

**The Problem of Church Government and Emergent
Presbyterianism in the Long Parliament, 1640 – 1643**

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June 2021

Abstract

The early years of the Long Parliament saw MPs seized with the issue of church government. What began as an attack on the worst excesses of the Laudian church quickly escalated into a wholesale assault on episcopacy itself. Taking the opportunity to 'reform the reformation' MPs decided to abolish episcopacy, and in 1643 they called in the experts to advise them on what form of church government should take its place. Two years later the Westminster Assembly put forward a presbyterian system of church government which the following year parliament would set out to erect with the Erastian modifications parliament desired.

The reasons why MPs chose presbyterianism have been little studied, many historians accepting the traditional view that it was as a result of pressure from the Scots. Through an examination of parliamentary debates in the years 1640 – 1643 this thesis will identify and trace an emerging English presbyterian position in the Long Parliament to demonstrate that the MPs' choice was proactive rather than reactive and resulted from religious, political and social ideas distinctive to England.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, university. All sources are acknowledged as references.

Alison Gaines

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The problem of church government and emergent presbyterianism in the Long Parliament, 1640-1643

Introduction

In the summer of 1646, the Long Parliament and the Westminster Assembly reached a compromise on church government that ushered in a presbyterian system for the national church. After almost six years of heated debate in parliament and the country episcopacy had been abolished and presbyterianism preferred to the alternative congregationalism.¹ It is unlikely however that those who took their seats in parliament in November 1640 would have foreseen this outcome. As this thesis will show the historiography reveals little or no support for presbyterianism in the decades leading up to 1640 so why, a mere six years later, did presbyterianism become parliament's polity of choice? How did MPs come to agree a system of church government which Robert Baillie described as being "a strange monster" to the English people, and of which Richard Baxter some years later would say, "Till (1641) ... I never thought what Presbytery or Independency was nor ever spake with a man who seemed to know it"?²

The aim of this thesis is to explain parliament's choice of presbyterianism by tracing its progression from the opening of the Long Parliament in November 1640 to the summer of 1643 when the matter was referred to the Westminster Assembly. In an attempt to better understand the development of parliament's support for presbyterianism this thesis will explore its debates on church government, the alternatives available, the attitudes and intellectual ideas of MPs in respect of the church, and the interest groups and arguments that influenced them. The thesis will argue that the presbyterian impulse of these years had the active support of a majority of members in both houses, that such support was predicated on factors distinct to England's political, social

¹ Episcopacy was formally abolished that October – 'October 1646: An Ordinance for the abolishing of Archbishops and Bishops within the Kingdom of England, and Dominion of Wales, and for settling of their Lands and Possessions upon Trustees, for the use of the Commonwealth', *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660*, originally published by His Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1911, 879-883.

² Robert Baillie, *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie, 1637 – 1662*, ed. David Laing, 3 Vols. (Edinburgh, 1841-42), Vol. 2, 117; Richard Baxter, *A True History of the Councils Enlarged* (London, 1682), 91.

and religious culture rather than on the need to secure Scottish support for the war effort as has traditionally been argued, and that the choice of presbyterianism was entirely rational.³ It will also contend that the years 1640 to 1643 were formative for this purpose and that by the time the question of church government was referred to the Westminster Assembly MPs had a clear idea of what the governance of the English Church should look like.

This study is not directly concerned with the puritan divines or the divisions that existed first with the episcopalians and later between the presbyterian and the independent divines, nor is it concerned with the significance of the religious issue for the political divisions which became particularly obvious in the years 1646-1649. Both areas have received extensive treatment from historians in recent years.⁴ This thesis seeks instead to address gaps in the historiography. It will reconstruct and explain parliament's decision on church government rather than focusing on the divines, and as noted above this thesis will leave the story in the summer of 1643 when, it is argued, the groundwork in parliament had already been laid for the polity that would emerge some three years later.

The 'Erastian presbyterian' compromise between parliament and the Westminster Assembly in 1646 was not, of course, the end of the story. Battles with the congregationalists continued and the question of toleration came to the fore. Eventually the presbyterian system would fail due to the growing strength in parliament of independency backed by the New Model Army, but other factors such as a lack of popular support may have played their part. This failure of the presbyterian system should not be allowed to disguise the importance of the parliamentary debates that led to its introduction, and what they can tell historians about the religiopolitical experience of MPs in the early years of the decade, the methods they used to make decisions once the yoke of royal supremacy was cast off, and the changing ground rules of political life.

³ For historians who argue that presbyterianism was adopted in return for Scottish support see William Shaw, *A History of the English Church during the Civil Wars and under the Commonwealth*, 2 Vols. (London, 1900) and Conrad Russell, *The Fall of the British Monarchies 1637 – 1642* (Oxford, 1991).

⁴ For recent studies on the presbyterian divines see Ann Hughes, *Gangraena and the struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford, 2004) and Elliot Vernon, 'The Sion College Conclave and London Presbyterianism during the English Revolution' (Unpublished PHD Thesis, University of Cambridge, 1999). For studies on the debates between presbyterian and independent divines see Hunter Powell, *The Crisis of British Protestantism, Church power in the Puritan Revolution, 1638-1644* (Manchester, 2015). For events leading up to Prides's Purge in December 1648 see, David Underdown, *Prides Purge, Politics in the Puritan Revolution* (Oxford, 1971).

Chapter Outline

This thesis will deal with the issues by chapters as set out below.

Chapter One of this thesis will study the debates on religion in the early months of the Long Parliament, when almost universal condemnation of the convocation and canons of May 1640 lit the fuse for the heated debates that would follow on how to reform the church. It will discuss the initial calls for root and branch reform and how these were received by MPs.

Chapter Two will move the story forward to the middle of 1641 when, the calls for reform not abating and the attack on episcopacy growing, parliament considered alternative forms of church government. It will ask what alternatives were available, which alternatives were seriously considered by parliament, and what do they tell us about parliament's thinking on church government at the time.

Several presbyterian groupings, the Scots, the City of London, even ordinary members of the public sought to put pressure on parliament to adopt their chosen system of church government but in these early years a cohort of the godly clergy were the best placed to do so. Chapter Three of this thesis will break the chronological narrative and question how effective the clergy were in conveying their message to MPs and how receptive MPs were to their arguments. The chapter will examine the fast sermon programme, religious written polemic and puritan social networks. It will also trace emergent presbyterianism within the clergy.

This thesis will end its study as the Westminster Assembly first sits. Chapter Four will look at how parliament set out to solve the problem of church government by convening a religious assembly. It will explain how those who called for an assembly had high hopes for its success, how parliament picked its members and how parliament decided its agenda. The assembly was parliament's assembly and parliament was the dominant partner in the relationship. Chapter Four will attempt to explain why parliament wanted it this way, and what this tells us about its preferred church polity.

The MPs

The MPs appointed to the Long Parliament in 1640 are the focus of this thesis, the title of Chapter Three notwithstanding. George Yule stresses the increasing emphasis on piety, the influence of godly preachers and theological texts, the growing and firm belief in the Bible as “a book of precedents for the right ordering of life” and the “conversion” of many of the gentry to the cause of reform.⁵ These gentry would form a core of the members appointed to parliament in 1640 he says.⁶ Yule may exaggerate their numbers at the outset, but as civil war drew near and members left to join the King the puritan members were able to seize the initiative. Yule is confident that these puritan MPs would have been familiar with the ecclesiological arguments for the reform of church government. This thesis will study how much weight was afforded to such considerations, in contrast with secular considerations such as the need for church government to provide discipline to maintain social order and the desire to maintain state control. Rather than seeing parliament and its members as passive recipients of the arguments of others, this thesis hopes to show it and them as active players working to lay the ground for the presbyterian polity that would follow.

For the most part this thesis will concentrate on the MPs who sat in the House of Commons. This is not to overlook or downplay the significance of the peers who sat in the House of Lords. In *Radical Parliamentarians* David Como points out that after a large group of the peers had abandoned Westminster to join the King, a small number of peers acquired a disproportionate institutional leverage.⁷ References in this thesis to ‘parliament’ will mean both houses if the context so admits.

This thesis will not discuss the religious beliefs of individual MPs. Although one might see the value of knowing whether an MP was a presbyterian or a congregationalist, the truth is that in the early 1640s most MPs who would be members of the parliamentary party had not yet formed a firm belief in either, and indeed some never would. Historians of the period who do ascribe a denomination to particular MPs are usually applying hindsight, in that the MP

⁵ George Yule, *Puritans in Politics, The Religious Legislation of the Long Parliament 1640 – 1647* (Sutton Courtney Press, 1981), 72-82.

⁶ Yule, *Puritans in Politics*, 80.

⁷ David Como, *Radical Parliamentarians and the English Civil War* (Oxford, 2018), 12.

might, for example, have been a supporter of the presbyterians in the Westminster Assembly, or an elder in a presbyterian classis later in the decade.

Historiographical trends

The strongest historiographical trend to be challenged by this thesis is the established view that the attempt to create a presbyterian national church in England during the 1640s was a short-lived experiment doomed to failure from the start. Historians offer two explanations why this was the case.

The dominant traditional view is that under the undue influence of the Scots the ministers in the Westminster Assembly accepted the Scottish presbyterian position on ecclesiology and parliament adopted it to gain military support in the Civil War. Once the need for Scottish support had passed, so did the presbyterian impulse.⁸ One religious historian claimed that English presbyterianism was a consequence of “dire political necessity” and that it was the atmosphere of Scottish deliverance in the early years of the revolution which led to the willingness to adopt it.⁹ In recent years this view on the role of the Scots has been challenged to varying degrees by several historians. Nicholas Tyacke writes that it was not surprising that the King’s religious opponents in both countries made common cause “but the English were never less than equal partners”.¹⁰ In *The Rise of Puritanism* however he acknowledges a Scottish role, Bishops and prayer book being swept away, “partly under Scottish pressure” he says.¹¹

Others have been more confident in challenging the traditional view. One of Hunter Powell’s recurring themes is the influence of the Scots on English polity, but, he argues, “the Scots were no more the vanguard of presbyterian polity as is commonly believed than the English were acquiescent ecclesiological infants in need of a helping hand”.¹²

The editors of *Insular Christianity* acknowledge that debates persist about how far Scottish pressure propelled or sustained English opposition to the regime of

⁸ Shaw, *A History of the English Church* and Russell, *Fall of the British Monarchies* support this traditional view.

⁹ James Fulton Maclear, ‘The Making of the Lay Tradition’, *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Apr., 1953), 120.

¹⁰ Nicholas Tyacke, ‘The Fortunes of English Puritanism 1603 – 1640’ in Nicholas Tyacke, *Aspects of English Protestantism c.1530 – 1700, 111-131* (Manchester, 2001), 126.

¹¹ Nicholas Tyacke, ‘The ‘Rise of Puritanism’ and the legalising of dissent, 1571-1719’ in Tyacke, *Aspects*, 63.

¹² Powell, *The Crisis of British Protestantism*, 52.

Charles I and the extent to which presbyterianism in England was extracted, or at least expected as the price of the Scottish alliance. They do not express a view, save to say that The Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 “fed into a process” whereby the presbyterian alternative secured legal establishment.¹³

This thesis agrees broadly with the more modern view on the influence of the Scots, but believes that while this rejects the negative narrative surrounding the choice of presbyterianism it fails to offer a positive explanation of why presbyterianism was chosen. This thesis seeks to fill this gap.

A second argument why presbyterianism failed is that the presbyterian polity lacked public support.¹⁴ “The reorganisation, along Presbyterian lines, never really got off the ground” writes John Morrill. “Although it gained majority support in both houses, there was no general support in the country” he adds.¹⁵ Other historians such as Claire Cross argue that congregationalism was at least as likely as presbyterianism to be the nonconformist ecclesiology of choice in the 1620s and 1630s.¹⁶

Recent attempts have been made by historians such as Ann Hughes, Elliot Vernon and Chad Van Dixhoorn to paint a more positive picture of presbyterianism in the 1640s, but these have concentrated on the presbyterian clergy.¹⁷

This thesis cannot argue with the view that parliament’s presbyterian ‘experiment’ for the national church was a failure, but it will argue with the view that it was doomed from the start. Scrutinising the explanations given by Shaw, Russell, Morrill and others it appears that they stem at least in part from a judgement that there was no such thing as ‘English presbyterianism’ in 1640 and thus it had no time to establish itself. It is important therefore to look at what historians have to say about puritanism in the 1620s and 1630s, what

¹³ Robert Armstrong and Tadhg O’Hannrachan, ‘Alternative Establishments? Insular Catholicism and Presbyterianism’ in *Insular Christianity: alternative models of the church in Britain and Ireland c 1570 – 1700*, eds Robert Armstrong and Tadhg O’Hannrachan, 1-27, (Manchester University Press, 2013), 17.

¹⁴ John Morrill, ‘The Church in England’ in *Reactions to the English Civil War 1642 – 1649*, ed. John Morrill, 89-114 (Basingstoke, 1982).

¹⁵ Morrill, ‘The Church in England’, 96, 98.

¹⁶ Claire Cross, *Church and People 1450 – 1660* (Glasgow, 1976) 226-227. Others disagree. George Yule, for example, in *The Independents in the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 1958) 22-23 points out that there were only two independent congregational churches in London in 1642, and very few in the country.

¹⁷ See Hughes, *Gangraena*; Vernon, ‘The Sion College Conclave’, and Chad Van Dixhoorn, ‘Presbyterian ecclesiologies at the Westminster assembly’, in *Church polity and politics in the British Atlantic world, c. 1635-66*, eds. Elliot Vernon and Hunter Powell, 104-129 (Manchester University Press, 2020).

evidence exists of presbyterianism within the puritan networks of this time and what are the problems of trying to identify it. Once a better understanding of the position as it pertained in 1640 has been gained, it is possible to look more positively at MPs' debates in the early 1640s and to understand that for several reasons connected to their own ideas and beliefs presbyterianism presented itself as a sensible choice.

The problem of labels

A difficult consideration for this thesis is the use of the words 'presbyterian' and 'presbyterianism' in writing about mid-seventeenth century religious beliefs. For many years historians have wrestled with the definition of puritanism and although there remain shades of opinion, most are now settled on something like Patrick Collinson's memorable but loose description of puritans as "the hotter sort of Protestants".¹⁸ Distinguished by their zeal from other Calvinist Protestants they formed a sub-group whose focus was on Bible study, prayer, fasting, sermon attendance and strict sabbatarianism.¹⁹ No such settled meaning presents itself for presbyterianism. Historians accept that presbyterians are puritans, Collinson described the Elizabethan presbyterians as the 'intransigent minority of puritan extremists', but not all puritans are presbyterians.²⁰

When contemporaries or historians speak of presbyterians or presbyterianism before the 1640s they may be referring to those who continued to hold to the ideas of the Elizabethan presbyterians whose movement was quashed in the early 1590s or to the Scottish presbyterians whose movement developed piecemeal until it emerged in 1638 with a 'Melvillian' two-Kingdoms solution.²¹ They may even be referring to puritans. There is a tendency to use the term presbyterian loosely as will become apparent from the discussion on early

¹⁸ Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford, 1990; first pub. London, 1967), 27.

¹⁹ John Coffey, 'Puritanism, Evangelicalism and the Evangelical Protestant Tradition in *The Emergence of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities*, eds. Michael A.G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart, 252-77 (Nottingham, Inter-Varsity Press, 2008), 255; and see works cited later in this chapter for further discussion on puritanism in the early Stuart years.

²⁰ Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 467.

²¹ Yule, *Puritans in Politics*, contains a description of the Elizabethan movement at pages 57-59, and the Melvillian two-Kingdoms theology at 90-91. Elliot Vernon comments on the latter in "They agree not in opinion among themselves: two-kingdoms theory, Erastianism and the Westminster assembly debate on church and state, c. 1641-48", in *Church polity and politics in the British Atlantic world, c. 1635-66*, eds. Elliot Vernon and Hunter Powell, 130-154 (Manchester University Press, 2020), 137-139.

Stuart puritanism later in this Introduction. Contemporaries such as Peter Heylin would often not differentiate between presbyterians and puritans.²²

In the 1640s the ideas of the presbyterians, like the puritans before them, diversified even further. As Hunter Powell helpfully demonstrates in his recent work on church power a variety of types of presbyterian emerged in the early 1640s and for ease he labels them; clerical English presbyterians, English presbyterians, Erastian presbyterians and Scottish presbyterians.²³ Furthermore there were, he says, marked and important differences between these groups of presbyterians and within the groups themselves, and he seeks to correct over-simplifications. Powell uses the label 'clerical' to describe those presbyterians who believed that all church power could reside in a synod of elders over multiple churches and not in the local church.²⁴ The clerical presbyterians emerged as a force in the Westminster Assembly and were responsible for the directory for church government sent to parliament in July 1645.²⁵ In parliament an Erastian presbyterian position emerged in opposition to them, the latter successfully imposing its views on the settlement of 1646. This thesis will show that such an outcome was indicated as early as 1641.

It is also necessary to understand the terms 'congregational' and 'independent' but similar difficulties emerge in their use as those in relation to the use of 'presbyterian'. Generally, 'congregational' was the term of self-description preferred by the dissenting brethren and the Massachusetts puritans. They believed that church power was given to and lay with each individual congregation of believers. That congregation was a self-sufficient unit which chose its own ministers and elders responsible for discipline within the congregation. The congregationalists eschewed presbyterianism's hierarchies of interlinked consistories. Unfortunately however, despite their claims to the contrary, the congregational model was markedly similar to that of separatist congregations which sought to separate from the Church of England. 'Independent' had a wider semantic range. It was more loaded and carried a variety of connotations that could include separatist congregations. Usually

²² Anthony Milton, *Laudian and Royalist polemic in Seventeenth Century England: The career and writings of Peter Heylyn* (Manchester, 2007), 93-98, and see later in this chapter.

²³ Powell, *The Crisis of British Protestantism*, 10, 262.

²⁴ Powell, *The Crisis of British Protestantism*, 10.

²⁵ A copy of the directory for church government delivered to both houses of parliament by the Westminster Assembly on 3rd July 1645 can be found in *The Minutes and Papers of the Westminster Assembly, 1643-1652*, Vol. 5, ed. Chad Van Dixhoorn (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012), 204.

those using 'independent' to describe themselves were at the separatist end of the ecclesiological spectrum.²⁶ Having conducted a close study of the minutes of the Westminster Assembly, Van Dixhoorn reports that assembly members respected the dissenting brethren's resistance to the term 'independent' and only rarely employed it as a descriptor of the congregationalist system.²⁷ Other contemporaries were not as respectful, and historians will often use the term 'independent' to describe a congregationalist.

To confuse matters further, the name 'Presbyterian' was given to a political grouping formed in the second half of the decade that supported peace with the King, often to distinguish these politicians from the 'Independents' who did not. Although outside the scope of this thesis, it is important to note the use of the name 'Presbyterian' for those who were strict constitutionalists and upholders of the traditional mixed government of England.²⁸ The religious presbyterians discussed in this thesis were not necessarily political Presbyterians or vice versa.

