

1. The relevant portions of the Symbols

The Confessional chapters that apply are as follow:

Of the Church

Of the Communion of Saints

Of the Sacraments

Of Baptism

Of the Lord's Supper

Of Church censures

Of Synods and Councils

Likewise the catechism questions that are built on these portions are in this sequence:

L.C. 154-177

S.C. 88-97

2. Observation

In historic background it must be remembered that the confessional fathers were working against three different ecclesiastical philosophies. There was the older Roman Catholic tradition and its insistence on the hierarchical composition of the church; there was the Erastian ideology in which the church was virtually the handmaid of the governmental systems; and there was the Geneva concept in which the church was the governed society of elders working in concert. The first of these was represented by the Church of England, the second by many of the independent churches (dissenters) but by no means all, while the third was alive in the Scots Presbyterian bodies. The latter group tended to dominate the confessional assemblage while the independent (or non-conformist) forces held great control of the English governmental system. Parliament, having been "burned" by episcopacy, was looking favorably towards the Scots ideas but moving cautiously. Therefore the confessional fathers were trying to withstand episcopacy while advocating Biblical ideals that would generally appeal to all Christians. The attempt to spell out a jure divino for church government in the confession was not allowed by Parliament although such procedure will be accounted for in the books of Common Worship, etc. On this particular doctrinal escapade the members of the Westminster assembly probably had some of their most difficult moments.

3. Summary

Comprehensively speaking we may summarize the Confessional concept of ecclesiology thusly:

The Church is the Lord's representative body on earth commissioned to carry out His commands, maintain His fellowship, and continue His ministry in and by the ways He has appointed...with no usurping of either His authority or the life He has given the members.