



Calvin's Influence on the Theology of the English Reformation

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Abstract

This paper traces the influence of John Calvin on the English Reformation from the time of the breach with Rome under Henry VIII until the great ejection of dissenting puritan clergy from the ministry of the Church of England in 1662. It argues that Calvin's teaching only began to have an impact on the English Reformation during the reign of Elizabeth I and that although his theology had a widespread impact on both individuals and groups within the Church of England it never shaped the Church's official doctrine, liturgy or pattern of ministry, although it seemed likely that this would be the case at the time of the Westminster Assembly in the 1640s. It also raises the question of whether Calvin sought episcopacy from the Church of England in the reign of Edward VI.

Keywords

John Calvin, Church of England, ministry, liturgy, predestination

Introduction

What do Pope Pius V, the seventeenth-century Puritan writer William Prynne and Wikipedia all have in common? The answer is that they all hold that during the Reformation the theology and practice of the Church of England was shaped by the influence of John Calvin.

In his Bull of 1570 deposing Queen Elizabeth I, *Regnans in Excelsis*, Pope Pius V declares that the Queen 'has ordered that books of manifestly heretical content be propounded to the whole realm and that impious rites

and institutions after the rule of Calvin, entertained and observed by herself, be also observed by her subjects'.¹

From the other end of the theological spectrum William Prynne argues in his 1630 work *Anti-Arminianisme* that the Church of England had 'indeni- zened and adopted' the works of Calvin, and his successor in Geneva, Theodore Beza, and that the teaching of the reformed Church of England had been in line with their teaching about predestination throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.²

Moving on to the present day, the entry on 'Puritanism' in the online ency- clopaedia Wikipedia tells us: 'The Church of England as a whole was Calvinist, as seen in the Calvinist 39 Articles, the Calvinist Anglican Homilies, and in John Calvin's correspondence with King Edward VI and Thomas Cranmer.'³

What these three examples demonstrate is the existence of a school of thought going back to the time of the Reformation itself that has held that the theology of the English Reformation was strongly influenced by the thought of Calvin, to the extent that scholars have talked about a 'Calvinist consensus' in the Church of England at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries.

It needs to be noted, however, that this way of looking at the English Reformation has always been challenged. Three further examples will illustrate this point.

First, the Zurich reformer Heinrich Bullinger was asked to refute *Regnans in Excelsis* on behalf of Elizabeth I and in the course of his *Confutation of the Pope's Bull* he argues that, unlike the adherents of Rome, Protestants do not rely on the teachings of human beings except in so far as they are agreeable to Scripture. In consequence:

The Queen of England's majesty never received of Calvin, or any other excellent or well-learned men, any ordinances to follow, nor never regarded them: and yet by the way, if any of them have taught anything out of God's pure word, no godly man can take scorn thereof.⁴

Secondly, in his books *Aerius Revivendus, or the History of the Presbyterians* and *Historia Quinquarticularis*, the seventeenth century opponent of William

¹ Text from <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius05/p5regnans.htm>.

² For details about Prynne's work see P. White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 2-6.

³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puritan>.

⁴ Cited in White, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

Prynne, Peter Heylyn, gives a completely different account of the history of the Church of England to that put forward by Prynne. He maintains that Calvinist ideas about Christian belief and practice only came into the Church of England following the return of the ‘Genevians’ from exile after the accession of Elizabeth I and that the original and official teaching of the Church of England about predestination was that taught by Melancthon and Arminius and by the Eathers before them, rather than that taught by Calvin and his successor in Geneva Theodore Beza.⁵

Thirdly, in *Predestination, Policy and Polemic* (1992) Peter White argues the idea that there was a Calvinist consensus in the Church of England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is mistaken. There was in fact a spectrum of views about predestination in the Church of England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and beliefs reflecting the influence of Calvin were only part of this spectrum.

Given this very long standing clash of views what are we to make of the matter? I shall argue in this paper that John Calvin began to have an influence on the theology of the English Reformation from the time of Edward VI onwards, and that this influence had become widespread at the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century. However, acceptance of Calvin’s ideas was never universal and these ideas never finally became reflected in the official teaching or practice of the Church of England, although in the mid 1640s it looked as though this would be the case.

1. The English Reformation under Henry VIII (1520-1547)

Although it had its antecedents in the beliefs held by the Lollards from the fourteenth century onwards and in the growth of humanist scholarship in England at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the beginnings of the Reformation in England properly so called took place in the 1520s when scholars at Cambridge and elsewhere began to be interested in, and affected by, the new ‘Evangelical’ or ‘Protestant’ ideas that were coming in from the Continent. What then happened was that this Protestant influence became combined with the renewed study of the Bible in its original languages, the continuing influence of Eollard ideas, anti-clericalism, the growth of nationalism and Henry VIII’s desire to marry Anne Boleyn and produce a legitimate male heir. The combination of all these factors eventually led to the legal

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-11.

separation of the Church of England from the Church of Rome in 1533 and 1534 and to the contest between Catholic and Protestant ideas and practices that took place during the rest of Henry's reign.

If we ask what Calvin's influence was in all this, the answer is that he seems to have exerted no influence at all. We know that the growth of Reformation ideas in England was influenced by the work of Martin Luther, Philip Melanchthon, Huldrych Zwingli, John Oecolampadius and Martin Bucer, but there is no evidence that it was due to the influence of John Calvin. The reason this is the case becomes apparent once we consider the chronology of Calvin's life.

All the continental scholars previously mentioned had become leaders in the developing Protestant movement by the early 1520s, but Calvin's conversion from humanist to Protestant Reformer seems only to have taken place some time between 1527 and 1533. The first edition of the *Institutes* was not published until 1536 and Calvin's reputation as a significant Reformer only really took off after his return to Geneva from Strasbourg in 1541. What this means is that Calvin only really started to become prominent as a Reformer towards the end of Henry's reign, and this in turn explains why he does not seem to have influenced the Henrician Reformation.

2. The English Reformation under Edward VI (1547-1553)

During the reign of Edward VI, however, Calvin came to be regarded as one of the leading continental Reformers. This can be seen from the fact that in 1552 Archbishop Cranmer chose to write to him as well as to Philip Melanchthon and Heinrich Bullinger proposing the idea of a conference of leading Protestant theologians as a means of establishing the unity of the reformed churches and as a counterweight to the Council of Trent.⁶ When Calvin replied he declined to accept Cranmer's invitation to take part in the proposed conference, saying that he would support the idea in prayer, but that he hoped his 'want of ability' would 'occasion me to be excused'.⁷

During Edward's reign Calvin also wrote to the King himself, to the Lord Protector, the Duke of Somerset, to Archbishop Cranmer and to the King's tutor Sir John Cheke, to give them encouragement and advice on how to take

⁶ H. Robinson (ed.), *Original Letters relative to the English Reformation*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Parker Society/Cambridge University Press, 1846), pp. 24-25.