Finally, on the subject of labels and definitions, the term 'Erastian' is given by Powell to one of the types of presbyterianism and indeed best describes the form of presbyterianism that emerged in 1646. In his essay 'They agree not in opinion amongst themselves' Elliot Vernon discusses the problems with the term which he says emerges in the mid-1640s to describe the claims of those such as the minister Thomas Coleman, the MP John Selden and William Prynne that government of the church should be established by law and the church should not have an independent ecclesiastical jurisdiction.²⁹ In this thesis Erastianism will mean the belief that the secular magistrate, rather than any ecclesiastical body, has the power to determine discipline, and possibly doctrine, for the established church. For the MPs of the 1640s, this meant a version of the Tudor royal supremacy where the 'royal' element became diminished and was replaced by parliament.³⁰

In this thesis, 'presbyterianism' and 'congregationalism' will necessarily be used in a somewhat fluid sense depending upon the time and the context. In

²⁶ This description is taken from John Coffey, 'Brethren or Sectaries? Richard Baxter on the Congregationalists', *The Congregational Lecture 2012*, (London The Congregational Memorial Hall Trust (1978) Ltd, 2012), 7.

²⁷ Van Dixhoorn, *Minutes and Papers*, Vol. 1, 30.

²⁸ Ian Smart, 'Liberty and Authority: the Political Ideas of Presbyterians in England and Scotland during the Seventeenth Century', PhD thesis, University of Strathclyde, 1978, 4.

²⁹ Vernon, 'They agree not in opinion amongst themselves', 130.

³⁰ Vernon, 'They agree not in opinion amongst themselves', 131.

the early 1640s this thesis will be seeking evidence in parliament of marks of religious presbyterianism that could be precursors of any of the types of presbyterianism identified by Powell. It will be assumed that presbyterians will hold to a Calvinistic theology of the authority of the scriptures, grace through faith alone and the sovereignty of God, what will differentiate them for our purpose will be their choice of church polity typified by conciliar rule by groupings of presbyters or elders of equal rank in a hierarchical structure (for example, assembly, classis, synod, general assembly). The thesis will endeavour to respect the wishes of the dissenting brethren and refer to their choice of polity as 'congregational', although given the common usage of the term 'independent' by contemporaries and historians on occasion the term 'independent' may be used, and unless otherwise specified will mean the same thing.

Early Stuart Puritanism

The Jacobean church was not a stable or harmonious body, it was riven with friction and disagreement. Nonetheless, these internal tensions had been contained and the Protestant Church of England established by Elizabeth I had on the whole worked providing a centre ground with wide boundaries within which the great majority of English people were prepared to worship. James I followed a religious policy aimed generally at preserving this 'broad church' and other factors such as a shared hostility to Rome were also powerful forces for unity. The accession of Charles I was to mark the beginning of a gradual shift in religious policy which was to have fateful consequences both for Charles and the country. Charles shared the religious views of a small group of Arminian churchmen such as Archbishop Laud some of whose beliefs were fundamentally at odds with many of their fellow Protestants, and the puritans in particular. Charles' backing for these 'Laudian' churchmen and their innovations raised the religious temper and profoundly alienated large numbers of previously conformist puritans leading ultimately to the Civil War with a religious discord at its heart.

It has for a long time been commonly understood that after Elizabethan presbyterianism had been suppressed in the early 1590's presbyterianism did not re-emerge until the 1640s. William Shaw set the historiographical trend; "There have only been two occasions in the history of English dissent in which puritan clergy have favoured a pure presbyterian system" he wrote in 1900,

“The one was under Elizabeth, the other was during the civil wars. In both cases the movement stands apart from the general stream of puritan protest....”, and most modern historians of puritanism agree.³¹

In his important interpretation of the origins of the English Civil War, ‘Puritanism, Arminianism and counter-revolution’, Nicholas Tyacke argues that there was a Calvinist consensus in the Jacobean period in which nonconformists and “even presbyterians” were never regarded as being totally beyond the pale in the central establishment of the English Church.³² This consensus, Tyacke continues, was blown away by the emergence of Arminianism in the 1630s.

In a later essay Tyacke makes no claim for the existence of presbyterianism but does discuss two potentially interesting proto or ‘presbyterian like’ organisations or groups.³³ One is the Feoffees for Improvements, set up by puritans in the 1620’s to support the preaching ministry and quashed by Laud in the early 1630’s. The other is a grouping of 13 English puritan clergy who were signatories in 1637 to a letter to their New England brethren seeking clarification about elements of church government there, fearing, it appears, their separation from the English Church.³⁴ Tyacke, asking how one should categorise these 13 clergymen, writes: “To call them a synod seems unduly formal, though there are similarities with the puritan conferences of high Elizabethan days“. He concludes however that they look more like refugees from persecution thrown haphazardly together.³⁵

Other historians have put a more positive slant on these 13 clergymen. David Como sees them as a nascent presbyterian grouping.³⁶ Michael Winship has devoted a chapter to them, describing the arguments in the correspondence triggered by this letter and making the point that the English group consisted not only of puritans, generically considered, but within it a “virtual microcosm of the English Presbyterian tradition, past, present and future”.³⁷

³¹ Shaw, *A History of the English Church*, 6.

³² Nicholas Tyacke, ‘Puritanism, Arminianism and counter – revolution’, in Tyacke, *Aspects*, 134.

³³ Tyacke, ‘Fortunes’, 111-131.

³⁴ Tyacke, ‘Fortunes’, 121-125.

³⁵ Tyacke, ‘Fortunes’, 125-126.

³⁶ Como, *Radical Parliamentarians*, 31.

³⁷ Michael Winship, ‘Straining the Bonds of Puritanism: English Presbyterians and Massachusetts Congregationalists Debate Ecclesiology, 1636-1640’, in *Puritan and Catholics in the Trans-Atlantic World 1600-1800*, eds. Crawford Gribben and Scott Spurlock, 89 – 111 (UK, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 90.

Peter Lake doubts the existence of presbyterianism in the 1630's. In his essay, 'Anti-popery, the Structure of a Prejudice', he notes,

Many commentators have observed how misguided, even irrational, were Laudian fears of puritan Calvinism. Certainly Presbyterianism, either as a movement or even an expressed preference was conspicuous by its absence from the Jacobean church.³⁸

According to Anthony Milton, Peter Heylin's works of the 1630's demonstrate these Laudian fears by their constant rebuttal of the puritans.³⁹ Heylin rarely sought to differentiate presbyterians from puritans and so, for example, he taunted Henry Burton (who was to become a leading advocate of independency) with reference to "Travers and Cartwright and the rest of your Predecessors" (Travers and Cartwright were Elizabethan presbyterians).⁴⁰

In his more recent book *The Boxmaker's Revenge*, Lake uses a dispute between Stephen Denison, an "order and orthodoxy obsessed" or "moderate puritan" and John Etherington, a more radical puritan, to achieve a widened sense of what puritanism was in early modern England.⁴¹ He also shows how the puritan underground of the 1620's and 1630's connects to the "ideological cacophony" of the 1640s.⁴²

Lake's book makes no mention of the presence of presbyterianism in the London puritan milieu of the 1620's and 1630's. He does however suggest some crypto or proto-presbyterian beliefs. For example, a panel of divines convened with the tacit agreement of the Bishop of London to decide upon a dispute between George Walker and Anthony Wotton is described by Lake as a crypto-presbyterian exercise, self-regulation akin to a classis.⁴³ In sermon gadding Nehemiah Wallington and other lay puritans are said to have turned to powerful preaching in lieu of the discipline a presbyterian system would afford, while their willingness to challenge and debate with ministers points to a system accepting of lay involvement.⁴⁴ Accordingly, notwithstanding Lake's (in this book implicit) view that presbyterianism was not present in early Stuart

³⁸ Peter Lake, 'Anti Popery: The Structure of a Prejudice' in *The English Civil War*, eds. Richard Cust and Anne Hughes, 181-210 (London, 1997), 193.

³⁹ Milton, *Laudian and Royalist Polemic*, 93-98.

⁴⁰ Milton, *Laudian and Royalist Polemic*, 93.

⁴¹ Peter Lake, *The Boxmaker's Revenge* (Stanford, California, 2001).

⁴² Lake, *The Boxmaker's Revenge*, 410.

⁴³ Lake, *Boxmaker's Revenge*, 226.

⁴⁴ Lake, *Boxmaker's Revenge*, 83.

London, one can see that in 1640 the people of London would have been familiar with the aims and organisation of something similar to presbyterianism, even if it was not yet recognised as 'presbyterian'.

Covering a similar period to *The Boxmaker's Revenge*, David Como's *Blown by the Spirit* broadly agrees with Lake's description of a 'puritan underground' riven by infighting leading to fissure and the origins of a radical puritanism that points the way to the public battles of the 1640s.⁴⁵ His focus is on what would come to be called antinomianism, and the radicals within the pre-civil war puritan community whose theological beliefs on salvation by faith and divine grace served as a "spawning ground" for later forms of sectarian religiosity.⁴⁶ Like Lake, Como does not make any claims for the existence of a presbyterian faction within this puritan milieu, but he does suggest that antinomianism and its ilk arise as a backlash against a legalistic, formalistic, strenuous, duty based piety of 'mainstream' puritanism. Como's argument is that the puritan community of the early Stuart period gave birth to both zealous, Calvinist magistrates and to the anarchic and revolutionary sects of the 1640s and 1650s.⁴⁷ The inference is that it is these zealous Calvinist magistrates who became the presbyterians of the 1640s. This is worthy of further investigation.

Como and Lake's monologues consider the internal divisions generated within the puritan community and contained there until forced into the open by the rise of Arminianism. As Lake points out, "A sense of the internal dynamics of the 'London Puritan underground' or 'Puritan public sphere' before 1640 makes many of the developments of the 1640s far more readily explicable".⁴⁸ This thesis aims to explain how these internal dynamics manifested themselves in and to parliament in the first part of the 1640s and impacted MPs' debates on church government.

Other historians demonstrate puritan continuities by reference to individual puritans and/or local communities. Jaqueline Eales, in her work on the Harleys of Brampton Bryan describes a community of the godly in the Welsh Borders including the Harleys that connects with the centre of government in London.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ David Como, *Blown by the Spirit* (Stanford, 2004).

⁴⁶ Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 23.

⁴⁷ Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 31-32.

⁴⁸ Peter Lake, 'The Historiography of Puritanism', in *Cambridge Collections online* (Cambridge University Press 2008), 364.

⁴⁹ Jaqueline Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads: The Harleys of Brampton Bryan and the outbreak of the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 1990).

John Fielding, through his 2012 edition of *The Diary of Robert Woodford, 1637-1641*, tells a compelling story of the life of a committed puritan who worked, lived and prayed in a thriving Northamptonshire community of puritans.⁵⁰ Ann Hughes' study of Thomas Dugard, a Warwickshire schoolmaster, reveals Dugard's connections to Lord Brooke, and shows how Brooke was instrumental in fostering connections not only between local lay and clerical puritans, but between local puritans and a wider network that included future Long parliamentarians such as Pym himself.⁵¹ These local or family based studies spanning the early Stuart period tell the reader much about the ties of patronage, kinship, community and religious sympathies that bound the puritans together. Such studies show that it was not only a reaction to Arminianism that drove dormant puritans into militancy in the 1640s, it was also a continuing tradition of aspiration to complete the reformation.

None of the authors discussed here make any claim for the existence in this period of a strain of puritanism that they call presbyterian with adherents who could be called presbyterians. As Jaqueline Eales writes in her essay 'A Road to Revolution', "Before 1640.... the difference between 'moderate puritan opinion' 'presbyterianism' and 'Independency' was not so obvious and as has often been stated what united them then was more important than what divided them".⁵² Ann Hughes makes a similar point when discussing how Thomas Edwards was "made" as a presbyterian. In her book *Gangreana* Hughes discusses Edwards' contacts in the 1620s and 1630s with many of the esteemed godly clergy of the day. Hughes notes that the structure of church government was not, before the 1640s, an essential issue amongst this group. It was, she says, "a matter of well-being rather than the very being of essence of a true church".⁵³ Tom Webster also agrees. In his opinion many godly ministers, and probably the majority, regarded church government issues as superfluous, as a divisive waste of time or as questions of a secondary nature, not as significant as matters of doctrine and worship.⁵⁴ Whilst Como and Lake may take a slightly different view than the others on the extent of differences within the puritan community, they would accept that such differences were

⁵⁰ John Fielding, ed. *The Diary of Robert Woodford, 1637-1641* (Cambridge, 2012).

⁵¹ Ann Hughes, 'Thomas Dugard and his Circle in the 1630s – A Parliamentary Puritan Connection?' *Historical Journal* Vol. 29, No.4. (1986), 771-793.

⁵² Jaqueline Eales, 'A Road to Revolution: The Continuity of Puritanism, 159-1642' in , *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700*, eds. Christopher Durston and Jaqueline Eales (New York, 1996),208.

⁵³ Hughes, *Gangreana*,34.

⁵⁴Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1997), 310.

contained within that community and thus were not obvious to the outside world. Lake does (admittedly only as an aside) list “the usual run of presbyterians” as being one of the parties to the debate conducted within this puritan community.⁵⁵ Possibly he is suggesting that there were a small number of people who can be seen as presbyterian, but this does not mean presbyterianism was a distinct movement. Finally, it is notable that Robert Woodford’s diary makes no mention of presbyterianism (nor congregationalism or independency) being discussed within his puritan community. Coming from ‘the horse’s mouth’ some would see this as compelling evidence that presbyterians were not to be found in the puritan communities of late 1630s or early 1640s.

Tyacke, Lake, Como and others are not, however, interested in presbyterianism per se. This is not the focus of their work. Nor is it the focus of Tom Webster’s *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England* but in the final chapter of his book he does ask the question, “where were the English Presbyterians before 1643?”⁵⁶ His conclusion is that there were none. In discussing the sociability of networks enjoyed by the godly, he cautions that the clerical conferences common in such networks should not be construed as sub-presbyterian classis, but are merely the means by which ministers could look to their brethren for advice and support.⁵⁷ Elliot Vernon comments that such conferences held, albeit latently within them, the means of becoming structures for a push for further reformation.⁵⁸

Carol Schneider’s and Elliot Vernon’s work on the puritan ecclesiological debates of the 1630s discuss the controversies centred on the Staffordshire minister John Ball.⁵⁹ Ball, one of the 13 signatories to the letter to New England mentioned above, is seen by some as one of the leading presbyterians prior to his death in 1640. He argued that the keys of ecclesiological discipline were held by the presbytery alone and, reports Vernon he “reasserted the centrality of clerical authority as the divinely appointed instrument of true order in the church”.⁶⁰ Although Ball’s arguments were a far cry from the Westminster

⁵⁵ Lake, ‘Historiography’, 363.

⁵⁶ Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 310.

⁵⁷ Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 48, 59.

⁵⁸ Vernon ‘Sion College Conclave’, 39.

⁵⁹ Carole Schneider, ‘Roots and Branches: from Principled Non Conformity to the Emergence of Religious Parties’ in *Puritanism - Transatlantic Perspectives on a 17th Century Anglo American Faith* ed. Francis J. Bremer (Boston, 1993), 187 -200; Vernon, ‘Sion College Conclave’, 55.

⁶⁰ Vernon, ‘Sion College Conclave’, 56.

presbyterianism of the 1640s says Vernon, they do contain what Schneider describes, and he accepts as the “authentic presbyterian temper” that “the heart of church authority was the ecclesiastical college, ministers and elders gathered together to exercise governance and authority as the first congregations had known them”.⁶¹ In Vernon’s opinion, Ball’s conviction that the Church of England, despite its faults, was the correct vehicle for the evangelical mission of the gospel ministry was a belief that the presbyterians of the 1640s would share.⁶²

Michael Winship is more convinced than others of a distinctly presbyterian strain of belief in the 1630’s. By reference to the debate that followed the letter from Ball and his fellow clergymen to New England, he states that the fact

that Presbyterians and Congregationalists in the 1630s had already delineated, with a mixture of anger and sorrow, what would be the long lasting boundaries between them gives to the failure of their search for accommodation in the 1640s an air of inevitability.⁶³

Winship acknowledges however that one major difference between the two debates was that in the 1630s, the English ministers were not arguing specifically for presbyterianism.⁶⁴

The virtual omission of presbyterianism from the debate on the early Stuart years has recently been addressed by Polly Ha in her book *English Presbyterianism 1590 – 1640*.⁶⁵ In this work Ha claims to have found the missing piece of a puzzle, namely, a continuous link between the Elizabethan presbyterians of the later 1500s and the presbyterians of the 1640s.

Ha rejects the strictures of defining presbyterianism by reference to the Elizabethan model, the Scottish Melvillian model or the simple idea of an authoritarian synodical system. For her, presbyterianism was a system of church government or power adhered to and supported by a collection of individuals. It was an alternative jurisdiction and a process used to reach a consensus, whether in theological argument, inter-congregational conflict or

⁶¹ Schneider, ‘Roots and Branches’, 196-197.

⁶² Vernon, ‘Sion College Conclave’, 50.

⁶³ Winship, ‘Straining the Bonds of Puritanism’, 104.

⁶⁴ Winship, ‘Straining the Bonds of Puritanism’, 105.

⁶⁵ Polly Ha, *English Presbyterianism, 1590 - 1640* (Stanford, 2011).

interpersonal disagreement. Presbyterians claimed that their government embodied the biblical prescription for reconciling parties.⁶⁶

Ha softens the boundaries of what it might mean to be a presbyterian. From this we can see how Ha might find presbyterianism where other historians do not. She is looking for something nebulous, others are seeking, or perhaps more precisely, failing to find, something more definite.

One might argue that notwithstanding the length and detail of Ha's work, the evidence of presbyterianism produced is a little slight. Ha probably recognises this and is quick to point out that after the suppression of the movement in the early 1590's its leaders "deliberately concealed themselves" and undertook "clandestine activity" involving a continued assault on the hierarchy of the Church of England, one implication of which was to fuel the fears of Laudian divines such as Peter Heylin.⁶⁷ Furthermore, she is clear in her introduction that she is not suggesting that presbyterianism was a majority or even a widespread position amongst puritans nor that it was an organised movement as it had been under Elizabeth.⁶⁸

Ha's findings of continuing interest in presbyterian thinking amongst the godly stands alone in the historiography of the early Stuart years. The historiographical consensus is that English presbyterianism in a form most would recognise was absent from the puritan debates of the 1620's and 1630's. That said, some scholars such as Schneider, Vernon and Winship are able to see in the informal gatherings and intra-community debates of this period a context in which presbyterianism might crystallise and develop into the presbyterian position of the 1640s. This thesis will build on the work of historians such as Schneider, Vernon and Winship, but also those such as Como and Lake to show how the ideas of 'moderate' or 'conformable' puritans of the 1620s and 1630s might influence the thinking of MPs in the early 1640s.

