious bond
with England

As a treaty, the Solemn League & Covenant:

- did not specifically speak of Presbyterianism.
- It was intentionally inclusive toward Independents.
- Held up the monarchy in principle, but left its relationship to the church
vague.
- As a result of this treaty
 - The Scottish Covenanters will send their army south to aid the
Parliamentarians against the king,
 - and send a group of their own Divines to advise the Westminster
Assembly.

New Covenant Presbyterian Church

Preaching God's Sovereign Grace to a World of Need

128 St. Mary's Church Rd., Abingdon, MD 21009

410-569-0289

www.ephesians515.com

www.ncpres.org

david.barker@ncpres.org