

Lesson 8: The Historical Context of 1LCF

Excerpts from the records of the Westminster Assembly and Parliament

29 March 1644: Preparation of “an ordinance for suppressing the unlawful assembling and meeting together of Antinomians and Anabaptists.”

9 August 1644: Petition to prevent “the spreading opinions of Anabaptism and Antinomianism with that turbulency, that it tends to a division amongst them that join in the owning of this great cause [the Reform of the Church of England]: But, in regard to the unseasonableness of the time, we did forbear, but now we see those men have cast off all affection, and are so embittered, that it is high time to suppress them.”

31 August 1644: Ordered, That it be referred to the committee of plundered ministers, to proceed with all such as shall publish the opinions of Anabaptism or Antinomianism.

5 September 1644: Then were we about to transmit our remedies against Anabaptism and Antinomianism to the Houses, when Mr. [Philip] Nye, in the name of others also, desired to put in his reasons against them: and this cost a large and a hot debate. At last, with much ado, it was put to the question, and voted, that these remedies should be sent in the afternoon.

That all Ministers who teach or divulge, Baptizing of Infants to be unlawful ... be commanded to bring in the grounds and reasons of their opinions in a brief and compendious manner in writing under their hands unto the Assembly, ... to be examined according to the Word of God.

19 September 1644: The advice of the Westminster Assembly regarding the suppression of Anabaptists is presented to Parliament.

c. 16 October 1644: 1LCF is published

1 November 1644: Discussions and deferrals

The Purpose of the Confession

Addressed to “those that think themselves much wronged, if they be not looked upon as the chief Worthies of the Church of God, and Watchmen of the City.”

We question not but that it will seem strange to many men, that such as we are frequently termed to be, *lying under that calumny and black brand of Heretics*, and sowers of division as we do, should presume to appear so publicly as now we have done... We have therefore for the clearing of the truth we profess... briefly published a Confession of our Faith...

The Sources of the Confession

True Confession (1596)

The Points of Difference (1603)

William Ames, *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity* (1629 in Latin; 1642 in English)

The Response to the Confession

Stephen Marshall

I acknowledge it the most Orthodox of any Anabaptists confession that ever I read, (although there are sundry Heterodox opinions in it) and such an one as I believe thousands of our new Anabaptists will be far from owning.

Robert Baillie

Tell the English Anabaptists now of the Doctrine and practice of their fathers in *Munster* and elsewhere, they are ready with passion to deny all affinity, all consanguinity with such monstrous Heretics...the furthest they will profess to maintain is but a simple antipaedobaptism...We wish that all our questions with that generation of men were come to so narrow an issue; we are loath to force upon any man the errors which he is willing to disallow.

We wish that all these who go under the name of Anabaptists in England, were resolved to stand to the Articles of that confession without any further progress in error.

Daniel Featley

If we give credit to this Confession and the Preface thereof, those who among us are branded with that Title, are neither Heretics, nor Schismatics, but tender-hearted Christians: upon whom, through false suggestions, the hand of authority fell heavy, whilst the Hierarchy stood: for, they neither teach free-will, nor falling away from grace...nor deny original sin...nor disclaim Magistracy...and to this purpose they have published this confession...Of which I may truly say...They cover a little rats-bane in a great quantity of sugar.

Thomas Edwards

Charged the Particular Baptists' Confession with "not holding [orthodox doctrines] as the Reformed Churches do."

Increase Mather

In England, several Anabaptist Congregations emitted confessions of their faith, wherein they professed orthodoxy as to the fundamentals in doctrine, and that they only differed from other churches as to infant baptism, and yet, I know not how many of the leaders in those congregations afterwards durst [dared] openly strike at the foundation of the true Christian religion.