The difficulties of locating presbyterianism in the early 1640s

The foregoing pages highlight some of the difficulties of a search for presbyterianism pre-1640 both in the primary sources and in the histories

⁶⁶ Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, 4.

⁶⁷ Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, 3, 5; Ha cites Milton, *Laudian and Royalist Polemic*, 93-96 as her source for the reference to Peter Heylin.

⁶⁸ Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, 3.

themselves. First, most historians are interested in puritanism in general, not presbyterianism, hence with the exception of Polly Ha presbyterianism has not been their focus. Secondly, this thesis has already noted the problem of definition. In the absence of a label 'presbyterian', what should historians look out for when studying the primary sources, and even if the name presbyterian is used, has it been used correctly? Thirdly, it is possible that there are individual presbyterians, John Ball is an example, but not groups working together. Fourthly, historians such as Eales, Hughes and Webster point out that church government was not an issue for early Stuart puritans. If that is correct, it is hardly surprising that there is no, or little evidence of presbyterianism being discussed in puritan networks. Alternatively, Ha may be correct, and the level of persecution drove presbyterians underground so their voices are lost to us. Finally, historians such as Lake and Como have identified a puritan milieu in which positions were flexible and fluid, and it can within this milieu be difficult to differentiate presbyterian ideas from those of the congregationalists or those who would support reduced episcopacy. This is particularly so when the focus of puritans in general is a fight against Laudian episcopacy, and areas of conflict within are stifled for the greater good.

In the early years of the Long Parliament these obstacles continue to hamper a search for emerging presbyterianism amongst the MPs. To overcome them this thesis will focus instead on the ideas expressed by MPs on church government, and whether these might lead parliament to choose presbyterianism as the form of government for the English Church. What do MPs see as the purpose of church government, what do they want and expect from it? These ideas and desires might include the need for parliamentary supremacy, lay involvement, a national church, an able preaching ministry, social order, piety and learning, and scriptural warrant.

Approach, methodology and primary sources

In approaching its principal question why, despite little evidence of active pressure for a reform of the church along presbyterian lines in the early Stuart years the Long Parliament decided to adopt that system of church government, this thesis has divided the topic both chronologically and thematically into the chapters outlined above. Each chapter broadly asks a series of interlinked questions about what MPs believed, thought, wanted, did or said in relation to or of church government and when, if at all in our period, did a positive

presbyterian position first emerge in parliament. By adopting an inquisitive approach the thesis aims to uncover a previously under studied and little understood process to answer the question why parliament adopted presbyterianism and to show that its decision was made for rational, positive reasons distinct to England's political and religious culture.

The principal primary sources for this thesis are speeches in parliament, diaries, commentaries and correspondence of MPs reporting upon proceedings in parliament and official parliamentary records such as the Commons and Lords Journals. Pre-eminent amongst the diarists is Sir Symonds D'Ewes but other MPs' diaries have been consulted. D'Ewes is the only diarist who continued to write throughout the period although even he became less prolific as time passed. His testimony is generally regarded as reliable and reasonably thorough although he could of course be selective in what he recorded and had his own personal interests and beliefs that might impact his reporting.

Secondary to these sources will be diaries, commentaries and correspondence of contemporaries outside parliament but with (it is to be believed) inside knowledge. Use will be made of the private letters and journals of Robert Baillie which provide an invaluable resource for this period notwithstanding Baillie's own presbyterianism and thus biases. Such sources also include works written 'after the event' but by those involved or witnessing the events of the 1640s such as Richard Baxter and Edward Hyde.

Thirdly, many of the fast sermons preached in parliament have been printed and these will be used to understand the theological and ecclesiological messages heard by the members, although as Tom Webster points out for a period of two to three years after the Aldermanbury Accord of November 1641 these tended to call for an energetic approach to ecclesiological reform without being specific as to the results desired by the preacher. He considers that this silence in parliament obscures from view one of the likely public sources of influence.⁶⁹

Finally certain printed polemical material produced by the divines will be relevant. This will be used in Chapter Three to trace an emergent

⁶⁹ Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 330-331. The Aldermanbury Accord is the name given by historians to an agreement most agree was made by clerical members of the Aldermanbury circle and others in November 1641 to refrain from publishing or promoting particular views on church government, that is to say to stifle their differences and to work together in the fight against episcopacy.

presbyterianism within the clergy, where the focus will be on more 'serious' theological works rather than on sensational pamphlet sources that often dominate the narrative.

Summary

This introduction has laid the foundations for a deeper enquiry into the problem of church government in the early years of the Long Parliament, what MPs believed that government should look like, and why for them presbyterianism emerged as the solution.

Chapter One

The early months of the Long Parliament and the development of ideas about the government of the church.

The critical question in the early months of the Long Parliament was over the fate of episcopacy and whether it should be reformed or abolished. There were many reasons why episcopacy came under attack, but our earlier discussion on early Stuart puritanism suggests that a call for prebyterianism was unlikely to have been amongst them. Chapter One of this thesis will study these early months in parliament to see what evidence exists that a generalised demand for change might have begun to crystallise around more specific ideas about the future of the church, its government and its organisation for the exercise of authority and maintenance of discipline.

Concentrating on parliamentary debates about convocation and the canons of May 1640, the Root and Branch Petition of December 1640 and the Ministers' Petition and Remonstrance of January 1641 this chapter will show how characteristic ideas of many English Protestants such as fear of popery, dislike of clerical usurpation of secular functions, the need for piety and moral reform and a desire for more preaching gathered pace and coalesced around a wholesale attack on the bishops. Later chapters will then trace the maturing of these ideas to show that when faced with a binary choice between presbyterianism and congregationalism, the former, coming closest to satisfying these ideas and working within the framework of a national church and parish system, was the obvious choice for most MPs. In this way this thesis will also counter the traditional argument that parliament adopted the presbyterian polity as a result of pressure from the Scots, although the influence of the Scots' newly realised presbyterian zeal cannot be written out of the story.

The Scots and the calling of parliaments

The part played by the Scots in causing Charles I to call the Long Parliament is incontrovertible. It is therefore fitting to address this briefly before considering the parliamentary debates of late 1640 and early 1641. Hunter Powell describes Charles' attempt to enforce Laudian innovations on the Scottish Kirk

as perhaps his “greatest misstep”.¹ It resulted in rebellion as the Scots covenanted together to reject England’s prelatical church, its ceremonies and its liturgy and put in place a presbyterian polity more radical than that which had operated in Scotland in the decades since James VI accession to the throne. Charles, insensitive as ever to the Scottish mood, fought back resulting in the First Bishops War of 1639, and subsequently, notwithstanding a peace treaty worked out at Berwick, the Second Bishops War of 1640. To raise finance for the latter the King called the Short Parliament which lasted only three weeks, after which, without the much needed funds, he fought and lost the Second Bishops War leaving the Scots army in position in Newcastle. As a result, Charles was forced to call the Long Parliament.²

The Scots rebellion and its connection to English politics has been much researched in recent years and historians are familiar with it. This research gives important insights into the extent of collaboration between the Scottish Covenanters and their allies in England.³ We now know, writes David Como, that “English oppositional politicians, of the circle of Saye, Warwick and Pym, engaged in secretive correspondence with the Scots in 1639-40”.⁴ A letter published by Peter Donald bears the initials N F and is attributed to Nathaniel Fiennes. Together with a paper of intelligence which accompanies the letter it manifests a “full preparedness to show solidarity with the Covenanters in their invasion” argues Donald.⁵ Robert Baillie made mention of the Covenantors’ “friends” in England on several occasions both before and after the opening of the Long Parliament although unfortunately he rarely named them.⁶ For both the English and the Scots it was a matter of practical politics, but the earliest contacts had a strong religious flavour to them as people on both sides of the Border vented their resentment of current Laudian policies. These contacts are important as they reveal not only the possibility of pre-existing presbyterian sympathies on the part of some MPs elected to the Long Parliament in

¹ Hunter Powell, *The Crisis of British Protestantism, Church power in the Puritan Revolution, 1638-1644* (Manchester, 2015), 16.

² The Short Parliament sat from 13th April to 5th May – Commons Journal, Vol. 2, 3-19; The Scots took Newcastle on 30th August 1640 – Conrad Russell, *The Fall of the British Monarchies 1637 – 1642* (Oxford, 1991), 144-145.

³ John Adamson, *The Noble Revolt: The Overthrow of Charles I*, (London, 2007), 36 – 52; Peter Donald, ‘New Light’ on the Anglo – Scottish Contacts of 1640’, *Historical Research*, 62, (1989), 221-229; Russell, *Fall of the British Monarchies*, 147.

⁴ David Como, *Radical Parliamentarians and the English Civil War* (Oxford, 2018), 50.

⁵ Donald, ‘New Light on the Anglo-Scottish Contacts of 1640,’ 222, 226.

⁶ Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, Vol. 1, 261, 262, 275, 280, 289, 290 297, 306 etc..

November 1640, but also potential sources of presbyterian influence on the MPs in the early months of the parliament.

That the Scots and their supporters in England mounted a concerted propaganda campaign targeted at the English is without doubt. Como's chapter on the secret press in general and the Margery Mar–Prelate Press in particular gives an excellent overview of the pro-Scottish pamphlets published in 1640.⁷ The first to be published by the 'Marjery' press was *An Information from the States of the Kingdome of Scotland, to the Kingdome of England* and it aimed to place the blame for the breach of the peace at Berwick firmly in the hands of the King's advisors. Whilst it made no overt claims for the rightness of presbyterianism per se, it did attack episcopacy, defending Scotland's right to abolish the bishops and to set up a presbyterian system of government for its church. The pamphlet called on "all good Christians and Patriots in the Isle, to labour and maintaine love and friendship among ourselves, and with the Protestants about us", and it expressed confidence that its 'neighbour Nation' will join with it to supplicate the King for remedy of its present condition.⁸ A second Scots manifesto, published at the time of the Short Parliament, continued the theme of justifying the Scots rebellion as defensive of its peoples just liberties and the true reformed religion. The *Remonstrance Concerning the Present Troubles* placed the blame primarily on Laud and Wentworth, First Earl of Strafford, backed by "the.....mighty Faction of Papists", and warned the new English parliament not to side with Charles as this would "overthrow....our Religion and Liberties, and in the burial thereof to...digge a Tomb for your own...".⁹ For the present the Scots propaganda aimed at eliciting English support by maintaining common cause with its neighbour. For religion, that common cause consisted of anti-Laudian and anti-episcopal beliefs. The attempt to "presbyterianise" their intended ally would follow.

As noted above, Charles called the Short Parliament to raise funds to fight the Scots. When parliament refused supply, it was dismissed. Clarendon observed in the countenances of "Those who had most oppos'd all that was desir'd by his Majesty, a marvellous Serenity;" and noted,

⁷ Como, *Radical Parliamentarians*, 56 – 88.

⁸ *An Information from the States of the Kingdome of Scotland, to the Kingdome of England* (London, 1640). It was first published in Edinburgh.

⁹ *A Remonstrance Concerning the Present Troubles* (London, 1640), 14-15, quoted in Como, *Radical Parliamentarians*, 57.

nor could they conceal the Joy of their hearts : for they knew enough of what was to come, to conclude that the King would be shortly compellid to call another Parliament, and they were as sure, that so many, so unbias'd men, would never be elected again.¹⁰

Conrad Russell makes a similar point, arguing that the failure of the Short Parliament was partially due to a pro-Scots faction within it who were tactically committed to preventing Charles from defeating the godly cause in Scotland. Prominent among these men Russell names Lords Brooke and Saye, and the MPs John Pym, John Hampden, Sir Robert Harley, Sir John Wray, Nathaniel Fiennes, Oliver St. John.¹¹ A similar group of men to those named by Como. All were staunch anti-Arminians committed to upholding 'the true religion established by law' and saw in their co-religionists the Scots there best hopes of achieving this. As we will see, this did not necessarily make them presbyterians.

The foregoing narrative shows that the nascent Scottish Presbyterianism meant the criticism of Laudian innovations was legitimately on the English political agenda. The godly amongst the MPs elected to the Long Parliament would not miss the opportunity to pursue their cause.

The Long Parliament and its members' beliefs

As Christian magistrates members of the Long Parliament believed themselves to be responsible for both the civil and religious spheres within the country. Many were convinced that reformation of the church must be put first, and none doubted their right to deal with it. "We are here assembled" said Sir Benjamin Rudyard in the House of Commons on 7th November 1640,

to do God's business and the King's, in which our own is included as we are Christians, as we are subjects. Let us first fear God, then we shall honour the King the more: For I am afraid we have been the less prosperous in Parliaments, because we have preferred other matters before Him. Let religion be our Primum quaerite for all things else but et

¹⁰ Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, ed. W. Macray. 6 Vols. (Oxford, 1888), Vol.1, 139-140.

¹¹ Russell, *Fall of the British Monarchies*, 99.

cetera's to it; yet we may have them too, sooner and surer, if we give God his Precedence.¹²

Sir John Holland, speaking on 9th November, would prioritise the church:

In Redress of our *Grievances*, in those of the Church, which ought to have Priority in our Consultations, as well in respect of Necessity, as Dignity. In these, Mr. *Speaker*, I do humbly desire, and doubt not but we shall proceed with all true Piety, and well-grounded Zeal to God's House, and his Truth.¹³

Sir Edward Derring speaking a day later agreed:

The Sufferances that we have undergone are reducible to two Heads. The first concerning the *Church*; the second belonging to the *Commonwealth*. The first of these must have the First-fruits of this Parliament; as being the first in Weight and Worth, and more immediately referring to the Honour of God, and his Glory, every Dram whereof is worth the whole Weight of a Kingdom.¹⁴

This sentiment did not dissipate as time moved on. In June 1641 Sir Henry Vane was to ask the house when promoting the Root and Branch Bill: "For hath not this Parliament been called, continued, preserved, and secured by the Immediate finger of God, as it were for this work?"¹⁵ This was, he said, the reason closest to his heart for calling for the abolition of episcopacy.

But what was this reformation of the church to look like? One theme that emerges is members' firm belief in the Bible as a book of precedents for the right ordering of life. Harbottle Grimston, when speaking on 9th November 1640 of the Bishops' claim to jure divino jurisdiction would say,

Mr. Speaker, we meet not with an Arch-Bishop, or a Dean, or an Arch-Deacon, in all the New Testament: and whatever may be said of the

¹² Sir Benjamin Rudyard's Speech, Nov. 7 1640 in Rushworth, *Historical Collections of Private Passages of State*: Vol. 4, 1640-42 (London, 1721), 1-45, British History Online (BHO), para. 156.

¹³ Sir John Halland's Speech, Nov. 9 1640 in Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, Vol. 4, 1-45. BHO, para 199.

¹⁴ Sir Edward Deering's Speech, Nov. 10 1640 in Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, Vol. 4, 1-45. BHO, para. 310.

¹⁵ Sir Henry Vane's speech against Episcopal Government, June 11 1641 in John Nalson, *An impartial collection of the great affairs of state, from the beginning of the Scotch rebellion in the year MDCXXXIX. to the murder of King Charles I.* Vol II, 276 – 279, also printed as *Sir Henry Vane his speech in the House of Commons at a committee for a bill against episcopal government, 11th June 1641* (London, 1641), Wing/V76.

Function of Bishops is one thing, but for their Jurisdiction, it is merely *Humana institutione*, and they must thank the King for it.¹⁶

Sir John Wray would make the same argument regarding bishops in November 1641. Unless the bishops could justify “their spiritual primacy over the ministers of Christ” from scripture he said, then the King was within his rights to “utterly to abolish all lordly primacy”.¹⁷ “We must settle such a forme of government in religion” said John White in January 1642 “as shall seeme to the wisdom of the House to come nearest to the word of God”.¹⁸ Members of the House of Lords felt the same way. Lord Brooke in his Discourse prayed that we should make scripture “our sole guide”.¹⁹ There are numerous other examples some of which will be highlighted later in this thesis.

It was this belief in the primacy of the Bible which, according to George Yule, was the whole rationale of the Fast Sermons which were intended to guide parliament in questions of the church but also state.²⁰ Ministers were added as advisors to parliamentary committees for the same reason, and the committees would rely on their advice. For example, the heads for consideration brought to the Commons on 9th March 1641 by the committee for the Ministers’ Petition and Remonstrance claimed that the bishops should not have the sole right of ordination because “Timothy was ordained by the laying on of hands of elders” and cited 1 Tim IV and 2 Tim I in support.²¹ A quick perusal of Verney’s notes of proceedings in this committee reveal frequent questions posed of Cornelius Burgess and the importance placed on scriptural warrant by the committee in their deliberations.²²

¹⁶ Harbottle Grimston, *Mr. Grimstons speech, in the High Court of Parliament* (London, 1641), Wing (2nd edn.)/G2038, 9; also quoted in George Yule, *Puritans in Politics, 1640 – 1647* (Abingdon, Sutton Courtney Press, 1981), 81.

¹⁷ John Wray, Sir, *An occasionall speech made to The House of Commons ... by Sir John Wray* (London, 1641), Wing (2nd edn.) W3668, 5.

¹⁸ John White, *Mr White’s Speech in Parliament on Munday the 17th January* (London, 1641), Wing/W1773.

¹⁹ Robert, Lord Brooke, *A discourse opening the nature of that episcopacie which is exercised in England : wherein, with all humility, are represented some considerations tending to the much-desired peace and long expected reformation, of this our mother church*, (London, 1642) 65–66, quoted in William Abbott, ‘The issue of episcopacy in the Long Parliament, 1640 – 48’, DPhil Thesis, University of Oxford, 1982, 55.

²⁰ Yule, *Puritans in Politics*, (81. The Fast Sermons are discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

²¹ William Shaw, *A History of the English Church during the Civil Wars and under the Commonwealth*, 2 Vols. (London, 1900), Vol.1, 48.

²² Ralph Verney, Sir, *Verney Papers: Notes of Proceedings In the Long Parliament, Temp. Charles I. Printed From Original Pencil Memoranda Taken In the House by Sir Ralph Verney ... And Now In the Possession of Sir Harry Verney*, ed. John Bruce, Camden Society, Ord. Series 31 (London, 1845), 4-14.

Convocation and the Canons

In parliament's first weeks the members expressed in general terms their almost unanimous condemnation of the state of the church under Laud, including the growth of papacy and recusancy, the lack of a dedicated and learned preaching ministry and the many innovations in religion. The first specific issue to be discussed however was the removal of the legislative independence of convocation. This was not a new topic for parliament. It had made a number of attacks upon convocation's independency following the promulgation of the canons of 1604, and statements by John Pym and others in the parliaments of 1628 and 1629 indicate that the events of the 1620s, particularly the arminian controversy, had increased MPs' sense of parliamentary superiority over convocation and of parliament's important role in all religious matters.²³ After the Laudian measures of the 1630s, MPs sympathetic to puritan nonconformity were more concerned than ever to establish a veto over matters passed in convocation.