⁷ Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 713.

forward the Reformation in England. His specific suggestions were that more encouragement should be given to preaching, that sufficient pastors should be provided and paid for, that a statement of doctrine and a catechism needed to be produced, that prayers for the dead, the invocation of the saints and the rite of extreme unction should be abolished, that steps should be taken to prevent the universities being infected by those ‘opposed to the true religion’ and that vice should be suppressed.⁸

There is no direct evidence to show what influence these letters had on those to whom they were addressed and, through them, on the wider Reformation in England. What we do know, however, is that Calvin did have some influence on the 1552 version of the *Book of Common Prayer*. At the suggestion of Peter Martyr and Martin Bucer, two Reformed scholars teaching in England, the sentences, exhortation, confession and absolution at the beginning of the services of Morning and Evening Prayer were borrowed from the liturgy produced by Calvin for the French Church in Strasbourg and subsequently introduced into the Church of Geneva,⁹ and the words accompanying the distribution of the elements at Communion were taken from the liturgy of the Reformed scholar John à Easco, which was in turn based on the Strasbourg liturgy. It has also been suggested that the introduction of the Ten Commandments into the Communion service was due to Calvin’s influence and the responses to the commandments are taken from the work of Valerand Poullain who had succeeded Calvin as the minister of the French Congregation in Strasbourg and who had translated the Strasbourg rite into Latin and dedicated it to Edward VI in the hope that it would contribute to the revision of the Prayer Book.¹⁰

Two other documents produced by the Church of England during Edward’s reign that are often thought to show the influence of Calvin’s theology are the *Forty Two Articles* of 1553 and the *First Book of Homilies* of 1547. In fact, however, neither of these documents shows any signs of being influenced by Calvin’s theology.

⁸ These letters can be found in *ibid.*, pp. 707-11, 711-14, and 714-15 and in J. Bonnet (ed.), *The Letters of John Calvin*, vol 2 (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1858), pp. 182-98. Calvin also dedicated commentaries on Isaiah and the Catholic Epistles to Edward VI along with a French translation of his Latin *Four Sermons ... with a Brief Exposition of Psalm 87*.

⁹ For the Strasbourg and Geneva liturgies see B. Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), ch. VII.

¹⁰ H. Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans* (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1948), pp. 26-27.

The *Forty Two Articles*, the predecessor of the *Thirty Nine Articles* of Elizabeth I's reign, were drawn up by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer from 1548 onwards in consultation with the other bishops of the Church of England as a statement of the doctrinal position of the Church of England 'for the avoiding of controversy in opinions and the establishment of a Godly concord in certain matters of religion.' The basis on which it is normally claimed that these articles are 'Calvinist' is the teaching about predestination in Article XVII.

The first paragraph of this Article declares:

Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid), he hath constantly decreed by his own judgement secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom He hath chosen out of mankind, and to bring them to everlasting salvation by Christ to as vessels made to honour: whereupon, such as have so excellent a benefit of God given unto them be called according to God's purpose by his Spirit working in due season; they through grace obey the calling; they be justified freely; they be made sons of God by adoption; they be made like the image of His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ; they walk religiously in good works; and at length by God's mercy they attain to everlasting felicity.

This paragraph is often claimed to reflect the view of predestination put forward by Calvin in his commentary on Romans, in *Institutes*, Book III, Chs XXI-XXIV and in his work *On the Eternal Predestination of God*. However, there are a number of cogent objections to this claim.

First, as Charles Gibson notes in his commentary on the Articles, the issue of chronology crops up again given that work on the articles began in 1548 and was completed by the summer of 1552:

Calvin's *Institutes* were first published in 1536, so that his views had been made public some time before the English Articles were drawn up. But the great discussion on predestination in Geneva, and the publication of his book *De Predestinatione* only took place in 1552. It has consequently been doubted whether his system had produced much influence in England at the time when the seventeenth Article was drawn up.¹¹

Secondly, the Article as a whole seems in fact to have drawn on the work of Luther and Melancthon rather than Calvin and the first paragraph just quoted is for the most part taken directly from the words of St. Paul in

¹¹ C. Gibson, *The Thirty-Nine Articles*, 2nd edn (London: Methuen, 1908), p. 474.

Ephesians 1:3-11, Romans 8:28-30 and Romans 9:21, a fact which is even clearer in the Latin version of the Article than it is in the English.

Thirdly, one of the key features of Calvin's teaching on predestination that distinguishes it from the teaching on the subject by St. Augustine and by Lutheran theologians such as Melancthon is that Calvin teaches double rather than single predestination. That is to say, he holds that 'All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and accordingly, as each has been created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestinated to life or to death.'¹² In Article XVII by contrast, there is no predestination to damnation. As Oliver O'Donovan comments:

the Article does not speak of the double decree. The silence is emphasized by its peculiar shape. 'Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God,' it begins; and we naturally await a balancing sentence, 'Foreordination to death....' etc. But it never comes. Cranmer will not say that there is such a thing as foreordination to damnation, but only that belief in such does exist and that the devil can make use of it.¹³

The fact that the failure to mention predestination to damnation was not an oversight on Cranmer's part is also indicated by the fact that at the end of the Article Cranmer declares that 'we must receive God's promises in such wise as they be generally set forth to us in Holy Scripture.' To quote O'Donovan again, this means that they are to be understood 'generically, as addressed not to particular elect individuals but to the class of human beings who will hear and obey God's word. That individuals refuse to hear is not to be explained by reference to divine decrees.'¹⁴

Fourthly, a further indication of a lack of influence by Calvin on the *Forty Two Articles* is provided by the teaching of Articles X and XV. Article X states that

The grace of God, or the Holy Ghost by him given, doth take away the stony heart and giveth an heart of flesh. And although those that have no will to good

¹²) J. Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Bk III, ch xxi, 5.

¹³) O. O'Donovan, *On the Thirty Nine Articles* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1986), p. 85. The last clause in the quotation refers to the statement later on in the Article that 'for curious and carnal persons lacking the Spirit of Christ to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's predestination is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the Devil may thrust them either into desperation, or into a recklessness of living, no less perilous than desperation.'

¹⁴) *Ibid.*, p. 86.

things, he maketh them to will, and those that would evil things he maketh them not to will the same: Yet nevertheless he enforceth not the will. And therefore no man when he sinneth can excuse himself, as not worthy to be blamed or condemned, by alleging that he sinned unwillingly or under compulsion.