The matter was raised in the Short Parliament even before the outcome of the May convocation was known. In the Commons uneasiness about this convocation led to direct questions about the power of the clerical assembly. The powers of convocation were one of a number of grievances about which the house was concerned. On the 17th April Pym divided the grievances into three categories: innovations in religion, propriety of goods, and liberty of parliament. He made clear the approach that the Commons should take. Attempts to obtain redress would be based on claims of lawful right. Pym enumerated ways in which he felt that the law was not being observed in religion. The popish threat was advancing while the 'best professors of religion' were discouraged. Ecclesiastical courts were assuming more authority than the law gave them. Parliamentary privileges and powers would be defended first though, not because they were more important, they were not, but in Pym's view without securing these religion could not be secured. Pym said,

Although religion is in truth the greatest grievance to be looked into, after and also should claim the precedence in that respect, before either of the other generals, yet in so much as that verity in religion receives an influence from the free debates in parliament without

²³ For a brief introduction to the relevant proceedings in these parliaments see Mark Parry, 'William Laud and the Parliamentary Politics of 1628–9' *Parliamentary History*, Vol. 36, pt. 2 (2017), 137–158.

which men will be afraid to speak, I think it fit in order to privileges in pa'rliament to have priority.²⁴

The importance placed by Pym on parliamentary authority over religion was to be repeated time and again in the coming years.

Convocation, normally meeting only while parliament sat, was kept in session after the dissolution of the Short Parliament to frame a new set of church canons. These canons, approved in May, inflamed opinion against the regime.²⁵ *The Petition of the Twelve Peers for the Summoning of a new Parliament* brought to his Majesty's attention "the oath and canons lately imposed upon the clergy and [his] subjects" and sought a parliament "whereby the causes of these and other great grievances may be taken away".²⁶ In December 1640 the Commons took up the grievance and debated the canons made by convocation earlier that year. As Esther Cope puts it "The Pym-Hampden group rallied again to defend parliament's legislative powers from infringement by Convocation".²⁷

The early speakers on the canons of May do not deal directly with the question of church government, but their arguments give some pointers to their future thinking on the issue. In particular, the discussion on the canons centred on whether convocation had the power to bind the ministry and the laity without the latter's consent and the house concluded it did not. In a speech of 9th December Edward Bagshaw set out a series of reasoned arguments against the canons before concluding on his "first and chiefest point" that "no Cannons can bind the Laiety and Clergy, without consent in Parliament: and therefore these Cannons made against the Laiety, as well as the Clergy, without their

²⁴ John Pym, *A Speech Delivered in Parliament by a Worthy Member thereof.* (London, 1641), quoted in Esther S. Cope, 'The Short Parliament of 1640 and Convocation', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. XXV, No. 2 April 1974, 173.

²⁵ *Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiastical; Treated upon by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, Presidents of the Convocations for the respective Provinces of Canterbury and York, and the rest of the Bishops and Clergie of those Provinces; And agreed upon with the Kings Majesties License in their severall Synods begun at London and York. 1640. In the year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord Charles, by the grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, the Sixteenth* (London, 1640).

²⁶ A copy of the Petition of August 28th, 1640 can be found in *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution 1625 – 1660*, ed. Samuel R. Gardiner (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1889, repr. 1979), 134.

²⁷ Cope 'The Short Parliament of 1640 and Convocation', 178.

assent, cannot bind.”²⁸ Oliver St John, amongst others, felt the same way. He declared,

In H.8 time almost all matters of religion ordered by Parliament and so all matters of religion handled in E.6 time, Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth. Therefore they [Convocation] could not do it without act of Parliament.

He noted as he had in the Short Parliament that the respective powers of parliament and convocation were shown in the difference between the wording of their writs of summons.²⁹ Several of the lawyers in the house attempted to defend convocation’s powers and addressed the question of consent by arguing that the laity were parties through parliament to the making of the statute which gave ecclesiastical jurisdiction to the Crown, and the Crown had given license to convocation to make the canons. Nevertheless, the House resolved that the clergy of England in convocation or synod had no power in matters of doctrine or discipline or otherwise to bind the clergy or the laity of the land without common consent of parliament, “nullo contradiente”.³⁰ This was a principle that would apply not only to the episcopate, but also to any other clerical assembly.

Conrad Russell makes the point that what concerned many members of the Long Parliament at the time was that they were not prepared to trust religion to the judgement of those appointed by Charles I. It was necessary therefore to reduce the significance of the Royal power of supremacy in the church, and to attempt to bind the Crown in a way it had not been bound before. “If we are looking for attempts to increase Parliamentary power it is to this debate [and the debate on ship money] that we should be looking” writes Russell.³¹ As debates progress on church government it becomes clear that parliament had no desire to abandon its claim to primacy in the church even after the threat from Charles had diminished. Any new form of church government would have to acknowledge parliament’s role as “ultimate interpreters” of religion.³²

²⁸ Edward Bagshawe, *Two arguments in Parliament the first concerning the cannons, the second concerning the premunire vpon those cannons* (London: Printed by George Miller, 1641), Wing/B401, 12.

²⁹ D’Ewes, 15th December 1640, in *The Journal of Sir Simonds D’Ewes : from the beginning of the Long Parliament to the opening of the trial of the Earl of Strafford*, ed. Wallace Notestein (Oxford University Press, 1923), 154-155.

³⁰ D’Ewes, 15th December 1640, in Notestein, *D’Ewes’ Journal*, 157.

³¹ Russell, *Fall of the British Monarchies*, 231.

³² The term “ultimate interpreters” is Russell’s, *Fall of the British Monarchies*, 231.

It was not only the legal status of convocation that came under attack in December 1640, it was the content of the canons, and of canon six in particular. Canon Six imposed an oath on all clerics and certain others binding them never to “consent to alter the Government of this Church by Archbishops, Bishops, Deanes and Arch-deacons, &c. as it stands now established”.³³ In addition to the understandable concern of those already opposed to the current hierarchy of the church, suspicions quickly swelled against the “&c.” tacked onto the passage. Opponents of the etcetra oath as it soon became known wondered what exactly they were being asked to swear. The oath triggered a spate of clerical meetings and petitioning which continued throughout the autumn and winter of that year. Richard Baxter recorded that in Shropshire the ministers of the county met to discuss the oath, which was opposed by the majority present. Baxter later noted that the oath “put me upon deeper thoughts of the point of episcopacy, and of the English frame of Church government, than ever I had before”.³⁴ This upsurge of clerical opposition to the canons in part led to the nation-wide Ministers’ Petition and Remonstrance delivered to the Commons on 23rd January 1641, but it is clear that many in parliament felt equally strongly. Sir John Wray described the etcetera oath as a “vast Oath to force mens consciences” and called the canons “crooked”.³⁵ In a speech of 9th November Harbottle Grimston drew the attention of the Commons to the etcetera oath in the following terms, signifying not only his determination that parliaments’ hands in matters of religion will not be tied, but also his position on episcopacy:

And Mr. Speaker, for prevention in case the Wisedome of the state in this great Counsell, should at any time think fit to alter any thing in the government of our Church, they would anticipate and forestall our judgements, by making vs sweare before-hand, that we would never give our consent to any alteration. Nay Mr. Speaker, they goe a little further, for they would have vs sweare that the government of the Church by Archbishops, Bishops, Deanes, Archdeacons, &c. is *lure divino*, Their words are, *as of right it ought to stand*; Whereas Mr.

³³ The ‘others’ were primarily academics, for example all who had a degree in divinity, law, or physic.

³⁴ Quoted in Jaqueline Eales, ‘A Road to Revolution: The continuity of puritanism’ in *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560 – 1700*, eds. Christopher Durston and Jaqueline Eales, 184-209 (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1996), 204. Details of the clerical meetings can also be found in the same place.

³⁵ John Wraye, Sir, *Eight occasional speeches made in the house of Commons this Parliament, 1641; The Third, upon dismounting the Cannons, December 15, 1640* (London, 1641), Wing (2nd edn.)/W3667, 5-6.

Speaker, we meet not with the name of an Archbishop, or a Deane, or an Archdeacon in all the new Testament;³⁶

Clarendon would later reflect that the matter of the canons, and the manner of making of them, “was insisted on as a pregnant testimony of a Malignant spirit in the very Function of the Bishops”.³⁷ Certainly, the debates began a march towards the demise of episcopacy. What they did not do is present presbyterianism as an acceptable alternative.

‘Root and Branch’ and petitions for reform

A key feature of these early months in parliament was the proliferation of petitions aiming to bring pressure to bear on parliament to address complaints about the church. Not all of these petitions came from the clergy. On 11th December 1640 parliament was presented with a petition from London, which, D’Ewes tells us, was a petition against bishops, their tyrannical government and their claims to be *jure divino*.³⁸ The petition, he said, had 15,000 hands and 1500 men accompanied it to Westminster Hall. It was, he adds, of “great weight” and after some debate a large number of members agreed it should be considered.³⁹

This petition from London, which together with similar petitions from other counties were to become known as the Root and Branch petitions, called for the current government of the church “with all its dependencies, root and branches,” to be abolished and “all laws in their behalf made void” and prayed that “the government according to God’s Word may be rightly placed among us”.⁴⁰ The debate on church government would engage parliament for some years to come, and members’ speeches on the question how to deal with the Root and Branch petitions present some indications of the thought processes that would guide members’ decision making during those years.

The London Root and Branch petition, although it called for the abolition of episcopacy, did not suggest any alternative model of church government.

³⁶ Harbottle Grimston, *Mr. Grimstons speech, in the High Court of Parliament* (London, 1641), Wing (2ndedn)/G2038, 9.

³⁷ Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion*, Vol.1, 205.

³⁸ D’Ewes, 11th December 1640, in Notestein, *D’Ewes Journal*, 138-139.

³⁹ D’Ewes, 11th December 1640, in Notestein, *D’Ewes Journal*, 138-139.

⁴⁰ The London Petition Against Bishops in Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, Vol.4, 68-99, BHO, para. 297. This petition became known as The Root and Branch Petition.

Members were not blind to the risks, and while permitting it to be read and discussed, urged restraint. D'Ewes reports himself as telling the House that on the abolition of bishops, "we ought to proceed with great moderation".⁴¹ Such calls for caution, and fears of the consequences would be repeated throughout the course of the Root and Branch debates. In February 1641 Sir Benjamin Rudyard, noting the desire for change, warned the House that "whilst we are earnest to take away Innovations, let us beware we bring not in the greatest Innovation that ever was in *England*". Furthermore, with perhaps a nod to latent calls for presbyterianism of which he was aware, he revived an old argument against presbyterianism and asked the House to consider whether "a popular democratical Government of the Church (though fit for other places) will be either suitable or acceptable to a Regal Monarchical Government of the State?"⁴²

The Root and Branch petitions, and the subsequent Ministers' Petition and Remonstrance which was more moderate in tone ushered in the question of reform of church government.⁴³ On 8th and 9th February 1641 the House of Commons was asked to debate the question whether to commit the Ministers' Petition and Remonstrance and the London 'Root and Branch' petition for consideration by a committee, but D'Ewes tells us that "divers mistaking the Question" the house "fell into other long and large disputes" about episcopal government.⁴⁴ The records show that many members spoke on episcopacy, some at length, and their speeches reveal a real desire to reform episcopacy while echoing the debates on convocation and displaying an innate conservatism cautioning against anything too radical. The speakers also demonstrate a knowledge of theology which to the present day reader is impressive. All decry the persons of the bishops, but are willing to debate their function. Many appear to have been against prelates but supportive of bishops in their primitive form. Others favoured some sort of reduced or moderated episcopacy, harking back to that which existed in the times of Elizabeth and James. Peyton however reports that the long debate was "upon equall terms

⁴¹ D'Ewes, 11th December 1640, in Notestein, *D'Ewes Journal*, 139.

⁴² Sir Benjamin Rudyard about Church – Government, 9th February 1640/41, in Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, Vol 4, 165-202, BHO paras. 162, 163; See Polly Ha, *English Presbyterianism, 1590-1640* (Stanford, 2011), 13 for the old arguments against presbyterianism

⁴³ The Ministers' Petition and Remonstrance was presented to the House of Commons by Sir Robert Harley on 23rd January 1641. No copy of it is extant. Brief details can be found in Verney, *Verney Papers*, 4-14. The petition is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three below.

⁴⁴ D'Ewes, 8th February 1641, in Notestein, *D'Ewes Journal*, 335.

on each part both for and against Episcopacy” and thus one cannot discount the possibility that the house was more evenly split than the published speeches or contemporaneous reports of them show.⁴⁵

Elliot Vernon notes that at this time ‘primitive episcopacy’ seems to have been a particularly ambiguous umbrella term for a spectrum of ecclesiastical positions.⁴⁶ This is perhaps a little unfair. In his speech of 9th February Digby is quite clear: “Let us not destroy bishops, but make them such as they were in primitive times” he says. And then continues:

Do their large territories offend? Let them be retrencht. Do their courts and subordinates offend? Let them be brought to govern as in the primitive times by assemblies of their clergy. Doth their intermeddling in secular affairs offend? Exclude them from the capacity.”⁴⁷

On 9th February, at the beginning of his speech quoted further below, Bagshaw chose to distinguish two types of episcopacy, “the first *in statu puro*, as it was in primitive times, the second *in statu corrupto*, as it is at this day”. It is the latter, he says, that is intended and meant in the London Petition to be taken away, and thus he is in favour of retaining and committing that petition.⁴⁸ For Nathaniel Fiennes, primitive episcopacy is the form that existed in “the ancientest and most Primitive Time of Christianity”.⁴⁹ A call for primitive episcopacy appears to be distinguished from calls for reduced, moderated or reformed episcopacy by the larger extent of the changes to be made. Those seeking a primitive episcopate believed that a return to the episcopate of Elizabeth or James was insufficient.

Of the published speeches, only Fiennes, speaking in response to Lord Digby, indicates a willingness to consider abolition. It is in his speech also that the historian finds one of the first mentions of presbytery, not a call for presbyterianism as such, but a recognition of it as a possibility and of presbyters as a preferred alternative to bishops. Fiennes, when answering the

⁴⁵ Thomas Peyton, Sir, 8th February 1641, (f.82), quoted in Notestein, *D’Ewes Journal*, 335.

⁴⁶ Elliot Vernon, ‘The Sion College Conclave and London Presbyterianism during the English Revolution’ (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge, 1999), 57.

⁴⁷ George Digby, *The Third Speech of the Lord George Digby concerning bishops and the citie petition* (London, 1641), Wing/B4775, 18-19.

⁴⁸ Edward Bagshaw, *Mr Bagshaw's speech in Parliament February the ninth, 1640. Concerning episcopacy and the London petition* (London, 1641), Wing (2nd edn.)/B399, 1-2.

⁴⁹ Nathaniel Fiennes, *A Speech of the honorable Nathaniel Fiennes (second son to the right honorable the Lord Say) in answer to the third speech of the Lord George Digby concerning bishops and the city of London petition* (London, 1641), Wing/F880, 6.

argument that government by bishops is as ancient as Christian religion, maintains that,

so far as the Acts of the Apostles, and the New Testament goeth, which was the ancientest and most Primitive Time of Christianity, I could never find there any distinction between a *Bishop* and a *Presbyter*, but that they were one and the very same Thing.

And subsequently, in dealing with the argument that bishops are so necessary to the government of the Kingdom and the safety of the Monarchy that the King cannot let them go, and the risk of excommunication of the King if he does, Fiennes reasons thus:

Either Princes are *subject to Excommunication*, or they are not; if they be not, then they need as little to fear a *Presbytery*, or an Assembly, as a *Bishop* in that Respect; if they be, they have as much to fear from *Bishops*, at leastwise from Bishops in their *Convocations*, as from Presbyters in their Assemblies; and so much the more, because they have formerly felt the Thunderbolts of those of that Stamp, but never from this *latter* fort.⁵⁰

It would be wrong to read Fiennes speech as a call for episcopal government to be replaced by presbyterian government. Better perhaps to see it as evidence that some members at least might be prepared to contemplate presbyterianism as an option. As noted above, Rudyard alludes to the risk of it in his speech of the 9th February, and that some members at this time see presbyterianism as a risk and desire to counter it as a threat is also confirmed by Edward Bagshaw's speech on the same date. While in favour of the committal of the London 'Root and Branch' petition Bagshaw says:

I am for a thorough Reformation of all Abuses and Grievances of Episcopacy; which Reformation may perhaps serve the turn, without alteration of the Government of *England*, into a form of Presbytery, as it is in other Kingdoms, of *Scotland, France, Geneva* and the *Low Countries*; which for mine own part, had I lived in these Kingdoms, I should have been of the opinion of the Protestant Party in point of Presbytery, &c. because those Kingdomes are governed by the Civill Law, which maintaines the Jurisdiction of the Pope and Papall Episcopacy, which the

⁵⁰ Fiennes, *A Speech in answer to the third speech of the Lord George Digby*, 8.

ancient Lawes of *England* condemne, being likewise in themselves opposite to the Civill and Canon Lawes. And if not withstanding all the Reformation that can be made by the Lawes of this Land, a better forme of government may evidently appeare to us, concerning which there is no forme now before us; it is to be taken by us into consideration, according to that imperiall Constitution in these words, *In rebus nobis constituendis evidens utilitas esse debet, ut ab eo jure recedatur quod diu equum visum est.*⁵¹

Bagshaw's argument is that presbyterianism may be necessary in civil law jurisdictions to protect the Protestant faith, but in a common law jurisdiction such as England it was not. In his final sentence he does indicate however that although no alternative to episcopacy is currently before the Commons, for him, nothing, if better, is off the table.

The speeches of the 8th and 9th February, while dealing with the issue of substance vis the future of episcopacy, also touched on the means being used to bring it to be debated. Some, like Lord Digby, both criticized and feared the street politics behind the Root and Branch petitions. There was, he said, "No man of judgement, that will think it fit for a parliament, under a monarchy, to give countenance to irregular, and tumultuous assemblies of people, be it for never so good an end".⁵² Fiennes however was willing to defend mass petitioning. In response to the complaint about the irregularity in the number of petitioners (15,000 he tells us) he argued,

if a multitud find themselvs agreived, why it should be a fault in them to expresse their grievances more then in one, or a few, I cannot see, nay, to mee it seemes rather a reason that their Petitions should bee committed, and taken into serious consideration, for thereby they may receive satisfaction, though all be not granted that they desire.

And he felt the large number attending the House to present the petition justified by previous opinions expressed in the House questioning many signatures on a petition if only a few presented it, citing the response by some to the Ministers Petition and Remonstrance as an example. "Therefore it was not without cause, that a considerable number should come, with a Petition

⁵¹Bagshaw, *Mr Bagshaw's speech in Parliament February the ninth, 1640. Concerning episcopacy and the London petition*, 7. I cannot find a translation of the latin phrase at the end.

⁵² Digby, *The Third Speech of the Lord George Digby concerning bishops and the citie petition*, 8.

signed by so manie,” and as to any misconduct by those handing the petition in, “but for any disorder in their carriage, I saw none; for upon an intimation in one word from this House, they forthwith retired to their dwellings”.⁵³ While Fiennes was willing to exploit or respond to audiences outside parliament, Digby feared them, but as Michael Braddick points out both Digby and Fiennes were, it appears, happy to see their speeches printed for the masses.⁵⁴ While this thesis will focus on the debates in parliament to trace the growth of support for presbyterianism in parliament, it is important to acknowledge that outside influences could have a bearing on MPs’ decisions. While it is impossible to judge the impact that mass petitioning had on most MPs it is certainly possible that some were prepared to countenance debating the abolition of episcopacy as a result of these outside pressures.

MPs were divided in their response to the calls for reform of church government, and if a majority position can be discerned it was in favour of some form of primitive episcopacy, and not total abolition. According to Braddick, chastened by this the “rooters” in parliament determined to proceed cautiously over the spring, aiming, as their friend Robert Baillie put it, “to take down the roof first to come to the walls”.⁵⁵ Baillie of course was clear what he wanted when they got to the walls, there is no evidence at this point that any of the members were. The committed ‘rooters’ amongst the MPs had not yet revealed themselves, or had not yet been persuaded to this course of action.

The debates of 8th and 9th February concluded with a compromise of sorts. MPs agreed to commit the Ministers’ Petition and Remonstrance and the London Root and Branch petition to the committee of 24, to which would be added six new members, the house reserving to itself the question of episcopacy.⁵⁶ The committee started work immediately and some information on its debates can be found in Verney’s Notes.⁵⁷ The Commons having reserved the question of episcopacy, the committee did not deal directly with church government. The committee reported back to the House of Commons on 9th March with three heads for consideration by the house. First, the secular employment of the bishops, their legislative and judicial employments in parliament, in Star Chamber, and in temporal offices; second, their sole power in ecclesiastical

⁵³ Fiennes, *A speech in answer to the third speech of Lord George Digby*, 2 – 3.

⁵⁴ Michael Braddick, *God’s Fury, England’s Fire* (London, Penguin Books, 2009), 131.

⁵⁵ Robert Baillie quoted in Braddick, *God’s Fury*, 131.

⁵⁶ Commons Journal, 9th February 1641, Vol. 2, 81.

⁵⁷ Verney, *Verney Papers*, 414.

things (that is, ordination and censure); and third, the greatness of the revenues of the Deans and Chapters.⁵⁸

MPs' objections to clerical hierarchy

William Abbott writes that the second and third heads reported by the committee to the house on 9th March represented a desire to change the most fundamental, spiritual parts of the office of bishops: to reduce the bishops' superiority over ministers and to eliminate the hierarchical structure through which they currently exercised their control over ministers.⁵⁹ The heads revealed a plan for a general repudiation of the hierarchical nature of the current episcopacy and the entire network of offices that existed between the bishop and the minister which enabled the bishops to exercise their power. While a major reason for abolishing the deaneries and chapters was the desire to confiscate their revenues, a number of MPs were also willing to abolish those institutions as part of this plan.

The London Root and Branch Petition opens with a brief description and condemnation of the hierarchical structure of the current government of the church: *"That whereas the Governments of Archbishops and Lord Bishops, Deans and Archdeacons, &c. with their Courts and Ministrations in them, have proved prejudicial and very dangerous both to the Church and Commonwealth"*.⁶⁰ The petition's first grievance is that this hierarchical structure subjects and enthralls ministers under it, and by degrees exempts ministers from temporal offices. Throughout this parliament MPs expressed dissatisfaction with a church government in which directives were issued to ministers from a distant, central source via a multi-tiered chain of command. In describing the prelacy that they wished to remove speakers frequently used the terms "hierarchy" and "hierarchical" in a pejorative sense. It first came to the fore in debates about the etcetera oath when on 9th November Lord Digby criticised the oath as *"a Covenant against the King, for Bishops and the Hierarchy"*.⁶¹ Later Dering, in his sanitised version of the Kent Petition presented to the house on 12th January 1641, prayed *"that this Hierarchicall power may be totally*

⁵⁸ Commons Journal, 9th March 1641, Vol. 2, 99.

⁵⁹ Abbott, 'The Issue of Episcopacy', 25.

⁶⁰ From the copy of the petition in Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, Vol. 4, 68 – 99, BHO, para. 296.

⁶¹ Lord Digby's Speech, November 9th 1640, in Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, Vol. 4, 1-45, BHO, para. 226.

abrogated, if the wisdom of this Honourable House shall find that it cannot be maintained by God's Word, and to his glory".⁶² In February 1641 Oliver Cromwell "was more convinced touching the irregularitie of Bishops than ever before, because like the Roman Hierarchie, they would not endure to have their condition come to trial".⁶³ In seeking the breakdown of this hierarchical structure, a large number of MPs appear to have been willing to alter the current episcopal office beyond recognition says Abbott, describing the possible outcomes as 'Presbyterian Episcopacy'.⁶⁴ The proposals of Ussher, Dering and Bishop Williams discussed briefly below and in Chapter Two offer differing interpretations of such schemes, all going some way to dismantling the hierarchical structures of the existing episcopal government and allowing for partial parity between the ministers in the presbyterian way. Perhaps those MPs who favoured primitive episcopacy, however hazily delineated, wanted something that went even further.

March to May 1641

The first head reported to the house by the committee on 9th March, namely the attempt to take away the secular powers of the bishops, took up much time in the Commons in March, April and May while questions of church government took a back seat. Meanwhile on 1st March the House of Lords formed its own committee, chaired by Bishop Williams, to consider innovations in the church concerning religion.⁶⁵ It was in this committee that the only serious parliamentary discussion towards some form of reduced episcopacy took place, but as Chapter Two will show by May hopes for settlement based on reduced episcopacy had collapsed and the "rooters" and their supporters gravitated towards more radical measures. There were a number of reasons for this collapse, explained succinctly by David Como to include "outpourings of pressure from London.... voicing frustration that no religious change had been forthcoming"; pressure from the Scots who intimated that peace was not possible without abolition of episcopacy; the risks exposed by the 'Army Plot';

⁶² Edward Dering, Sir, *Proceedings, principally in the county of Kent, in connection with the Parliaments called in 1640, and especially with the Committee of Religion appointed in that year*, ed. Lambert B. Larking, (Westminster, Camden Society, 1862), 29 - 32n.

⁶³ Cromwell quoted by D'Ewes, 9th February 1641, in Notestein, *D'Ewes Journal*, 340.

⁶⁴ Abbott, 'The Issue of Episcopacy', 25.

⁶⁵ House of Lords Journal, Vol.4, March 1640/41, 174-203.

and with the death of Bedford the loss of a conciliatory and pro-episcopal voice. The principal reason in Como's view however was the failure of the Commons first real attempt to reduce episcopal power, the peers rejection on 24th May of the bill removing the bishops from the House of Lords.⁶⁶ On 27th May 1641 a bill for Root and Branch abolition of episcopacy was introduced into the Commons. Chapter Two of this thesis will look for signs of emerging presbyterianism in the debates in the house surrounding the Root and Branch Bill.

Summary

At the beginning of the Long Parliament leaders of the 'Junto' (Pym, Bedford, Warwick and their circle) did not seek to abolish episcopacy, let alone replace it with presbyterianism, they merely wanted reform to purge the church of Laudianism and 'reduce' the power of bishops, which for some meant restoring bishops to their apostolic station.⁶⁷ Cornelius Burgess, with whom they had close ties, later wrote that the Junto did not at first seek "extirpation of all Episcopacy, but only to reduce it to the Primitive".⁶⁸ It is likely many MPs felt the same, although as we have noted, primitive episcopacy, albeit not clearly defined, would be radically different from episcopacy as it currently existed. Notwithstanding pressure from parliaments' more zealous allies in London and the country, this cautious, or perhaps principled approach continued at least for the first few months of 1641.

This chapter has also shown however that these early debates in parliament caused members to think in greater depth about the issues and hence to refine their ideas about what the church should look like. That it should be Protestant and Reformed went without saying, but what did this mean? What began as an attack in parliament on episcopal power and Laudian innovation developed into calls by members for the reform of episcopacy and then into calls for its abolition. This is not to underplay the impact of outside events such as the Root and Branch petitioning campaign or the need for peace with Scotland but what emerges is greater clarity of thought from MPs on what they might want. The debates reveal a clear position that the governance of the church must

⁶⁶ Como, *Radical Parliamentarians*, 91.

⁶⁷ Both Como, *Radical Parliamentarians*, 90 and Braddick, *God's Fury*, 126-127 agree on this assessment of the Junto's position.

⁶⁸ Cornelius Burgess quoted in Como, *Radical Parliamentarians*, 90.

accord with scripture, that parliament should have authority over a national church and that within that church there should be parity amongst the ministry. Although not strictly concerned with church government, parliament was agreed that all jurisdiction of the ministry in secular affairs should be removed. Together these reforms would, MPs believed, assure an able and sufficient preaching ministry for spiritual edification of the nation. In his article on the English presbyterians of the later 1630s Michael Winship makes the point that the most important priority of the English presbyterian tradition, such as it was, was the preservation of a national preaching church.⁶⁹ This sounds remarkably similar to the position reached by MPs in March 1641. No one as yet is calling specifically for presbyterianism, but only a few are actively cautioning against it.

⁶⁹ Michael Winship, 'Straining the Bonds of Puritanism: English Presbyterians and Massachusetts Congregationalists Debate Ecclesiology, 1636-1640', in *Puritan and Catholics in the Trans-Atlantic World 1600-1800*, eds. Crawford Gribben and Scott Spurlock, 89-111 (UK, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 107

Chapter 2

Alternatives to episcopacy and the Root and Branch Bill

As spring turned into summer in 1641 positions in the country on church government polarised. At one extreme were the supporters of root and branch reform, where three possibilities would emerge, presbyterianism, congregationalism or a new Erastian way where parliament and the laity would take a leading role in running the church. At the other extreme was jure divino episcopacy, with its apologists now a small, formerly influential group of Laudian bishops, plus Bishop Joseph Hall (and the King). In between, says Alan Ford in his biography of the Archbishop of Armagh, James Ussher, there remained a sizeable but not always vocal group of people who supported episcopacy but wanted it reformed.¹

The adherents of root and branch reform and those of a reformed episcopacy would take the opportunity in 1641 to put forward their proposals for a new form of church government. None of these was a presbyterian or congregational form, but the platform of church government contained in the Root and Branch Bill and debated in the House of Commons in the summer of 1641 paved the way for the church that would emerge from the Westminster Assembly. This platform of church government was the only one proposed that was wholly non-episcopal and it will be the focus of this chapter.

For the reasons discussed below the Root and Branch Bill would ultimately fail, but the fact that it failed should not disguise the fact that it enjoyed majority support in the Commons. As such it can usefully be studied, says Anthony Fletcher, for “the shaft of light that it throws on men's ideas about the church just before the Civil War”.² Writing some years earlier William Shaw felt the same way. He wrote that the bill “stands as an illustration of the advance of opinion that had been made since November 1640, under the force of circumstances which compelled the House to examine its own mind to know what it desired”. Further, true to his view on the influence of the Scots, Shaw adds, “It [the bill] shows what would probably have been the action taken, the

¹ Alan Ford, *James Ussher: Theology History and Politics in early modern Ireland and England* (Oxford, 2007), 236.

² Anthony Fletcher, ‘Concern for renewal in the root and branch debates of 1641’, *Studies in Church History* 14: 1977, 285.

Church system and government adopted... if events had not necessitated the adoption of the Solemn League and Covenant".³ For these reasons, and to seek embryonic presbyterian positions in parliament this chapter will examine the debates in the Commons on the Root and Branch Bill. First however this chapter will briefly consider the schemes put forward by supporters of a reformed episcopacy.

Reduced Episcopacy

The spiritual, legal, political and economic elements of seventeenth-century episcopacy were many and those wishing to retain a reformed episcopate were presented with a wide range of alternatives in the degree to which it could be changed. Some MPs and petitioners spoke out for the episcopate of Elizabeth's or James' reign, but others such as D'Ewes and Edward Bagshaw, as we have seen, spoke for and sought a return to episcopacy "in statu puro, as it was in primitive times".⁴ The last option, says Ford, was the one behind which Ussher threw all his scholarly learning.⁵

Ussher's scheme for 'reduced' episcopacy is generally accepted by historians as the scheme of reduced episcopacy most likely to have had success had it been pursued.⁶ It was designed by a churchman of high repute on all sides, the presbyterian William Prynne called Ussher "that excellent learned antiquary".⁷ It was also a genuine attempt to find a via media to marry together episcopacy and presbyterianism and to find common cause between, on the one hand, himself and the Calvinist bishops and on the other hand divines such as Burgess and Marshall. It therefore had potential political support from moderates both in and out of parliament. Sir Edward Dering would argue on introducing his scheme in June that "If the right forme of primitive episcopacy were truly stated forth unto us, it would (questionlesse) take and lead our judgements along therewith".⁸ The difficulty was that Ussher's scheme never

³ William Shaw, *A History of the English Church during the Civil Wars and under the Commonwealth*, 2 Vols. (London, 1900), Vol. 1, 100.

⁴ Edward Bagshaw, *Mr. Bagshaw's speech in parliament February ninth 1640. Concerning episcopacy and the London petition* (London, 1641), Wing (2nd edn.)/B399, 1-2, quoted by Ford, *Ussher*, 236.

⁵ Ford, *Ussher*, 236.

⁶ Conrad Russell, *The Fall of the British Monarchies 1637 – 1642* (Oxford, 1991), 249 – 250; Ford, *Ussher*, 255.

⁷ William Prynne, *The antipathie of the English lordly prelacie* (London, 1641), 493, quoted in Ford, *Ussher*, 229.

⁸ Sir Edward Dering, *A Collection of Speeches made by Sir Edward Dering, Knight and Baronet, in matter of religion* (London, 1642), Wing/D1103, 48,114.

was stated to parliament. It was set out before the King on 21st January 1641, but Charles rejected it.⁹ In a speech to parliament Charles confirmed his commitment to the episcopal office by law established (as he saw it) and would not admit to any alteration of it save to return it to the way it was established in the time of Queen Elizabeth and his father.¹⁰ As Richard Baxter put it “as he would not when others would, so others would not when he would”.¹¹ Ussher would not pursue it without Charles’ agreement.

It is from Ussher’s scheme that Dering and Bishop John Williams respectively would draw inspiration, though Dering’s was closer in tenor to that of Ussher while Williams was more conservative. Briefly, it is worth noting that while both latter schemes preserved the office of bishop, Dering’s scheme left the locus of administration and political power with a ministerial synod, whereas Williams’ left effective control of the diocesan government with the bishop.¹² As noted at the end of Chapter One however hopes for a settlement based on a reduced episcopacy collapsed at about this time and Dering’s and Williams’ schemes were introduced too late to arrest the Commons’ movement towards total abolition. Neither gained traction in parliament.¹³

The Root and Branch Bill

The Root and Branch Bill was introduced into the House of Commons on 27th May 1641 at a time when the House of Lords had twice rejected the Commons’ bill to remove the Bishops’ votes in the Lords, and would shortly do so for a third time.¹⁴ As we have seen David Como thinks this the principal reason why hopes for reduced episcopacy collapsed.¹⁵ Shaw would describe this rejection

⁹ Ford, *Ussher*, 237, 247.

¹⁰ For the Kings Speech to Parliament on 23rd January 1641 see Rushworth, *Historical Collections of Private Passages of State*, Vol 4, 134-165, British History Online (BHO), para. 337; Ford, *Ussher*, 247, 250.

¹¹ Richard Baxter, *Reliquae Baxterianae*, ed. Matthew Sylvester (London, 1696), 62, 93; Ford, *Ussher*, 255.

¹² William Abbott, ‘The issue of episcopacy in the Long Parliament, 1640 – 48’, (DPhil Thesis, University of Oxford, 1982), 31.

¹³ Dering’s scheme was introduced into the House of Commons on 21st June 1641 – *Proceedings in the Opening Session of the Long Parliament, House of Commons*, ed. Maija Jansson, 7 Vols., (New York, University of Rochester Press, 2000 – 2007), Vol 5, 262; Williams’ scheme was introduced to the House of Lords on 1st July 1641 and was read for a second time on 3rd July, after which “it sank without trace” - Ford, *Ussher*, 250. A copy of Williams’ bill can be found in *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution 1625 – 1660*, ed. Samuel R. Gardiner. (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1889, repr. 1979), 167.

¹⁴ The House of Lords would reject the ‘Bill Restraining Bishops and others from meddling in Secular Affairs’ at its third reading on 8th June 1641, House of Lords Journal, Vol. 4, 268 -269.

¹⁵ See Chapter One, page 42.

as bringing “an end to all dreams of a moderate Church reform”.¹⁶ Restoration bishop John Hacket would write of the Root and Branch Bill’s introduction, “and so began the downfall of Episcopacy, which was never heard, never suffered to plead at the Bar of the Parliament in its own Cause, but, as one says pertinently, *It was smother’d in a Crowd.*”¹⁷ In 1642 Sir Thomas Aston had made a similar point; “Episcopacy and Lyturgie are both legally planted, and at this time both violently assaulted; the question is whether the battery, or the defence, be stronger; The one side charges furiously, and the other suffers silently”.¹⁸ Both contemporary writers felt the established order had fallen prey to popular sedition.

David Como describes the Root and Branch Bill as a “full blown anti-episcopal turn”. For some, he says, the bill perhaps remained a negotiating ploy to get the Lords to revisit the issue of the prelates’ votes. But Como favours the argument that it “suggested a hardening of will”, shared by others outside parliament, who now expressed hope of the “turning out of the Byshops.... since now there is noe other remedy for Cure of the disease”.¹⁹

The bill had the title, ‘An act for the utter abolishing and taking away of all archbishops, bishops, their chancellors and commissaries, deans, deans and chapters, archdeacons, prebendaries, charters and canons, and other under offices, out of the Church of England’.²⁰ It was introduced into the Commons by Sir Edward Dering, although he subsequently maintained that he was not a supporter of it and it had been “pressed” into his hands by a dedicated opponent of the bishops, Sir Arthur Heselrige, with backing from Sir Henry Vane junior and Oliver Cromwell.²¹ Less religiously radical members also supported the bill, with Pym and Holles, amongst others, speaking in its favour during the debates of 27th May. Their speeches, as reported by D’Ewes, are significant as they support the argument that it was the Lords’ rejection of the

¹⁶ Shaw, *History of the English Church*, Vol.1, 65.

¹⁷ John Hacket, *Srinia Reserata: A Memorial offered to the Great Deservings of John Williams, DD* (London, 1692), 148.

¹⁸ Sir Thomas Aston, *The collector to the reader, a collection of sundry petitions presented to the Kings most excellent Majesty* (London, 1642).