This article follows St. Augustine in emphasising the work of divine grace in the life of the believer, but it also declares that free will remains. As Peter White notes, this declaration reflects ‘a consensus amongst Edwardian Protestants that divine grace may be spurned and rejected, that it is not irresistible; human free will must play its part, first to accept or reject, to obey or not to obey, and having obeyed, then to co-operate.’¹⁵ This Edwardian emphasis on human free will and the resistibility of grace is at odds with the teaching of Calvin about the lack of freedom of the human will and the irresistible nature of grace to be found, for example, in *Institutes* Bk II, chs iii-v.

In Article XV we are told that ‘After we have received the Holy Spirit, we may depart from grace given and fall into sin, and by the grace of God we may rise again and amend our lives.’ As subsequent Puritan critics pointed out, the idea that it is possible to ‘depart from grace’ is contrary to the idea of the perseverance of the elect taught by Calvin in *Institutes* Bk II, ch. iii.6 and 11 and Bk III, ch. ii.40.

The *First Book of Homilies* is a collection of model sermons that was produced in 1547 to provide sound Protestant teaching in cases where the clergy lacked the ability or the theological inclination to provide it. It contains no references to, or citations from Calvin (the sources of its teaching are the Bible and the Fathers). Furthermore, it expounds the way of salvation in the homilies ‘Of the Salvation of all Mankind by only Christ’, ‘Of the true, lively and Christian Faith’ and ‘Of Good Works annexed unto Faith’ in a way that emphasises justification by faith, but which is completely silent about predestination. In addition, in the homily ‘How dangerous a Thing it is to fall from God,’ it warns against the possibility of Christians turning away from God to the extent that they are lost for ever, an idea which, like the teaching of Article XV, is contrary to Calvin’s belief in the perseverance of the saints.¹⁶

In summary, in the reign of Edward VI Calvin was regarded as a significant foreign Reformer and his liturgical work had some influence on the 1552 version of the *Book of Common Prayer*. However, he does not seem to have influenced the doctrine of the Church of England as this is reflected in the *Forty*

¹⁵ White, op. cit., p. 54.

¹⁶ For the Homilies see *The Homilies* (Bishopstone: Brynmill Press/Preservation Press, 2006).

Two Articles and the *First Book of Homilies*. The official doctrinal stance of the Edwardine Church of England was not ‘Calvinist.’ It was instead a moderate Augustinianism that emphasised the priority of divine grace, but which taught single rather than double predestination, stressed that the promises of the Gospel were for all, left a place for the exercise of human free will in salvation and believed in the danger of falling away from grace.¹⁷

3. The English Reformation in the reign of Queen Mary (1553-1558)

At the first sight it may seem a bit odd to talk about the Reformation under Queen Mary. Her reign was, after all, the period when the Reformation officially stopped and the English Church and nation resumed its obedience to the Pope. However, Mary’s reign was important for the subsequent development of the English Reformation both because the sufferings of the English Protestant martyrs as recorded by John Foxe provided inspiration for subsequent generations of English Protestants and because significant theological developments took place amongst those English Protestants who fled into exile in Europe.

According to the later historian John Strype, more than eight hundred people from England went into exile in various parts of Europe during Mary’s reign. The largest concentration of exiles was in Geneva where at its peak the English exile community numbered about two hundred people. This community had its own English speaking congregation which was led from 1556 by John Knox, a Scottish Protestant who had been a chaplain to Edward VI.

This congregation in Geneva was the most theologically radical of the various churches of English exiles that were established in continental Europe during Mary’s reign and it adopted both the fourfold order of ministry involving pastors, teachers, elders and deacons which had been introduced

¹⁷ For the teaching of the Edwardine theologians John Hooper and Hugh Latimer along these lines see White, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-44. In his biography of Thomas Cranmer, Diarmaid MacCulloch notes that the ‘mature Cranmer was a predestinarian’ (D. MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer* (London & New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 211). What he does not tell us is what precisely this meant. He notes Cranmer’s study of St Augustine’s teaching on this subject, but is silent about whether he followed Calvin’s interpretation of Augustine’s thought. In any event, the official teaching Cranmer produced for the Church of England in the *Articles* and the *Homilies* was, as noted above, not Calvinist in character.

into Geneva by Calvin through the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* of 1541¹⁸ and abandoned the 1552 Prayer Book in favour of *The Forme of Prayers*, a version of Calvin's Genevan liturgy with a few additions from the 1552 rite, notably the first section of the exhortation before Communion and parts of the marriage service.¹⁹

The significance of these developments in Geneva was that the fourfold 'presbyterian' ministerial structure and the form of liturgy adopted by the English church in Geneva became models for the changes that those on the radical wing of the English Puritan movement wanted to see introduced into the Church of England itself.

4. The English Reformation under Elizabeth I (1558-1603)

Relations between John Calvin and the Church of England during Elizabeth's reign got off to an inauspicious start. In 1558 John Knox published in Geneva his *First Blast of the Trumpet Blown Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, a work in which Knox attacked the exercise of political authority by women. This work was aimed at Queen Mary, but Elizabeth (not unnaturally) saw it as an attack on her. In addition, another of the English ministers in Geneva, Christopher Goodman, published in the same year a book entitled *How superior powers ought to be obeyed of their subjects, and wherein they may lawfully be disobeyed and resisted*. This book again was aimed at Mary, but Elizabeth saw its claim that ruler might rightly be disobeyed and resisted as undermining her authority as well. Because these works were published in Geneva, Elizabeth assumed they had Calvin's support and therefore his gift to Elizabeth of his commentary of Isaiah to mark the beginning of her reign was not well received. Calvin then had to write an extremely apologetic letter to Sir William Cecil, Elizabeth's chief adviser, distancing himself from Knox's views.²⁰

Whether because of this letter or because of other factors, Elizabeth's view of Calvin seems to have subsequently improved. In his biography of

¹⁸ For these ordinances see <http://www.cas.sc.edu/hist/faculty/edwardsk/hist310/reader/eccle-sord.pdf>. The theological basis for this fourfold order is set out by Calvin in *Institutes* Bk IV, ch. Iii and in his commentary on 1 Timothy.

¹⁹ For *The Forme of Prayers* see Thompson op. cit., ch IX.

²⁰ The letter to Cecil is in H. Robinson (ed.), *Zurich Letters* (Cambridge: Parker Society/Cambridge University Press, 1845), pp. 34-36.

Elizabeth's first Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker, Strype records that shortly before his death in 1564 Calvin wrote to Parker declaring

how he rejoiced in the happiness of England, and that God had raised up so gracious a Queen, to be instrumental in propagating the true faith of Jesus Christ by restoring the Gospel, and expelling idolatry, together with the Bishop of Rome's usurped power. And then made a serious motion of uniting Protestants together, [as he had done before in King Edward's reign.] He entreated the Archbishop to prevail with her Majesty to summon a general assembly of all the Protestant Clergy, where so ever dispersed; and that a set form and method [i. e. of public service], and government of the Church might be established, not only within her dominions, but also among all the Reformed and Evangelic Churches abroad.²¹

Strype goes on to record that this suggestion was generally well received, although with Elizabeth and her council re-iterating the Church of England's commitment to episcopacy, but that any action on the proposal was brought to an end by the news of Calvin's death:

This was a noble offer, and the Archbishop soon acquainted the Queen's Council with it. And they took it into consideration, and desired his Grace to thank Calvin; and to let him know they liked his proposals, which were fair and desirable: yet, as to the government of the Church, to signify to him, that the Church of England would still retain her episcopacy; but not as from Pope Gregory, who sent over Augustine the monk hither, but from Joseph of Arimathea; as appeared by Gildas, printed first anno 1525. in the reign of King Henry VIII.; and so far agreeing to Eleutherius, sometime Bishop of Rome, who acknowledged Lucius, King of Britain, Christ's Vicar within his own dominions. All this being before Rome usurped over princes: yet also renouncing the Romish manner, way, and ceremonies of episcopacy, which were either contrary to God's glory, or the English monarchy. This was a great work, and created serious thoughts in the Archbishop's mind, for the framing a proper method to set it on foot. But he had considered but a little while of these matters, when news arrived at Court that Calvin was dead.²²

Although Calvin's death brought to an end his proposal for the establishment of Protestant unity, attempts were subsequently made during Elizabeth's reign

²¹) J. Strype, *The Life and Acts of Matthew Parker*, Vol I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1821), pp. 138-139. 'Public service' here means what we would call 'liturgy.'

²²) *Ibid.*, p. 139.

to try to bring the Church of England into line with the Reformed churches abroad, and particularly the Church of Geneva. These efforts can be grouped under two headings, ministry and liturgy and the doctrine of predestination.

Ministry and Liturgy

As already indicated, the Genevan model of ministerial order and liturgy, which had also been adopted into the Church of Scotland due to the work of John Knox, came to be seen by those on the radical wing of the Elizabethan Puritan movement as one which the Church of England should follow.

After the accession of Elizabeth I the Church of England retained the traditional three fold order of bishops, priests and deacons and a slightly amended form of the 1552 Prayer Book. By the 1570s those on the radical wing of the Puritan movement, influenced by Beza, had come to believe that both of these needed to be replaced in order for the remaining ‘popish abuses’ to be removed from the English Church. In 1570, for example, the leading Puritan theologian Thomas Cartwright, who, it is said, ‘infected the minds of the scholars of the younger sort with mighty prejudices against the episcopal government and liturgy established in the reformation of the Church,’²³ gave a series of lectures on Acts in Cambridge in which he argued that

The certain and unchangeable form of Church government commanded in the Scriptures was ... the Presbyterian system. Thus the names and functions of Archbishops and Bishops should be suppressed; the Church should rid itself of ecclesiastical chancellors and other such officials; ministers should be in charge of one congregation, and no more, and they should reside there; ministers should be elected by the congregation, not created by the Bishop.²⁴

The attempts by the Puritan radicals to achieve the changes in ministerial order and liturgy they believed were needed took two forms.

First, they attempted to achieve change by Parliamentary action. In 1571 a bill was introduced into Parliament that would have allowed Church of England ministers to alter the Prayer Book or use the liturgies of the Dutch or French Reformed Churches.

²³ J. Strype, *The Life and Acts of John Whitgift DD*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1822), p. 38.

²⁴ H.C. Porter, *Reform and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), p. 140.

In 1572 and 1573 the *First and Second Admonitions to Parliament* were published, criticizing the ministry and liturgy of the English Church and calling for their replacement with a pattern of ministry and liturgy on the Genevan model.²⁵ In 1584–5 Peter Turner introduced a bill into Parliament which would have replaced the Prayer Book with an adaptation of Knox's Genevan liturgy, known as the *Waldergrave Liturgy* after its printer Robert Waldergrave, and 'further proposed to erect Presbyterianism, committing the government of the Church to pastors and elders, acting through congregational consistories and assemblies of the ministers and elders of each shire.'²⁶ Finally, in 1587 Sir Anthony Cope presented a two clause bill to Parliament. The preamble declared that 'Christ had committed the guidance of his Church to pastors, teachers and elders, and had ordained synods and councils, national and provincial.'²⁷ The first clause provided that the *Middleburg Liturgy*, a revised version of the *Waldergrave Liturgy*, should 'be authorized, put in use and practised' and the second clause abolished all existing laws touching on Ecclesiastical Government (with the idea being that a Presbyterian system would be introduced in their place).²⁸

Secondly, from 1572 onwards they also established an underground presbyteral system. This functioned as a parallel church alongside the official structures of the Church of England and was organized on the Genevan Presbyterian model as expounded by the Puritan theologian Walter Travers in his *Full and Plain Declaration of Ecclesiastical Discipline* of 1574, and in his *Book of Discipline* of 1586. There is also evidence that at least some of those involved in this parallel church used the *Waldergrave* or *Middleburg* liturgies for their services.²⁹

These efforts to introduce the Genevan discipline into the Church of England came to nothing. The Parliamentary bills were either voted down or quashed by Elizabeth I and the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift, took strong and effective disciplinary action, particularly through the Court of High Commission, against those Puritan ministers who were seeking to subvert the exiting ecclesiastical order.

²⁵ For the *Admonitions* see W. H. Frere, *Protestant Manifestoes* (London: SPCK, 1954).

²⁶ P. Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 286.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 307.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30. For the *Middleburg Liturgy* see Thompson, *op. cit.*, ch X.

²⁹ For details see *ibid.* pp. 131–159 and 272–371.

It is also important to note the point made by Judith Maltby in her study *Prayer Book and People* that by the end of the sixteenth century a widespread popular attachment to the Prayer Book seems to have developed in the Church of England at large.³⁰ This helps to explain further why the radical Puritan viewpoint did not ultimately prevail.

The arguments of the Puritan radicals were also challenged theologically by Whitgift in his *Answer to the Admonition* and *Defence of the Answer to the Admonition* and by Richard Hooker in his *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. Whitgift provided a point by point refutation of the Puritan proposals, while Hooker took a more architectonic approach, contending that a proper understanding of the nature of divine law refuted the Puritan argument for the 'regulative' principle that Scripture provided a detailed blueprint for every aspect of individual and corporate Christian behaviour.