¹⁹ David Como, *Radical Parliamentarians and the English Civil War* (Oxford, 2018), 92, quoting from the Bristol Archives, AC/C/36074/136e; Fletcher is of the opinion that “Many of those” who voted for the bill on 27th May may at first have seen it as a challenge to the Lords, a tactic to secure the passage of the bishops exclusion bill, but nevertheless sees it as a crucial step leading the Commons towards the radical objective—Anthony Fletcher, *The Outbreak of the English Civil War* (London, Arnold (Hodder), 1981), 101.

²⁰ Brief of the bill against archbishops, bishops, etc. SP 16/539:59 (Addenda, 27 May), copy in Jansson, *Proceedings*, Vol. 4, 617.

²¹ Dering, *A Collection of Speeches made by Sir Edward Dering*, 62.

bill to remove the prelates votes in the House of Lords that had spurred the radicals on to present the bill and was leading more moderate members to support it. The speeches demonstrated, said D'Ewes, "that our bishops had well ruined all religion amongst us and were not willing to yield to any the least reformation", and he records Mr Holles as saying,

that whereas we had lately passed a bill to bar them from having voices in the Lords House and that the said bill was not likely in respect of that part of it to be assented unto there, some of the said bishops have since boasted that they would now sit in the Upper House despite of the House of Commons.

After long debate the bill was referred to a committee of the whole house.²²

The original bill was "very short", doing little more than its title suggests, but after two months of debate it had grown to more than forty pages.²³ This is perhaps unsurprising. Pym, in his speech of 27th May, spoke of the "many other things there are which we must take into consideration which may be inserted into the bill", mentioning provision for all godly ministers and taking away of bishops votes in the House of Lords.²⁴ He set out to show the Commons that the bill involved a "constructive programme for the church" says Fletcher.²⁵ It is partly this "constructive programme" of "many other things" that enabled the bill to garner the support in the Commons that it actually did. A move to confiscate the deans' and chapters' land, wealth and income was popular with many MPs for the reasons noted below, as was the proposal to abolish the unpopular courts of High Commission and Star Chamber. The bill thus contained several measures that, taken individually, gained widespread approval from MPs of diverse opinions around reform. This chapter will concentrate on the measures concerning church government.

No complete copy of the bill as it stood when it was last debated in early August 1640 has survived, but its main provisions can be reconstructed from

²² D'Ewes, 27th May 1641 in Jansson, *Proceedings*, Vol. 4, 608.

²³ Dering, *A Collection of Speeches made by Sir Edward Dering*, 63; John Moore, 17th July 1641 in Jansson, *Proceedings*, Vol. 5, 687.

²⁴ Moore, 27th May 1641 in Jansson, *Proceedings*, Vol.4, 615.

²⁵ Fletcher, *Outbreak*, 100.

the Commons' Journals, parliamentary diaries, and newsletters.²⁶ Episcopacy, and the institutions such as deans and chapters that supported it were abolished. Though not included in the original bill, decisions were made to set up a new system of government in two stages. Its final form would be determined by a synod of divines, which it was intended should meet in the autumn of 1641 and work fast enough for the new jurisdiction to be established by 1 March 1642. In the meantime parliament would take all ecclesiastical jurisdiction into its own hands and proceed with the redistribution of the church's financial resources.²⁷ The debates that led to these far reaching resolutions revealed MPs' concern to use a period of control over the church for reform and renewal.²⁸

Chapter One has shown how members regarded reform as urgent, but it is notable that although the bill enjoyed majority support, such support was not, initially at least, overwhelming. The resolution of 27th May to read the bill a second time was passed by only 31 votes (139 for and 108 against) indicating that the proponents of the bill could not yet rely on the unanimous support that had been apparent in the debates on the canons in the previous year.²⁹ On 2nd June the Derbyshire MP Sir John Coke wrote to his father, "Tomorrow the abolition of Episcopacy shall be debated in the House of Commons, and it is doubtful on whether side the scale will turn".³⁰ Over the next few months certain members, most notably William Pleydell, Benjamin Rudyard, John Colepeper and Dering would put up a spirited defense of episcopacy or some moderated form of it but the house would nonetheless resolve to reform the church by abolishing government by bishops, by placing ecclesiastical

²⁶ See Anthony Fletcher, 'Concern for renewal in the root and branch debates of 1641' *Studies in Church History* 14: 1977, 279-286., and Fletcher, *Outbreak*, 102; A copy of what is possibly the original bill can be found in John Nalson, *An Impartial Collection of the great Affairs of State* (London 1683), Vol 2, 300.

²⁷ Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Cowper MSS*, Vol. 2, 288. A letter of 14th July from John Coke Jnr to his father at Melbourne Hall advises, "The bill at present in the House of Commons is to translate all episcopal authority and jurisdiction from the persons of the now bishops into the hands of nine commissioners for every shire; who are to execute it in such manner as the bishops should have done until the 1st of March next. In the meantime it is intended that a synod shall be called to consult of the settling of a new government." This source is cited by Fletcher in 'Concern' and in *Outbreak* to support the statement that this was to be a temporary scheme only pending consultation with a synod of divines. Fletcher's other cited source is BL Sloane MS, fol 17r. The temporary nature of the scheme is supported by Dering in his speech of 21st June 1641 when he refers to Vane's scheme as a proposal for commissioners "until a future government be resolved upon" and also to its being "an interregnum of commissioners" – Dering, *A collection of Speeches made by Sir Edward Dering*, 60-78.

²⁸ Fletcher, 'Concern', 279.

²⁹ Commons Journal, Vol. 2, 158.

³⁰ HMC, *Cowper MSS*, Vol. 2, 285.

jurisdiction in parliament's hands and those of persons to be appointed by parliament, and by agreeing to use the wealth of the current hierarchical structure to fund a learned and pious preaching ministry.

The Commons approached its reform agenda in a systematic way. Notwithstanding frequent interruptions for other, more pressing business on the 12th July the House resolved to replace the discipline afforded by church courts with nine lay commissioners in each shire who would exercise the old ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and with two further lay commissions to execute the archiepiscopal jurisdictions of Canterbury and York. The commissioners would be appointed by parliament. On 21st June Henry Vane had proposed that commissioners be appointed comprising equal numbers of both lay and ministerial representatives and it is perhaps a mark of growing radicalism in the Commons that the scheme would develop to be lay commissioners only.³¹ D'Ewes was persuaded during the debates of 12th July; "Divers spoke touching the committing of all ecclesiastical jurisdiction to lay commissioners. Mr. Selden spoke exceedingly well to it and showed that for the said jurisdiction it might be exercised by laymen".³²

It is not clear how in practice these commissions would operate, but a remark by Sir John Coke to his father on 14 July suggests that there was no intention to change the procedure of the courts: the commissioners would govern, he wrote, 'in such manner as the bishops should have done'.³³ The house rejected Sir Edward Hyde's proposal that appeals from county to metropolitan commissioners should be allowed, a predictable reaction, says Fletcher, which reflected the gentry's strong prejudice in favour of county independence. The memory of Laud was too fresh for any tolerance of central busybodies he concludes.³⁴ Rights of appeal were however to be allowed from the archiepiscopal commissioners, though it is not clear to whom.³⁵

The inherent anti-clericalism of the scheme is apparent, and although John Holland notes that MPs agreed that the commissioners should be allowed to appoint members of the clergy to assist them in certain particulars, the Commons' majority Erastian position points to the future and the debates of

³¹ Henry Vane's original proposal is set out by D'Ewes, John Holland and an anonymous diarist, all 21st June 1641 in Jansson, *Proceedings*, Vol. 5, at 254, 257, and 260.

³² D'Ewes, 12th July 1641 in Jansson, *Proceedings*, Vol. 5, 603; Shaw, *History of the English Church*, Vol. 1, 95.

³³ Fletcher, 'Concern', 280, quoting from HMC, *Cowper MSS*, 2, 288.

³⁴ Fletcher, 'Concern', 280, citing Harley MS 163, fol 789V.

³⁵ Moore, 2nd August 1641 in Jansson, *Proceedings*, Vol. 6, 171.

1645 and 1646 on the Westminster Assembly's scheme for church government.³⁶

A further concern for MPs currently was ordination. The need for more pious, learned and effective preachers was becoming increasingly urgent and could not be achieved without a means to ordain new ones. Pleydell argued that only bishops could ordain. At the other extreme some radical 'rooters', "well tutored by the presbyterian Scots commissioners" writes Fletcher, argued that "all the ministers in the county had right of ordination iure divino".³⁷ A proposal by D'Ewes occupied the middle ground. D'Ewes suggested that five divines of "learning, piety and integrity" should be trusted with nomination and ordination in each shire.³⁸ Fletcher surmises that this proposal was attractive because it neatly fitted the provincial pattern of social relationships between puritan gentry and divines and the long standing patronage system of local recruitment into livings. MPs and their friends, acting as commissioners, would nominate ordination committees in their own counties, appointing local clergy whom they knew well, who depended on their patronage and who served in their home parishes or even their households.³⁹ Most MPs, including even those of very radical views on religion, were not yet ready to abandon long standing social structures and parish based hierarchies. As debates on church government progressed into the middle of the decade this cultural and social conservatism would remain to the fore and when faced with a binary choice between presbyterianism and independency would be one of the reasons why many members chose the former. Presbyterianism offered them the opportunity to be involved in the conciliar system as elders at varying levels and thus maintained the social hierarchy within their own communities with which they were familiar.

Lay control of discipline and ordination was not the only radical measure included in the Root and Branch Bill. Early in the process members' thoughts turned to the question of how to finance a proper preaching ministry. The preaching ministry which MPs yearned for, urged Benjamin Rudyard, implied a well-paid ministry. He referred to current rumours that the root and branch men merely wished to grasp church lands for secular uses: "it will be a

³⁶ Holland, 12th July 1641 in Jansson, *Proceedings*, Vol. 5, 607.

³⁷ Fletcher, 'Concern', 281; D'Ewes, 17th July 1641 in Jansson, *Proceedings*, Vol. 5, 684.

³⁸ Fletcher, 'Concern', 282, quoting from Harley MS 163, fol 790; D'Ewes, 17th July 1641 in Jansson, *Proceedings*, Vol. 5, 684.

³⁹ Fletcher, 'Concern', 282.

shameful approach to so flourishing a kingdom as this to have a poor beggarly clergy” he said, “burning and shining lights do well deserve to be set in good candlesticks”.⁴⁰ The Commons’ solution was to abolish deans and chapters, confiscate their lands and place their wealth and income into the hands of feoffees to be applied “to the advancement of learning and piety”.⁴¹ Bishops impropriations and advowsons would also go to the feoffees for application as aforesaid.⁴² The vote to abolish deans and chapters passed by 210 votes to 4, a much larger majority than that in favour of a second reading of the original bill.⁴³

Fletcher sees the outcome of the debates on the Root and Branch Bill as signifying the point at which several moderate MPs fell into line with their more radical colleagues such as Nathaniel Fiennes and Henry Vane. This does not mean however that they supported all the aims of the supporters of root and branch. The use of dean and chapter lands for the payment of preaching ministers satisfied the hopes and expectations of many who were concerned for piety. These men may still have been content with some form of modified episcopacy, but events overtook them.

If there was solid support for the Root and Branch Bill, why was it abortive? Fletcher believes the house simply ran out of parliamentary time before the recess of 9th September.⁴⁴ Jaqueline Eales believes it was “shelved” because it was too divisive, and Abbott attributes its failure not only to weight of business, but also discouragement about the pro-episcopal position in the Lords.⁴⁵ A contemporary albeit biased voice, Clarendon, would have his readers believe that his chairmanship of the committee handling the bill was cunningly designed to hinder its progress, such that after “They were forced to discontinue their beloved Bill, and let laid aside”, Hesilrige would declare in the House “ that he would never hereafter put an Enemy into the Chair”.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Fletcher, ‘Concern’, 284, quoting from Nalson, *Collection of the Affairs of State*, Vol. 2, 298-300.

⁴¹ Fletcher, ‘Concern’, 283.

⁴² Fletcher, ‘Concern’, 283, citing Shaw, *A History of the English Church*, Vol 1, 90 and 94.

⁴³ Moore, 15th June 1641 in Jansson, *Proceedings*, vol 5, 176.

⁴⁴ Fletcher, ‘Concern’, 284.

⁴⁵ Jaqueline Eales, ‘A Road to Revolution: The Continuity of Puritanism, 159-1642’ in Christopher Durston and Jaqueline Eales, eds. *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560 -1700* (New York, 1996), 206; Abbott, ‘The Issue of Episcopacy’, 39.

⁴⁶ Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England* (Oxford, 1712), Vol.1, Book III, 275/276.

In the final debate before the recess D'Ewes noted sorrowfully that, despite the political achievements of the previous nine months, the session had done nothing to restore the liberty of men's consciences. 'Some good bills', he reminded the House, had languished in committees while they had discussed root and branch: "for our falling upon one great bill (I meant the bill of episcopacy) which had yet proved too great to pass out at these doors made us unhappily to neglect and lay aside all the rest".⁴⁷ This chapter will now examine this 'great bill's' interim scheme for church government in more detail, highlighting its two most notable features and its two most striking omissions.

The interim scheme for church government - Erastian and laicized

The most notable, and perhaps the most surprising of the interim scheme's features, was the high level of parliamentary control and lay involvement, and likewise the almost total lack of clerical involvement. Parliamentary control was absolutely at the forefront of the changes. As Nalson said of it:

here was to be a thorough Reformation indeed, and not only the Bishops were to be excluded from Government but even all inferior Clergy. A government so far from primitive that no age ever saw anything like it, and which had it succeeded, would have justified the Vulgar Scomm of the papists, that our Religion is a Parliament Religion.⁴⁸

Although the debates discussed in Chapter One demonstrate MPs' firm belief in parliament's supreme role in the church, they do not indicate anything as radical as the interim scheme in its final form. Perhaps the members were comforted by D'Ewes assertion that parliament did not intend to employ the lay commissioners about any spiritual function but only that form of ecclesiastical government which concerned matters of title, matrimony, bastardy etc.⁴⁹ Perhaps also MPs, seeing this as an interim measure only, did not give it the attention they might otherwise have done or saw it as necessary to put in place pending input from the meeting of divines they were to convene after the recess. The primary sources offer little insight of the intended role of this meeting of divines. In a letter of 28th December 1640

⁴⁷ Fletcher, 'Concern', 285, quoting from Harley MS 164, fols 5>i3r/v; D'Ewes, 9th September 1641 in Jansson, *Proceedings*, Vol. 6, 714.

⁴⁸ Nalson, *Collection of the Affairs of State*, Vol. 2, 415.

⁴⁹ D'Ewes, 10th July 1641 in Jansson, *Proceedings*, Vol. 5, 588.

Baillie, who appears to have had some advance notice of what was to be proposed the following year, indicates his belief that any synod or assembly convened after parliament had set up a system of its own would be used to implement it only. The “church being constitute” after parliament had settled “a modell of their own”, he wrote, “a Generall Assemblie may be called to perfyte it”.⁵⁰ The letter of 14th July 1641 from John Coke Jnr to his father states merely that the synod shall be called “to consult of the settling of a new government”.⁵¹

The interim scheme for church government - The abolition of episcopacy and its impact on social order

The Root and Branch Bill’s second most notable feature is its arguably precipitative abolition of episcopacy with immediate effect, which meant the interim scheme must be something completely new. A comparison of parliament’s debates during the preceding winter and their debates on the bill shows that earlier fears of the social and religious disorder which might follow the removal of the bishops were much less pronounced in the summer of 1641. Fletcher says that the group who drove the bill forward skillfully allayed these fears. Members were persuaded, he writes, to put confidence in their own ability to handle such disorder as might occur in the interval before a new form of church government was settled.⁵² Those who argued that it was unwise to demolish the existing system without having another to put in its place were answered by the bill’s supporters such as D’Ewes who argued, “before a new house can be raised where an old one stood the old one must first be pulled down”.⁵³ And in any event, D’Ewes was confident that it would not take long for parliament to have a new government in place. “Nor shall we need to study long for a new church government, having so evident a platform in so many Reformed churches” he told the Commons on 27th May.⁵⁴ The foreign states which supported Reformed churches were used as an example of how ‘bishopless’ nations could function without social or religious disorder. Furthermore, the aim of the bill as a whole, and in particular the provision to

⁵⁰ Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, Vol.1, 287.

⁵¹ Page 50, note 27 above.

⁵² Fletcher, ‘Concern’, 286.

⁵³ D’Ewes, 12th June 1641 in Jansson, *Proceedings*, Vol. 5, 509.

⁵⁴ D’Ewes, 27th May 1641 in Jansson, *Proceedings*, Vol. 4, 607.

use the wealth of the deans and chapters to maintain piety and learning, went some way to satisfying concerns. D'Ewes told the House on 27th July while arguing in support of this provision, "we know the way to maintain it (piety) is to abolish whoring, swearing and drinking, and to increase preaching and praying". And to answer calls for greater certainty he suggested adding the words "for the advancement of true religion". "Divers called to have those words I had mentioned inserted", wrote D'Ewes, and the vote was passed.⁵⁵

On the 10th July certain MPs who likely opposed the bill supported a request by Pleydell to read the tract *A Protestation Protested* to the House, perhaps an attempt on their part to add weight to their arguments of the risk of schism and separation arising from debates on church government.⁵⁶ This 'seditious pamphlet' was Henry Burton's critique of the Protestation, and its reading was resisted by D'Ewes, Fiennes and others, possibly because they most emphatically did not want the spectre of such schism and separation raised at this time.⁵⁷ The supporters of the bill could use cunning in addition to principled persuasion to push their agenda through the house.

Although initially affording some comfort, the attempts to allay MPs' fears of the disorder and confusion that might accompany the abolition of episcopacy did not put an end to those fears. During the summer of 1641 a number of pamphlets appeared warning of dangerous sects, "whose lewd and abominable exercise is so scandalous, blasphemous, heathenish and abominable", and even root and branch supporters were unnerved.⁵⁸ Stanley Gower wrote to Sir Robert Harley from Herefordshire about Brownists there who "discourage your reformation of our Zion" and urged that the Commons should "timely meet with this anarchy and confusion".⁵⁹ Alarm was also generated by the spread of lay preaching that was publicized by John Taylor's *Swarm of Sectaries and Schismatics*.⁶⁰ The growing awareness of how religious radicals might be threatening social and political order (well founded or not) was a prime mover in the pro-episcopal petitioning campaign later in the year,

⁵⁵ D'Ewes, 27th July 1641 in Jansson, *Proceedings*, Vol. 6, 105.

⁵⁶ Henry Burton, *The Protestation Protested* (London, 1641).

⁵⁷ D'Ewes, 10th July 1641 in Jansson, *Proceedings*, Vol. 5, 588.

⁵⁸ Anon, *A Discovery of 29 Sects here in London* (London, 1641), 6; Anon, *A Nest of Serpents Discovered* (London, 1641).

⁵⁹ Fletcher, *Outbreak*, 112, citing HMC Portland, III, 79.