It is worth noting that Whitgift in particular regularly cites Calvin to support his case, thus demonstrating the centrality of the appeal to Calvin for the theology of the Puritans and probably also the respect that conforming theologians such as Whitgift had for Calvin's thought. For example, Whitgift counters the Puritan appeal to the first chapter of The Acts of the Apostles in relation to the appointment of ministers by noting: 'M. Calvin in his Institutions saith plainly, that out of this place of the Acts and example there can be no certain rule gathered of electing and choosing ministers; for, as that ministry was extraordinary, so was the calling also.'³¹

The failure of these attempts by the radical Puritans to introduce the discipline of Geneva into the Church of England led some of them to bide their time waiting for a better day, but it led others to leave the Church of England and, alongside other radical Protestant groups that had never accepted the Elizabethan settlement of religion, they formed separate churches free of control by the bishops and the crown. These churches, which became the origins of the Congregationalist and Baptist traditions in English Christianity, tended to adopt a Congregationalist rather than a Presbyterian polity and to practice extempore worship rather than follow a set liturgy in the Genevan tradition.³²

³⁰ J. Maltby, *Prayer Book and People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

³¹ J. Ayre (ed.), *The Works of John Whitgift DD*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Parker Society/Cambridge University Press, 1851), p. 296. The Calvin reference is to *Institutes*, Bk IV, ch. iii.13.

³² For the Separatists and their worship see Davies, *op. cit.*, ch. VII.

The doctrine of predestination

After the accession of Elizabeth I the Church of England continued to uphold the approach to predestination that it took during the reign of Edward VI. The teaching of the *First Book of Homilies* remained unchanged and those who defended and expounded the teaching of the Church of England, such as John Jewel in his *Apology for the Church of England* or Alexander Nowell in his *Catechism*, either did not mention predestination at all (in the case of Jewel), or put forward a doctrine of single predestination combined with an insistence that it is those who remain ‘steadfast, stable and constant’ in their faith who constitute the elect (in the case of Nowell).³³

When the *Thirty Nine Articles* were finally authorized as the doctrinal standard of the Elizabethan Church in 1571 they took the same attitude to predestination and the exercise of the human will as had the *Forty Two Articles* before them. Article XVII continued to teach only predestination to life and the addition of the words ‘in Christ’ to the word ‘chosen’ in the first paragraph shifted the emphasis from the election of particular individuals to the election of Christ and therefore of all those who belong to him. Article XVI (the renumbered Article XV from the earlier articles) continued to assert the possibility of departing from grace and although Article X of the earlier articles was dropped, its emphasis on the freedom of the human will was reflected in the statement in Article X of the new articles that God’s grace works ‘with us’ when we have the will to do what God requires (Article IX of the previous articles had said it worked ‘in us’).

By contrast, towards the end of the sixteenth century there was, in academic circles at least, an increasingly widespread stress on the Calvinist doctrines of double predestination, irresistible grace and the perseverance of the saints. For example, these doctrines were expressed, with great force and clarity in the bestselling work *A Golden Chaine* published by the Cambridge theologian William Perkins in 1591.³⁴ Perkins’ work was highly indebted to the theology of Theodore Beza and this has raised the question of how much the ‘Calvinist’ theology put forward by theologians such as Perkins was influenced

³³ G. E. Corrie (ed.), *Nowell’s Catechism* (Cambridge: Parker Society/Cambridge University Press, 1853), p. 171, Nowell’s single predestinarian approach is particularly striking given that his catechism is heavily dependent on the work of Calvin.

³⁴ Reprinted in I. Breward (ed.), *The Work of William Perkins* (Abingdon: Sutton Courtenay, 1970).

by Calvin and how much by Beza, given the differences between Calvin and Beza on issues such as whether predestination should be regarded as the basic organizing principle of theology, whether Christ died for all or only for the elect and the grounds for Christian assurance.³⁵ What seems clear, however, is that Beza's teaching on double predestination, irresistible grace and perseverance of the saints was basically the same as that of Calvin and that the agreement between them makes it legitimate to talk about a 'Calvinist' theology in the same way as the basic agreement between Luther and Melancthon makes it legitimate to talk about a 'Lutheran' theology in spite of the differences between their theologies.

As Peter White notes, this increasing stress on a Calvinist doctrine of predestination meant that 'the doctrine of predestination began to harden into a Puritan grievance' in the 1580s, with Puritans complaining about what they saw as the deficiencies of the *Thirty Nine Articles* and the *Book of Common Prayer*:

In 1584, for example, Puritans complained of both Article XVI, asking 'whether it be not dangerous to say; a man may fall from grace?' and of Article XVII, 'that maketh no mention of reprobation.' Some of them objected that the Book of Common Prayer tended to favour 'the error of Origen, that all men shall be saved'. Another Puritan complaint of the same year included Article XVI among those which were in part 'untrue' and 'directly contrary to these places of Scripture; John 6:37, 3:9, 2:19, Jer. 32:39.' On Article XVII it was objected that without reprobation the doctrine of predestination could not be taught soundly according to the Scriptures, much less 'take away the dissensions of opinions and confirm the consent of true religion concerning this point of doctrine when as the chiefest and hardest point of controversy concerning this article not only with the papists but some others also of ourselves consisteth of that part whereof they have never a word.' At the same time the Book of Common Prayer, it was argued, ought to be purged of prayers like the last collect for Good Friday, which asked for mercy upon all Jews, Turks and Infidels and heretics that their ignorance and hardness of heart might be taken away, and the petition 'that it may please thee to have mercy on all men' in the Litany. Among prayers which were said to be 'against the eternal predestination and diverse workings of God were that for the third Sunday after Easter, with its petition for 'all them that are admitted into the fellowship of

³⁵ For the view that there were significant differences between Calvin and Beza on these topics see R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). For the opposite position see P. Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982).

Christ's religion' and its implication that God was willing to show all that were in error the light of his truth in order that they might return and even, perhaps, repent.³⁶

However, this growing emphasis on a Calvinist view of predestination also led to a counter-reaction with theologians who dissented from it becoming willing to criticize publicly Calvin's predestinarian teaching. The combination of these two factors eventually led to the publication of the *Lambeth Articles* of 1595.

In April 1595 William Barrett of Caius College Cambridge preached a sermon in which he attacked the Calvinist doctrines of the indefectibility of grace, Christian assurance and reprobation and made a personal attack on Calvin, Beza and other Reformed theologians for good measure. This sermon provoked a great furore and led a group of Calvinist Cambridge theologians led by the Regius Professor of Divinity, William Whitaker, to draw up the *Lambeth Articles* in consultation with Archbishop Whitgift in order to try to establish the limits of Church of England orthodoxy in a way that would exclude the views of people like Barrett.

The *Lambeth Articles* in their final form run as follows:

1. From eternity God has predestined some men to life and condemned others to death.
2. The moving or efficient cause of predestination to life is not the foresight of faith or of perseverance, or of good works, or of anything inherent in the persons predestined, but only the will of God's good pleasure.
3. There is a predetermined and fixed number of predestinate which cannot be increased or diminished.
4. Those not predestined to salvation will necessarily be condemned because of their sins.
5. A true, living and justifying faith, which the Holy Spirit sanctifies, cannot be extinguished, nor can it fall away or disappear in the elect, either finally or totally.
6. The true believer, i.e. one who possesses justifying faith is certain, by the full assurance of faith, of the forgiveness of sins and of eternal salvation through Christ.
7. Saving grace is not granted, communicated or given to all men, so that they might be saved by it if they wish.