⁶⁰ John Taylor, *Swarm of Sectaries and Schismatics*, (London, 1641).

but it would also bring moderate supporters of root and branch to the realisation that their reformation was not only necessary, but urgent.

In a printed speech dated 10th November 1641 Sir William Drake expressed his yearning for a middle way. There could be no “quiet settled state”, he declared, until some rule and uniformity was brought to the religious life of the nation, caught as it was in “an uncertain condition between illegal innovations and superstitions on the one side and I know not what lawless and irregular confusion on the other.” It was natural for men not limited by law to fly from one extreme, where they have been held by fear, to another he said, and they were now running, “from superstition and idolatry to irreverence and contempt of Gods publike worship and Ordinances.”⁶¹ There is some doubt whether this speech was actually delivered to the Commons, but its sentiment was shared by many.⁶²

The interim scheme for church government - A presbyterian form of church government?

A striking, but perhaps not surprising truth about the interim scheme is that it is not a presbyterian scheme. There is nothing in the Commons debates concerning the Root and Branch Bill to suggest that any of the members favoured, let alone were pushing for a presbyterian form of church government. Furthermore, there is little to suggest that anyone outside parliament, other than the Scots, was as yet openly pressing for one either, although as we will see in Chapter Three it is at about this time that the first divergences between presbyterian and congregational clergy appear in print. Baillie, perhaps optimistically, believed in December 1640 that the “farr greatest part are for our discipline”, and in February 1641 that “all are for the erecting of a kind of Presbyteries”.⁶³ The primary sources reveal several instances where it is clear that some MPs seeking thorough religious reform would have considered the presbyterian system a possible option. Chapter Three of this thesis will pick up some of these instances when discussing the

⁶¹ William Drake, *Sir William Drake his speech to Parliament concerning the present distempers, November 10th 1641* (London, 1641), Wing/D2138, 3-4.

⁶² Willson H. Coates, ed, *The Diary of Sir Symonds D'Ewes*, (USA, Archon Books, 1970), 117, note 15; and A.D.T. Cromartie, ‘The Printing of Parliamentary Speeches November 1640 - July 1642’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Mar. 1990), 42, comment on its validity.

⁶³ Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, Vol.1, 287, 303.

influence of the English clergy on parliament generally and its members individually. Potential other sources of knowledge and influence include the Scots as noted in Chapter One, and other foreign Reformed churches.

It is difficult to assess the extent to which the interim scheme draws on elements of a presbyterian system as known to or understood by the bill's promoters. In part this is due to the little we know about the interim scheme. It remains, to us at least, a skeleton of something yet to be fully developed. It is also due to the way that, as we have seen in the Introduction, presbyterianism disappears from the record in the early Stuart years and it is therefore far from clear what an English presbyterian system would look like in 1641. The Bishops Wars, and the presence of the Scottish Commissioners in London would however have familiarised many MPs and peers with the Scottish Presbyterian Church, so a comparison with that church is appropriate.

Perhaps the clearest explanation of the Scottish system in 1640 can be found in Alexander Henderson's *The Government and order of the Church of Scotland*. This sets out first, detailed information on the four types of officers in the church (Pastors, Doctors, Elders, Deacons), the manner of their appointment and their roles within the church, and secondly a description of the four Assemblies of the Church, how they are constituted and what each does. The four assemblies, Henderson tells us, are commonly known as Church Sessions, particular Elderships or Consistories; Presbyteries or Classes; Provincial Synods; and Nationall or General Assemblies. He explains that "none of these assemblies, from the least to the greatest are to treat of matters pertaining to the civill jurisdiction and Magistrate, but only of matters Spirituall and Ecclesiastical". He adds that, "The lesser and inferior assembly is subordinate to the superior and greater....but all the particular Churches are of equal power and authority and are ruled and judged by themselves and their intrinsicall power in assemblies composed, and consisting of their officers and commissioners from them."⁶⁴ As one would expect from what is primarily a polemic, Henderson stresses the strength of the hierarchical system of assemblies as bringing "externall order, strength and stedfastness, ...which is lovely and comfortable to all fearing God". Furthermore, it "hath been very

⁶⁴ Henderson, *The government and order of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1641), 33.

awefull and terrible, as an Armie with Banners, to all Papists, to all Heretics, Schismatics, Hirelings and all ungodly persons".⁶⁵

The differences between Henderson's church and the interim scheme devised by the Commons in the summer of 1641 are many, the similarities few. The interim scheme was decidedly Erastian in tone, the Scottish system most certainly was not. In the Scottish Church the Monarch played the part of a "Supreme Civil President" attending either in person or through a High Commissioner the National Synod or General Assembly, he was to watch and have inspection over the church and church matters, but in a civill way only.⁶⁶ The Scottish parliament would be asked to ratify decisions of the Kirk where necessary, but the Scottish parliament had almost no control over the Kirk's governing structures.⁶⁷ Under the interim scheme on the other hand, the English parliament and its appointed lay commissioners were governing the church and controlling its ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

The interim scheme placed ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the hands of a commission in each shire, it made no clear provision for any right of appeal from decisions of a commission. Indeed, as already mentioned a proposal for appeals put forward by Sir Edward Hyde did not meet with favour. This is very unlike the hierarchical system in Scotland, where Henderson describes a system of appeals and referrals up and down the ranking assemblies.

Only on ordination do we find some similarities, both systems allowing for lay involvement in ministerial ordinations.

For William Shaw it is significant that parliament did not seize this opportunity to adopt the Scottish system and MPs did not argue in favour of it. Almost every speaker of importance had expressed "a veneration for the character of a primitive Bishop" he wrote, and had called for the restoration of "the ancient primitive presbytery".⁶⁸ In his opinion there was the greatest possible difference between this and advocacy of a presbyterian system as it was understood in the seventeenth century. "A Presbyterian system as such had not entered the mind of the parliament" he added, and to support his opinion he quotes Derings's words from the debates on the Grand Remonstrance later in 1641:

⁶⁵ Henderson, *The government and order of the Church of Scotland*, 60.

⁶⁶ Henderson, *The government and order of the Church of Scotland*, 56, 66.

⁶⁷ Laura Stewart, *Rethinking the Scottish Revolution: Covenanted Scotland, 1637 - 1651* (Oxford, 2016), 18-19.

⁶⁸ Shaw, *History of the English Church*, 100.

Mr Speaker there is a certain newborn, unseen, ignorant, dangerous, desperate way of Independency. Are we for this independent way? Nay sir. Are we for the elder brother of it, the Presbyterian form? I have not yet heard any one gentleman within these walls stand up and assert his thoughts for either of those ways.⁶⁹

Shaw is correct to say that none of the debaters in the Commons called for the adoption of a presbyterian system along Scottish lines. He is however too quick to draw his conclusions. There are several reasons why individual MPs might not have sought a presbyterian system at this time, and their failure to do so does not preclude there having been presbyterian sentiment in the house.

First, Shaw's definition of the presbyterian system as it was understood in the seventeenth century, and against which he judges the debates is narrow and critical. Then, he says, presbyterianism was a clerical system, encroaching largely upon the civil and national life. It judged the actions and morals of individuals, it haughtily arrogated to itself a share of the national government.⁷⁰ Shaw's description is narrow and unforgiving. The Introduction to this thesis shows that later historians see a more diverse mix of ideas within seventeenth-century presbyterianism which would allow modern historians to find its presence where Shaw might not.

Secondly, the objective of root and branch supporters throughout 1641 was to secure the abolition of episcopacy and not merely to reduce it. There was though a real danger that moderate supporters of reform would successfully introduce a reduced episcopal system before a presbyterian system could be initiated. This risk was recognised by Baillie as early as December 1640 when he wrote, "The Primate of Ireland, and a great faction with him, will be for a limited good, and James Mitchells calked Episcopacie", but hoped that they would not "thryve in any of their designes".⁷¹ These fears led the Scottish ministers' to launch a concerted attack on limited episcopacy in early 1641.⁷² In March 1641 Baillie noted in correspondence that all the English ministers of Holland who were for the New-England way were now in England, and after noting his hope that the only considerable difference between them and the

⁶⁹ Shaw, *History of the English Church*, 101; Dering, *A collection of Speeches made by Sir Edward Dering*, 99.

⁷⁰ Shaw, *History of the English Church*, 101.

⁷¹ Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, Vol. 1, 287.

⁷² Anon, (attributed to George Gillespie), *Certain reasons tending to prove the unlawfulness and inexpediencie of all diocesan episcopacy (even the most moderate)*, (London, 1641); Robert Baillie, *The unlawfulness and danger of limited episcopacie* (London, 1641).

Scots and their allies will be about the jurisdiction of Synods and Presbyteries, Baillie continues; “Our questions with them of the new way, we hope to get determined to our mutual satisfaction, if we were ridd of Bishops; and till then, we have agreed to speak nothing of any thing wherein we differ”.⁷³

The comments and actions of the Scots referred to in the preceding paragraph evidence an understanding on the part of supporters of root and branch of the risk posed to their campaign by the supporters of reduced episcopacy. It is likely that root and branch supporters in parliament were aware of Ussher’s scheme and of the scheme being worked on by those attending Bishop Williams’ committee in the House of Lords. It is also possible that the agreement to suppress debate to which Baillie alludes had its adherents in parliament. The Commons records for 21st June 1641 show that when Vane introduced his interim scheme for commissioners he did so unexpectedly, interrupting Dering who was about to introduce his own scheme for reduced episcopacy.⁷⁴ Clearly, says Yule, “the Root and Branchers were trying to mobilise support for an attack on episcopacy and only produced their scheme when they absolutely had to”. Yule argues that Shaw sees Vane’s scheme “as another instance of the anti-clerical and anti-Presbyterian attitude of Parliament whereas in fact, it was part of a strategy of the Scots and their English allies” to ensure the abolition of episcopacy.⁷⁵ For Vane, no amendment of the current system would suffice for it “is so rotten and corrupt, from the very foundation of it to the top, that if we pull it not down now, it will fall about the eares of all those that endeavour it, within a very few years”.⁷⁶ Vane’s fellow parliamentary ‘rooters’ agreed. This was not the right time to introduce a form of presbyterian church government (or indeed a congregational form) to replace episcopacy as it stood a real risk of being voted down, never to return. Vane’s interim scheme served the purpose of holding the line against supporters of primitive episcopacy while events moved in the radicals’ favour.

A final reason why presbyterianism might not have been adopted for the interim scheme is MPs’ belief that it would not be difficult to find a new form

⁷³ Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, Vol. 1, 311.

⁷⁴ D’Ewes, Framlingham Gawdy, Holland, all 21st June, in Jansson, *Proceedings*, 247 – 266.

⁷⁵ George Yule, *Puritans in Politics, The Religious Legislation of the Long Parliament 1640 – 1647* (Sutton Courtney Press, 1981), 113.

⁷⁶ *Sir Henry Vane his speech in the House of Commons at a committee for a bill against episcopal government, 11th June 1641* (London, 1641), Wing/V76, 3-4.

of church government once episcopacy was abolished. Scottish presbyterianism was not the only example of presbyterianism from which MPs could adopt ideas for the English scheme. The Reformed churches of Switzerland and France had presbyterian systems. Whilst it may be the case that most parliamentarians did not currently favour the Scottish form of presbyterianism some clearly intended to look to the foreign Reformed churches for inspiration and therefore will not have ruled presbyterianism out as a possibility. Certain of the leading supporters of root and branch had praise for the foreign Reformed churches. Possibly as early as 1637 D'Ewes, in his *Primitive Practice for Preserving Truth*, regarded the abolition of episcopacy as a blessing vouchsafed by providence to the Scottish, French and Swiss churches "upon their first reformation".⁷⁷ He was keen, when speaking on 27th May in support of committal of the bill, to stress not only the beneficial attributes of the foreign Reformed churches, "truth and peace", but also the availability of, and his readiness to adopt their system of church government. D'Ewes said,

For when King James of blessed memory and his gracious Majesty who now is did marry their royal daughters to two princes which maintained the same church government and discipline which we now desire to have established, for the religion with them and us is the same. And neither of these two great princes would have married their eldest daughters where there was neither truth no peace to be found. Nor shall we need to study long for a new church government, having so evident a platform in so many reformed churches.⁷⁸

Supporters of episcopacy used the argument that political and social instability would follow its abolition. Supporters of the bill were not afraid to use the example of the foreign Reformed churches, as D'Ewes did, to undermine the episcopalians' arguments. Arguing in favour of the bill on 11th June Sir John Wray labelled the bishops self-seekers and asserted that had the Danish prelates sought the service of God they would not have "utterly been

⁷⁷ Simonds D'Ewes, *The Primitive Practice for Preserving Truth* (London, 1645), 65. Quoted in Abbott, 'The Issue of Episcopacy', 64. Abbott reports D'Ewes as saying that he had written it "about eight years since" for his private use.

⁷⁸ D'Ewes, 27th May 1641 in Jansson, *Proceedings*, Vol. 4, 607. James' daughter Elizabeth married Frederick Elector of Palatine in 1613 and Charles' daughter Mary married William of Orange in May 1641.

extirpated, as they were both by both king and commons”.⁷⁹ In the same debate Fiennes called upon his colleagues to consider the lack of division within the Swiss, French and other reformed churches, and the lack of division within the Scottish church until bishops “crept in amongst them”.⁸⁰ Both Wray and Fiennes were speaking from experience, both having spent time on the continent. Abbott writes that Wray had travelled to the Continent in his youth and while there had apparently imbibed a strong hatred of papists.⁸¹ Fiennes’ biographer notes that Fiennes went to Geneva and elsewhere in Switzerland as a young man, where he was influenced further in his animosity toward the church which he had already learned from his father (William Fiennes, First Viscount Saye and Sele). He also reports that there is strong evidence that Fiennes was in Scotland in 1639 and early 1640.⁸²

For all these reasons the lack of any presbyterian element in the root and branch interim scheme should not be taken to prove that there was no presbyterian sentiment in the Commons at this time.

The interim scheme for church government - Scriptural warrant

A second significant, and somewhat strange omission from the interim scheme is the lack of any claim for scriptural warrant.

A key element of MPs’ arguments against the prelatical bishops and in favour of primitive episcopacy is that the latter had scriptural warrant whereas the former did not. Ussher’s scheme included strong scriptural evidence in its favour. It is surprising then that those speaking in favour of the bill’s interim scheme do not argue that the lay commissions to be set up are mandated in the Bible. It is also hard to understand given the importance of scripture to most seventeenth-century Protestants that the interim scheme was acceptable to them without scriptural support. Several possible explanations present themselves. The most obvious is that the record is lost to us. Perhaps however at this juncture the need to assert the supreme authority of parliament in church matters and ergo the need to remove the bishops trumped the

⁷⁹ Moore, 11th June 1641 in Jansson, *Proceedings*, Vol. 5, 99. The editor notes that she has not been able to find a source for this reference.

⁸⁰ Moore, 11th June 1641 in Jansson, *Proceedings*, Vol. 5, 99.

⁸¹ Abbott, ‘The Issue of Episcopacy’, 66.

⁸² Marc Schwartz, ‘Fiennes, Nathaniel (1607/8 - 1669), politician and army officer’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 Sept 2004.

scriptural arguments. Conrad Russell makes the point that the root and branch scheme for church government was probably the result of “a principled determination that Charles should never again control the church”.⁸³ Perhaps also this is strong evidence that the interim scheme was indeed intended to be temporary, and the Commons was leaving it for the planned assembly of divines to give the scheme theological support or make such amendments as necessary to ensure it was in accordance with the word of God.

After the recess – the Grand Remonstrance

The adjournment of parliament in September stalled the push for root and branch reform. Earlier in this chapter we have noted historians’ differing opinions why the Root and Branch Bill failed. Neither the bill nor its interim scheme were picked up again when parliament resumed in October 1641. The debates that followed in the next three months point to other possible reasons why the bill was abandoned, not least a resurgent “Episcopall Partie” in the house, and the Junto’s new political imperative, namely the Grand Remonstrance.

Major debates on the proposed remonstrance took place in November 1641. It is clear from D’Ewes record of these debates that the ‘Episcopall partie’ still enjoyed considerable support.⁸⁴ D’Ewes notes that grievances concerning the prayer book and bishops’ lands were left out from the remonstrance because the “Episcopall partie were soe strong in the howse”.⁸⁵ When it came to a clause alleging that the bishops had brought “Idolatrie and popery” into the church however the house divided and the supporters of root and branch reform were successful in keeping the clause, 124 voting for it, 99 against.⁸⁶ When the Grand Remonstrance went to a vote of the house on 22nd November, it passed by 159 votes to 148.⁸⁷ The reformers were in the majority, but only just. However, Edward Hyde, the acknowledged leader at this time of the pro-episcopalians in the house, and his fellow royalists would

⁸³ Russell, *Fall of the British Monarchies*, 345.

⁸⁴ D’Ewes, 16th November 1641, in Willson H. Coates, ed, *The Diary of Sir Symonds D’Ewes*, (USA, Archon Books, 1970), 151; Commons Journal, Vol. 2, 16th November 1641, 316-317.

⁸⁵ D’Ewes, 16th November 1641 in Coates, *The Diary of Sir Symonds D’Ewes*, 151.

⁸⁶ D’Ewes, 16th November 1641 in Coates, *The Diary of Sir Symonds D’Ewes*, 152.

⁸⁷ D’Ewes, 22nd November 1641 in Coates, *The Diary of Sir Symonds D’Ewes*, 186.

in 1642 surrender ground to the root and branch supporters when they left parliament to join the King in Oxford.⁸⁸

Historians sometimes overlook the religious clauses in the Grand Remonstrance because of its broader political significance, but the attack on the episcopal church was one of its central objectives. Aside from the now ubiquitous blame placed on the bishops for all the ills of the Kingdom, the Grand Remonstrance contains a defence of puritans which indicates the strength of that ‘party’ in the house. It accuses the bishops of multiplying and enlarging “the differences between the common Protestants and those whom they call Puritans” and seeking to root them (the Puritans) out of the Kingdom, regardless of the fact that those they call puritan include those who “desire to preserve the laws and liberties of the Kingdom, and to maintain religion in the power of it”.⁸⁹

The Grand Remonstrance refutes accusations that parliament intends to abolish all church government leaving “every man to his own fancy for the service and worship of God, absolving him of that obedience which he owes under God to His Majesty” and maintains the right of parliament to establish rules of order and discipline for the church and state.⁹⁰ Clause 184 reads:

and we do hereby declare that it is far from our purpose or desire to let loose the golden reins of discipline and government in the Church, to leave private persons or particular congregations to take up what form of Divine Service they please, for we hold it requisite that there should be throughout the whole realm a conformity to that order which the laws enjoin according to the Word of God. And we desire to unburden the consciences of men of needless and superstitious ceremonies, suppress innovations, and take away the monuments of idolatry.⁹¹

Immediately following clause 184 the Commons states its desire to convene a general synod.⁹² This will be discussed in Chapter Four.