³⁶ White, op. cit., pp. 96-97.

8. No one can come to Christ unless it is given to him (to come), and unless the Father draws him. And not all men are drawn by the Father to come to the Son.
9. It is not placed in the will or power of any and every man to be saved.³⁷

It has been argued by Victoria Miller, Peter White and others that the final form of the *Lambeth Articles*, as agreed by Archbishop Whitgift and by the Archbishop of York, Matthew Hutton, was intended to leave room for a variety of opinions in that the articles can be seen as allowing the position that while the saved are predestined to life purely through God's good pleasure, the lost are damned from eternity because God has foreseen (rather than actively willed) their rejection of the Gospel, and also the belief that the non elect can possess, albeit temporarily, justifying faith.³⁸

However, this is not the *prima facie* meaning of the articles and is certainly not how they were read by Whitaker and his fellow Calvinists. They saw the articles as vindicating their Calvinist position.

When Queen Elizabeth I learned about the existence of the *Lambeth Articles* she intervened personally to prevent their circulation. As Miller notes, drawing on Strype's life of Whitgift:

She thought predestination 'a matter tender and dangerous to weak and ignorant minds.' She was also annoyed at Whitgift's participation in a synod of sorts called without her authorization, and she characteristically wanted to avoid controversy over doctrinal matters, even at the universities. Whitgift believed that Queen Elizabeth 'was persuaded of the truth of the propositions, but did think it utterly unfit that the same should any ways be publicly dealt with, either in sermons, or disputations.'³⁹

Furthermore, the production of the *Lambeth Articles* did not, as Whitaker and his supporters had hoped, stop people teaching non-Calvinist beliefs. In January 1596, for example, the Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, Peter Baro, preached a sermon in which he taught that God's antecedent will is that all should be saved, but that the reprobate are lost

³⁷ Text in G. Bray, *Documents of the English Reformation* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1994), pp. 399–400.

³⁸ V.C. Miller, *The Lambeth Articles* (Oxford: Latimer House, 1994), pp. 50–53; White, *op. cit.*, pp. 107–10.

³⁹ Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

because of God's consequent will to punish those who reject the offer of grace. He appealed in support to the teaching of Article XXXI of the *Thirty Nine Articles* that Christ's died 'for all the sins of the whole world' and the teaching of Article XVII about the general nature of God's promises given to us in Holy Scripture. There may have been a Calvinist majority amongst theologians in England at the end of the sixteenth century, but there certainly was not a Calvinist consensus.⁴⁰

5. The Continuing Reformation under James I and Charles I (1603-1649)

The controversies about Church ministry, liturgy and predestination that had developed during the reign of Elizabeth I continued unabated into the next century.

During the reigns of James I and Charles I there continued to be many on the Puritan wing of the Church who wanted a radical reform of the ministry and liturgy of the Church of England along Genevan lines. However, James I made it clear at the Hampton Court Conference of 1604 between the bishops and representatives of the Puritans that all he would allow would be minor changes to the *Book of Common Prayer*.⁴¹ During his reign and most of that of his son adherence to an episcopal pattern of church government and the exclusive use of the Prayer Book liturgy were rigorously enforced on the basis of the Canons introduced in 1604 which threatened with excommunication those who impugned either the 'rites and ceremonies' of the Church of England or 'the government of the Church of England by archbishops, bishops etc'⁴² and

⁴⁰ In his article on 'Calvin and the British Isles' in H. J. Selderhuis (ed.), *The Calvin Handbook* (Grand Rapids/ Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2008) Ian Hazlett declares that 'the Elizabethan Church is often designated as Calvinist, in substance if not in form, in general doctrine if not in all practice' (p. 123). However, he produces no evidence to support this claim other than the fact that Calvin's books sold well in England in the latter years of the sixteenth century. However, merely noting the number of Calvin's books sold does not prove 'the supremacy of Calvin's thought in Elizabethan religious thinking' (p. 123). We have to look for actual evidence that people's theology and practice was shaped by Calvin's work and if we do this we find that his thought was influential, but by no means dominant.

⁴¹ For the Hampton Court Conference see E. Cardwell, *A History of the Conferences and Other Proceedings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1859), chs. III-IV.

⁴² Canons 6 and 7 in G. Bray (ed.), *The Anglican Canons 1529-1947* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press/Church of England Record Society, 1998), pp. 273-275.

which enforced subscription to a declaration that the *Book of Common Prayer* and of *Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons* was ‘agreeable to the word of God’ and that in ‘public prayer and administration of the sacraments’ ministers would ‘use the form in the said book prescribed and no other.’⁴³

At the Hampton Court Conference James also rejected Puritan pleas for an amendment of Article XVI so that it would acknowledge that the elect could ‘neither totally nor finally’ fall from grace and the addition of the *Lambeth Articles* to the *Thirty Nine Articles*. The un-amended teaching of *The Thirty Nine Articles* remained the normative Church of England position with regard to predestination and the 1604 Canons required subscription to this teaching as agreeable with the word of God and threatened excommunication to anyone who said that it was not.⁴⁴

The royal declaration prefixed to the *Thirty Nine Articles* by Charles I in 1628 underlined the normative status of the Articles. It stated that the Articles ‘do contain the true doctrine of the Church of England agreeable to God’s Word: which we do therefore ratify and confirm, requiring all our loving subjects to continue in the uniform profession thereof, and prohibiting the least difference from the said Articles.’

The declaration went to insist that doctrinal disputes should be

...shut up in God’s promises, as they be generally set forth in the holy Scriptures, and the general meaning of the Articles of the Church of England according to them. And that no man hereafter shall either print or preach, to draw the Article aside any way, but shall submit to in the plain and full meaning thereof: and shall not put his own sense or comment to be the meaning of the Article, but shall take it in the literal and grammatical sense.

Although it is not specifically stated, what the declaration is addressing is disputes about predestination. That this is the case is indicated by the reference to ‘God’s promises, as they be generally set forth to us in the holy Scriptures’, which is a quotation from Article XVII. The fact that the declaration is concerned with disputes about predestination explains why reference is made to ‘the Article’, the article in question being Article XVII.

⁴³ Canon 36, in *ibid.*, p. 321. The rigorous enforcement of conformity to the discipline of the Church of England was what led the Pilgrim Fathers to move to Holland in 1609 and then to America in 1620.

⁴⁴ Canons 36 and 5 in *ibid.*, pp. 273 and 321.

Charles I felt it necessary to prefix the declaration to the Articles because, as we have already noted, the doctrinal disputes relating to Calvin and Beza's teaching about predestination that had begun in the reign of Elizabeth I continued in the reigns of James I and Charles I. These disputes were part of a wider debate about where the Church of England stood in relation to the Roman Catholic Church on the one hand and to the Reformed and Lutheran traditions on the other, with support for Calvinism being associated with an emphasis on the Church of England's being part of an international Reformed community and opposition to Calvinism being linked to a view of the Church of England as being part of a wider visible Church to which the Lutheran churches and the Church of Rome also belonged.⁴⁵

It has been suggested by some historians that these disputes about predestination led to a Calvinist consensus in the Church of England which existed at the end of Elizabeth I's reign and the beginning of James I's being overthrown by the growth of anti-Calvinist views of predestination (referred to at the time and subsequently as 'Arminianism') which became dominant in the higher echelons of the Church and at court from the 1620s onwards.⁴⁶ However, research by White and others has called this suggestion into question for two reasons.

The first reason is that it does not appear that there was ever a 'Calvinist consensus' in the Church of England. As we have already noted, such a consensus did not exist at the end of Elizabeth I's reign and there is no evidence that it developed during the reign of James I. During his reign there continued to be a range of views in the Church of England on the subject of predestination with neither Calvinist nor Arminian views predominating.

It has sometimes been suggested that the presence of an English delegation at the Synod of Dort 1618-19 shows that the Church of England supported the Calvinist doctrines agreed at this Synod. In reality the English delegates at the Synod seem to have argued against hard line Calvinist views and in favour of positions on which there was a greater degree of pan-Protestant agreement and in any event they never signed up to the doctrinal positions eventually

⁴⁵ For this latter point see A. Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant thought 1600-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁴⁶ For this suggestion see Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). The use of the term Arminian in this context does not mean that all those to whom it is applied were followers of the teaching of the Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius. The term was used to refer to anti-Calvinists in general with the polemical overtone that they were crypto-papists and semi-pelagians.

agreed at Dort (the so called ‘five points of Calvinism’) because they did not have the authority to do so.⁴⁷

The second reason is that there is no evidence that Arminian views became predominant during the reign of Charles I. White has convincingly argued that the royal declaration of 1628 which has sometimes been taken as a royal attempt to suppress Calvinist teaching was in fact Charles’ attempt to reign in Arminianism by preventing Arminians glossing Article XVII in line with their theology⁴⁸ and he has also shown that during most of Charles reign ‘official policy intended neither to outlaw Calvinism nor to propagate Arminianism.’⁴⁹ The overall policy of both the king and the leaders of the Church, such as Archbishop William Laud, was to calm controversy about predestination and to allow both Calvinists and Arminians to express their views provided that in so doing they did not cause undue dissension or reject or distort the Church of England’s official teaching.

Although the traditional polity and doctrine of the Church of England thus remained unchanged, the established order in the Church became increasingly unpopular because of its association with the personal rule of Charles I from 1629-1640 and because of the harsh treatment handed out by the bishops, and especially Archbishop Laud, to opponents of the Church such as Prynne, and from 1637 onwards the Church’s polity and doctrine were altered rapidly and radically.⁵⁰

Charles I’s attempt to impose a new Prayer Book on the Scots in 1637 led to war between England and Scotland. This forced Charles to recall Parliament in 1640 and this eventually led to the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642. This in turn gave the Presbyterian majority in Parliament the opportunity to abolish episcopacy, the Prayer Book and the Articles and this they duly did. They then replaced them with the following, which were agreed by the Westminster Assembly, which met from 1643-1649 to reform the Church of England and

⁴⁷ For details see White, *op. cit.*, ch. 9. For the documentary evidence relating to the British delegation at the Synod of Dort see A. Milton (ed.), *The British Delegation at the Synod of Dort 1613-19*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press/Church of England Record Society, 2005).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 250-252.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 307. Hazlett, *art. cit.* p. 123, is therefore mistaken when he talks about ‘the adoption of anti-Calvinist soteriological ideas by the monarchy’ after the 1620s.

⁵⁰ Contrary to the argument of the perceived anti-Calvinism of many of the bishops and other influential Churchmen does not seem to have been an important factor in the Church’s unpopularity. See White, *op. cit.*, pp. 307-12.

to try to bring about a united church in England (which then included Wales), Scotland and Ireland:

1. *The Form of Presbyterian Church Government*, a Presbyterian polity in line with that in place in Scotland involving the Genevan fourfold pattern of ministry and local presbyteries and regional and national synods.⁵¹

2. *The Directory of Public Worship*. This was a compromise liturgy that drew on the Genevan liturgical tradition, but also made provision for those who wanted extempore worship by giving directions for the kind of things that the minister should say rather than the actual words he should use.⁵²

3. *The Westminster Confession* and the *Westminster Longer and Shorter Catechisms*. These were statements of doctrine that put forward an uncompromisingly Calvinist theology. For example, in contrast with Article XVII the *Westminster Confession* teaches double predestination: ‘By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life and others foreordained to everlasting death.’⁵³ It also teaches, in contrast to Article XVI, that there is no possibility of the elect falling from grace: ‘They whom God has accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.’⁵⁴ It further holds, in contrast to Article XXXI, that Christ died only for the elect:

The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself, which He through the eternal Spirit once offered up to God, hath fully satisfied the justice of His Father, and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given for him.⁵⁵

The fact that in the *Westminster Confession* the decree of predestination is placed before the doctrine of creation and the fact that it teaches limited atonement indicates that this is Calvin as interpreted by Beza. Nevertheless, it is Calvin’s teaching about predestination that is at the root of what makes the doctrinal statements of the Westminster assembly distinctive.

⁵¹ The text of the *Form of Presbyterian Church Government* can be found at www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_standards/index.html?mainframe=/documents/wcf_standards/p395-form_presby_gov.html.

⁵² For the *Directory* see Thompson, op. cit., ch. XI.

⁵³ *Westminster Confession* 3:3. Text in Bray, op. cit., p. 490.

⁵⁴ *Westminster Confession* 17:1. Text in *ibid.*, p. 499.

⁵⁵ *Westminster Confession* 8:5. Text in *ibid.*, p. 494.

6. The end of the story, the Commonwealth and Restoration (1650-1662)

If the story of the English Reformation had ended at that point it might seem that its conclusion was the triumph in the Church of England of the influence of Calvin, or of the influence of Calvin as mediated by Beza. However, the story did not end at that point. Many who opposed the king and the bishops were equally opposed to Calvinist Presbyterianism and had no desire to see the one replaced by the other. Since they had strong support from the triumphant New Model Army and its leader Oliver Cromwell their views mattered and the eventual result was that during the Commonwealth period from 1649-1660, there was what Maltby has called ‘an experiment with privatization and free market Christianity.’⁵⁶ Under the terms of the Instrument of Government of 1653: ‘people were not to be compelled to any public profession of their faith, binding them to any particular church, but were to be free to go where they liked and worship in the way that suited them best,’⁵⁷ the only exceptions being ‘popery’ and ‘prelacy’ (commitment to episcopacy and the Prayer Book). The result of this freedom of belief and worship was that the Westminster Assembly’s vision of a single, united, Presbyterian and Calvinist Church of England united constitutionally, liturgically and doctrinally with the Church of Scotland never came to pass. Across the country as a whole Presbyterian Calvinism was never popular enough during the Commonwealth for this to happen.

At the other end of the religious and political spectrum from the radical Protestants of the New Model Army were those who remained faithful to the bishops, the Prayer Book and the *Thirty Nine Articles*. They regarded King Charles I and Archbishop Laud as martyrs for the Catholic faith and practice of the Church of England and they looked for the day when the Church of England and the monarchy would be restored together. When Charles II was eventually restored in 1660 those who felt this way became dominant in both Church and State, and the Commonwealth’s free market approach to religion came to an end. With some minor changes to the Prayer Book and the Ordinal attached to it, the Church of England was restored to what it had been prior to the Civil War and those ministers who could not accept this (including

⁵⁶) Maltby, op. cit., p. 234.

⁵⁷) Moorman, op. cit., p. 244

those who were Presbyterian Calvinists) were expelled from their livings in the Great Ejection of 1662.

These events marked the definitive end of the attempt to introduce a Genevan style ministry and liturgy into the Church of England and from the end of the seventeenth century Calvinist doctrine also began to die out both in the Church of England and amongst those who were now outside it. This was because Calvinism had become associated with Puritanism and therefore political sedition, because High Church Anglicans found Calvinism incompatible with their commitment to the teaching of the Fathers, and because for many both inside and outside the Church of England Calvinism was seen as incompatible with the growing emphasis on the reasonable nature of religion and the importance of human moral effort in doing what God requires.

Those who were forced out of the Church of England and who in theory retained a Presbyterian view of church order lacked the ability to maintain a Presbyterian polity in practice and as a result became *de facto* Congregationalists. During the eighteenth century the majority of the churches that had been Presbyterian in tradition eventually became explicitly Congregationalist, but a lack of effective disciplinary constraints against doctrinal innovation also led a substantial minority of them to become Unitarian.

However, the story of the influence of Calvinism in English Christianity does not end there. Calvinism came back in a big way with the Evangelical revival in the middle of the eighteenth century and has remained an important part of the Evangelical tradition within English Christianity ever since.

7. Why does the story matter?

That, then, is the story of the influence of John Calvin on the English Reformation. If we ask why this story still matters the answer is that it matters for two reasons.

First, it matters ecumenically because the events I have described in this paper continue to shape the belief and practice of churches in England and as such are still the cause of divisions between the churches that have not yet been overcome. In order to overcome these divisions we have to understand them and in order to understand them we have to understand the story of where they originally came from.

Secondly, it matters because God matters. That is to say, there is a tendency amongst mainstream Protestants (and sometimes among Christians of other traditions as well) to assume that matters of church order and liturgy are

matters which human beings are free to arrange as suits them best for reasons of tradition, taste, or potential benefit to mission. There is also an even more widespread tendency to think that salvation is a result of our choosing to become followers of Jesus Christ. The debates of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries surveyed in this paper challenge both these notions and put God back in the centre of the picture. They insist that we have to ask whether God has laid down the sort of polity he wants his Church to have and, if so, what this polity is. They also insist that if we are to be loyal to biblical teaching we need to accept that the free and sovereign grace of God is the source of our salvation and that, given that this is the case, we need to think hard about where human free will fits into the picture and how we are to make sense of the fact that some people reject the Gospel.

These are issues that really matter and to study the debates of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is to be reminded that they matter.

8. Postscript: John Strype on Calvin and episcopacy

In his life of Archbishop Parker, John Strype gives the following account of Calvin's attitude to episcopacy and an abortive overture made by Calvin, Bullinger and others to the Church of England in the reign of Edward VI:

And how Calvin stood affected in the said point of episcopacy, and how readily and gladly he and other heads of the Reformed Churches would have received it, is evident enough from his writings and epistles. In his book *Of the Necessity of reforming the Church*, he hath these words: *Talem nobis hierarchiam exhibeant, &c.* 'Let them give us such an hierarchy, in which Bishops may be so above the rest, as they refuse not to be under Christ, and depend upon him as their only Head; that they maintain a brotherly society, &c. If there be any that do not behave themselves with all reverence and obedience towards them, there is no anathema, but I confess them worthy of it.'

But especially his opinion of episcopacy is manifest from a letter he and Bullinger, and others, learned men of that sort, wrote anno 1549 to King Edward VI. offering to make him their Defender, and to have Bishops in their Churches for better unity and concord among them: as may be seen in – Archbishop Cranmer's Memorials; and likewise by a writing of Archbishop Abbot, found among the MSS. of Archbishop Usher: which, for the remarkableness of it, and the mention of Archbishop Parker's papers, I shall here set down.

Archbishop Parker's account thereof found in his papers by Archbishop Abbot 'Perusing some papers of our predecessor Matthew Parker, we find that John Calvin, and others of the Protestant churches of Germany and elsewhere, would have had episcopacy, if permitted: but could not upon several accounts, partly fearing the other princes of the Roman Catholic faith would have joined with the Emperor and the rest of the Popish Bishops, to have depressed the same; partly being newly reformed, and not settled, they had not sufficient wealth to support episcopacy, by reason of their daily persecutions. Another, and a main cause was, they would not have any Popish hands laid over their Clergy. And whereas John Calvin had sent a letter in King Edward the VIth's reign, to have conferred with the Clergy of England about some things to this effect, two Bishops, viz. Gardiner and Boner, intercepted the same: whereby Mr. Calvin's offerture perished. And he received an answer, as if it had been from the reformed Divines of those times; wherein they checked him, and slighted his proposals: from which time John Calvin and the Church of England were at variance in several points; which otherwise through God's mercy had been qualified, if those papers of his proposals had been discovered unto the Queen's Majesty during John Calvin's life. But being not discovered until or about the sixth year of her Majesty's reign, her Majesty much lamented they were not found sooner: which she expressed before her Council at the same time, in the presence of her great friends, Sir Henry Sidney, and Sir William Cecil.'⁵⁸

If this account is accurate it raises one of the great 'what ifs' of the history of the Reformation. What if the letter had not been intercepted and the Reformed churches had received episcopacy from the Church of England? How would this have affected the subsequent development of European Protestant Christianity?

⁵⁸) Strype, *Life of Parker*, pp. 139-40.



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