⁸⁸ Coates, editor of *The Diary of Sir Symonds D’Ewes* considers Hyde thus, noting his attempts to mould royalist sentiment out of the conservative spirit which emerged in parliament at this time after the activity of the months before the recess – page xxix.

⁸⁹ The Grand Remonstrance, 1641, in Samuel R. Gardiner, ed. *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution 1625-1660* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1899), 206-207, 216.

⁹⁰ The Grand Remonstrance, 1641, Clause 182, in Gardiner, *Constitutional Documents*, 228.

⁹¹ The Grand Remonstrance, 1641, Clause 184, in Gardiner, *Constitutional Documents*, 229.

⁹² The Grand Remonstrance, 1641, Clause 185, in Gardiner, *Constitutional Documents*, 229.

Without specifying the form of church government which it desires to see in place of the current episcopal system, the Grand Remonstrance contains a clear rejection of independency. It allows for presbyterianism or indeed any other system that would ensure the “peace and good government of the church” and that conforms to the Word of God.⁹³ It possibly allows also for a form of reduced episcopacy, although in hindsight it is difficult to see how any system which retained bishops, however ‘reduced’ their powers might be, could gain favour in the Commons given the amount of vitriol poured forth against them in the preceding year, and MPs probably were aware of this.

Summary

Fletcher concludes his essay ‘Concern’ by summing up the interim scheme under the Root and Branch Bill as follows: “The purpose of the interim scheme was spiritual renewal by preaching and moral discipline. If it was a bid for power by country gentlemen, it was also a sincere attempt to realise at last the authentic puritan programme of evangelical revival, which had preoccupied gentry in many parts of England since the 1570s and 80s”.⁹⁴ For some MPs this may well have been the case, for others however the aim may have been political, namely to remove the bishops and with them the King’s power base. The introduction of the scheme at a point at which Dering was pressing an alternative scheme for episcopacy could point to either, or indeed both conclusions.

What is reasonably clear is that when the Long Parliament went into recess on 9th September 1641, Laud’s form of episcopacy was dead and although supporters of reduced episcopacy would continue to campaign the supporters of root and branch had the upper hand in the Commons. The Commons majority for the Root and Branch Bill shows that over the previous ten months those in favour of radical religious reform had not only honed their ideas for the church they had also persuaded a majority of their fellow MPs to their point of view. Those such as D’Ewes who in December 1640 had urged that parliament proceed with “great moderation” were by the summer of 1641 prepared to give wholehearted support to the bill.⁹⁵ Furthermore, godly

⁹³ The Grand Remonstrance, 1641, Clauses 184 and 185, in Gardiner, *Constitutional Documents*, 229.

⁹⁴ Fletcher, ‘Concern’, 286.

⁹⁵ See D’Ewes, 11th December 1640, quoted on page 35 in Chapter One.

awareness in the country that parliament had decisively rejected the established episcopal regime would help to urge the campaign on in the coming months and years. Accordingly, although D'Ewes would express disappointment at the failing of "a great bill" that proved "too great to pass", much of value to the root and branch campaign had been achieved.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ See D'Ewes, 9th September 1641, quoted on page 53 above.

Chapter Three

The influence of the clergy

As without doubt the archbishop of Canterbury had never so great an influence upon the counsels at court as Dr. Burgess and Mr. Marshall had then upon the houses.¹

This was Clarendon's opinion, admittedly partial, of the ability of the leading puritan clergy of the early 1640s to influence parliament in matters of the church. This chapter will step away from the broader narrative of events in the years 1640 – 1643 to focus on the part played by the puritan clergy in these events. It will consider the identity of the ministers in question and the messages contained in their sermons to parliament. It will also locate the beginnings of the divergence of the presbyterian and congregational clergy and assess how this might have impacted on MPs. The Introduction to this thesis discusses the puritan networks of the early Stuart years and this chapter will show how those networks fostered personal connections between the puritan clergy and MPs in the Long Parliament. First however it is important to understand what the puritan clergy wanted.

The Ministers' Petition and Remonstrance

Chapter One has touched on the Ministers' Petition and Remonstrance delivered to the Commons on 23rd January 1641. No copy of this document has survived but its substance can be gathered from various sources. William Shaw has studied these and notes that the remonstrance consisted of "near fourscore heads" many of which touched upon corruption in matters of church government. Specifically, he lists complaints such as that church governors and officers are burdensome to all; bishops are not of divine institution, though they claim that they are; bishops wrongly assume sole rights of ordination and

¹ Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1843), Vol. 1, 121. Here Clarendon is speaking of October 1641 following the introduction to the Commons of the latest bill to take away the bishops votes in parliament.

jurisdiction; and the inconvenience of bishops' large diocese.² Robert Baillie summed the document up as a complaint about the Church of England's corruptions in "doctrine, discipline, lyfe and all".³ Signed in all by about 800 clergy nationwide it would be reasonable to assume that the Ministers' Petition and Remonstrance gives the historian a good overview of what they desired at this time.⁴

Notwithstanding its long list of complaints about the Laudian Church, Shaw can describe the Ministers' Petition and Remonstrance as a "standard of moderate reform", and Elliot Vernon places its preparation in the hands of those he describes as "moderate Puritan London clergy".⁵ While it is not possible to know the names of all ministers who organised the petition, these include Calamy and Marshall who were two of the seven ministers who presented the petition, and Cornelius Burgess and Calybutte Downing who subsequently avowed it.⁶ John White's name has also been added as one of those who were responsible for the preparation of the petition.⁷ Two of this five have already been noted per Clarendon as lead influencers of parliament, others will become familiar as this chapter progresses. All were connected to the 'Aldermanbury circle', a loose grouping of the London based godly clergy who met regularly at Edmund Calamy's house in Aldermanbury Street. The group has gained historical significance in part because of the lead it took in the battle against episcopacy and its support for parliament, but also because of its close connections with certain peers and MPs. These connections are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.⁸

² William Shaw, *A History of the English Church during the Civil Wars and under the Commonwealth*, 2 Vols. (London, 1900), Vol.1, 24-26. Shaw cites D'Ewes' diary, the Commons Journal and Verney's Notes as his sources.

³ Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, Vol.1, 292.

⁴ Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, Vol.1, 292. D'Ewes gives the number of signatures at "neare upon" 1,000 – D'Ewes, 23rd January 1641, in *The diary of Sir Symonds D'Ewes from the beginning of the Long Parliament to the opening of the trial of the Earl of Strafford*, ed. Wallace Notestein (Oxford University Press, 1923), 277

⁵ Shaw, *History of the English Church*, 23; Elliot Vernon, 'The Sion College Conclave and London Presbyterianism during the English Revolution' (Unpublished PHD Thesis, University of Cambridge, 1999), 51-52.

⁶ Shaw, *History of the English Church*, Vol. 1. 23-24, note 1. Baillie in fact says that sixteen of the "eldest and gravest" ministers handed in the petition but does not name them – Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, Vol.1. 292.

⁷ Jaqueline Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads: The Harleys of Brampton Bryan and the outbreak of the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 1990), 113.

⁸ The 'Aldermanbury circle' met from late 1640, but it is likely members of the group had met occasionally before that date. The name is a term of art used by historians.

The Ministers' Petition and Remonstrance was more cautious than the London Root and Branch Petition. It does not call for the abolition of episcopacy 'root and branch'. Thus, it is perhaps indicative of a willingness at this time to retain episcopacy in some much-reduced form provided Laudian excesses were removed and what emerges meets the overall aim of the godly clergy. Ministers views would develop and become more radical as time passes.

The Sermons

If the overall aim of the puritan clergy in the winter of 1640/1641 was moderate reform, this is not borne out by a study of the sermons given by some of their number to parliament. These sermons indicate a more radical position. The ultimate objective appears to be a Reformed Protestant Church and nation informed by and molded by the Bible, and the call was clear, parliament must reform the church, rooting out of the House of God everything that God had not planted. The puritan movement also exhibited a striking quest for national piety and regeneration, and this was included in the exhortations of the puritan clergy. Their early sermons in parliament however gave little hint of what a reformed church government should look like.

The first clergymen to preach in the Long Parliament were, unsurprisingly, Cornelius Burges and Stephen Marshall. Both were to become "pillars" of the puritan preaching programme.⁹ Speaking in the morning and afternoon respectively of 17th November 1640 both would exhort MPs to reform the church. Apparently sharing the Epistle Dedicatory in the printed copy of Burges' sermon, each preacher wished for God to make the parliament "the most accomplisht, best united, most successful and glorious House of Commons that ever sat in that High Court;" but to be so "chiefly in the effectual endeavours of a further sanctification of and stronger Guard about our true Palladium, the true Religion, already established amongst us, in the perfecting of this Reformation of it".¹⁰ Burges reminded MPs that this was the anniversary of Queen Elizabeth's accession and argued that "the very memory

⁹ John Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1969), 37. Wilson's book is a leading source on preaching in the Long Parliament in general and the fast sermons in particular. It covers the period up to the regicide.

¹⁰ Cornelius Burges, *The First Sermon, preached to the honovrable hovse of commons now assembled in Parliament at their Publique Fast. Novemb. 17. 1640* (London, 1641), Wing/B5671, Epistle Dedicatory, unpaginated.

of so blessed a work begun on this very day” should persuade the members “to go forward to perfect that happy reformation which yet in many parts lies unpolished and unperfected”.¹¹ Marshall, using more colourful language, urged parliament,

Bee ye purgers and preservers of our religion. Look thoroughly what is amisse and pluck up every plant that God hath not planted: throw to the Moales and to the Bats every ragge that have not God's stamp and name upon it.¹²

The Epistle Dedicatory also included a plea that appeared many times in future sermons, that parliament should act “in the erection, maintaining, protecting and encouraging of an able, godly, faithful, zealous, profitable preaching ministry”.¹³ Marshall seconded this in his sermon. “Yet give me leave onely to propound one thing” he said, “which it appears would prove a Catholike remedy for all our evils... and the healing of all our distempers; that is promoting, establishing and maintaining a faithful, learned, painful preaching ministry”.¹⁴

Wilson points out that the introductions to both sermons suggested, “intentionally to be sure”, that the preachers were prophetic messengers conveying the word of the Lord.¹⁵ Marshall, for example, states that he has a “special errand to deliver from the Lord”, and that is,

to assure [parliament] that the hand of God is upon them for good that seek him; but his power and wrath against all them that forsake him, viz. That God will be with you, while you be with him.¹⁶

Burges went further, imploring parliament to enter a solemn, strict and inviolable covenant with their God.¹⁷

Burges and Marshall’s sermons set the tone for most of the sermons that followed. It would be wrong however to conclude that only puritan preachers were invited to address parliament. Although no Laudian episcopalians

¹¹ Burges, *The First Sermon*, 72.

¹² Stephen Marshall, *A Sermon before the House of Commons (17th November 1640)* (London, 1641), Wing (2nd ed.)/ M776, 40.

¹³ See page 70, note 10 above.

¹⁴ Marshall, *A Sermon before the House of Commons (17th November 1640)*, 48.

¹⁵ Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament*, 38.

¹⁶ Marshall, *A Sermon before the House of Commons (17th November 1640)*, 2.

¹⁷ The theme of a religious covenant with God runs throughout Burges’ sermon of 17th November 1640.

appeared in the pulpit, (D'Ewes notes that "Noe Convocation man to be troubled to be preacher"), 'anglicans' such as John Gauden did.¹⁸ Indeed, Gauden was the next minister to follow Burges and Marshall, delivering his sermon to the Commons on 29th November 1640. Wilson writes that Gauden's exhortation had a very different cast to it than that of Burges and Marshall.¹⁹ Gauden, a future high churchman and divine right royalist, whilst seeking reformation, urged that it could be achieved by "a serious setting of (Churchmen) to the study, preaching and practizing of Truth and Peace in holy life".²⁰ His was an "abstract, irenic, discussion of Truth and Peace", explains Wilson, whereas Burges and Marshall consciously framed their sermons in terms of biblical precedents, drawing parallels between England's experiences and Israel's and missing no chance to invoke the spirit as well as the letter of prophecy. Wilson judges that these fundamental differences in temper, tone and style witness the nascent differentiation between puritans and 'anglicans' who might have reformist goals in common.²¹ They also suggest a period when all but the most ardent advocates of Laud desired some reform of the church and could gain a hearing from parliament. For this reason, perhaps those of a more puritan hue chose the 'softly, softly' approach urged by some in relation to the pressing of the London Root and Branch Petition and illustrated by the Ministers' Petition and Remonstrance.²²

In 1641 ministers took every opportunity to preach to MPs when MPs were gathered for humiliations and thanksgivings. The purpose of these sermons was made clear to their listeners. "Let this be the product of this solemn Fast to quicken you to a Nationall Reformation" urged Calamy in *Englands Looking-Glasse*.²³ He advised that the MPs should "bring us back not onely to our *first Reformation* in King Edwards dayes, but *reform the Reformation it self*" and perfect it "according to the word of God".²⁴ Most preachers would adopt biblical examples. In his sermon of 4th April 1641, *The Troublers Troubled*,

¹⁸ D'Ewes, 9th November 1640, in Notestein, *The diary of Sir Symonds D'Ewes*, 18. Notestein notes Peyton as recording that Rouse and others had urged that none of the authors of the late Canons, nor any member of the convocation be selected to preach, citing Peyton, f. 8.

¹⁹ Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament*, 42.

²⁰ John Gauden. *The Love of Truth and Peace* (London, 1641), Wing/G362, 35, 42-43; quoted in Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament*, 42.

²¹ Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament*, 43.

²² Baillie noted that friends in both houses had advised that the pressing of the root and branch petition be spared until the bishops and their convocation had been placed in praemunire - Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, 274, 275.

²³ Edmund Calamy, *Englands looking-glasse, December 22 1641* (London, 1642), Wing/C235, 48.

²⁴ Calamy, *Englands looking-glasse*, 46.

Samuel Fairclough, using the biblical example of Achan whose offences were clearly the cause of Israel's troubles, and Joshua who dispatched the offender, told MPs, "the divine policy and heavenly remedy is that those that have authority under God, doe totally abolish and extirpate all the cursed things whereby it was disturbed".²⁵

The formal programme of monthly fast sermons was not instituted until early 1642 when Charles made what could be described as another of his political 'missteps'. On 24th December 1641, the Commons had requested the Lords to join with them in asking the King to allow a monthly fast to be kept by both Houses of Parliament and the whole Kingdom while the troubles continued in Ireland.²⁶ The King agreed by proclamation of 8th January 1642.²⁷ "By agreeing to the system," writes Hugh Trevor-Roper, "Charles I had put in the hands of his enemies a means of co-ordination and propaganda to which he himself had no parallel".²⁸ The puritan clergy and their supporters in parliament had achieved the formalisation of the program for exhortation into which they had poured their energies over the past year or more.

The message of the sermons over our entire period was surprisingly uniform. Regardless of the identity of the preachers, presbyterian or congregationalist or as yet undecided or undeclared, their fundamental theme agitated for a wholesale reform of the church and the commonwealth. This was to be carried out by parliament in accordance with scripture. A study of the sermons led one historian, Ethyn Kirby, to support the view that the sermons were Erastian in tone. She notes that "throughout all the sermons the dependence of the forces of righteousness upon parliament was stressed" and speaks of the preachers' unwillingness to press for a godly reformation in its own right.²⁹ Baillie would have agreed with her assessment. He was later to speak scathingly of the preachers,

²⁵ Samuel Fairclough, *The Troublers Troubled, or Achan Condemned, and Executed* (London, 1641), Wing/F109, 24.

²⁶ Commons Journal, Vol. 2. 355-357.

²⁷ *Stuart royal proclamations*, Vol. 2, ed. James F. Larkin (Oxford: Oxford University Press), Oxford Scholarly Editions Online (2013).

²⁸ Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'The Fast Sermons of the Long Parliament' in ed. Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century* (New York, 1968), 98.

²⁹ Ethyn Kirby, "Sermons Before the House of Commons, 1640-42", *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 44, No. 3, 528-548 (Apr. 1939), 546.

the way of all her preachers, even the best, has been to speak before the parliament with so profound a reverence as truly took all edge from their exhortations, and made all applications to them both toothless and adulatorious.³⁰

William Lamont disputes Kirby's interpretation with many of his own examples. "Ministers will work with parliament", he writes, "but only if parliament will implement clerical demands; if not, the reformation will come by a different route". He quotes Case, "God can do his work without a Parliament"; and Goodwin is equally emphatic: "this Parliament seems to have been called by God for such a time as this; and if you will not do it, God will do it without you. . . . Reformation will arise some other way".³¹ Lamont concludes that these views are not Erastian. They do however reveal a preference that parliament delivers the desired reformation and this message would come back to bite the ministers in 1645 when parliament rejected the theocracy of the Westminster Assembly's presbyterian system, substituting what Baillie would call a "lame erastian presbytery".³²

The preachers called for a wholesale reform of the church, but they declined to give guidance how this reformed church should be governed. There is scant evidence of the puritan preachers overtly championing their own favoured form of church government. That said, some preachers did give slight or indirect indications of their thinking. For the presbyterians, this tended to reveal itself in an emphasis on discipline, and taking the need to abolish episcopacy as a given, in a call for moderation.

In *Dauids zeale for Zion*, a sermon preached before the Commons on 4th April 1641, Thomas Wilson told his listeners that a godly ministry would ensure that "vile persons that speak villainy may have their mouths stopped". He urged that "the purity of discipline (a sacred way of promoting the gospel, without which all Christ's Kingdom and gospel is not received) very necessary to the condition of the church may be introduced". At one point, stressing the need for fervour, he told MPs, "let there be admonition and instruction in the words of the Lord, let there be disciplined and orderly walking: this was David's zeal,

³⁰ Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, Vol. 2, 220.

³¹ William Lamont, "Episcopacy and a 'Godly Discipline', 1641-6", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 10.1 (1959), 76, quoting from Thomas Case, *The Second Sermon ...*, (London, 1641), 36; Thomas Goodwin, *Zbabels Encouragement... .*, (London, 1642), 52.

³² Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, Vol. 2, 362.

heare him". And towards the end of his sermon, still speaking directly to the MPs, he informed them,

your peace and prosperity is in the welfare of God's house, you have a share in that ship, in the peace thereof shall you have peace, it is said of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love that, will not beauty of the assemblies, a godly ministry, a pure discipline, a spiritual worship bring on to you much peace and comfort.³³

On 30th November 1642 the presbyterian Charles Herle's theme was truth and peace. Herle entreated MPs to aim for unity and order in both church and state. As he put it, "Unity in reducing independency of Episcopal jurisdiction under one civill government, order in exploding that Chimera of Independency of Congregations within one nationall Church". Herle concluded,

if we keep the centre, ther's hope in time we may compasse the circle too: which that we may do, let us daily beg of him, who is both our truth and peace, that he would continue us our truth, and restore us our peace.³⁴

Herle is seeking a middle way between episcopacy and congregationalism, one which I will argue was appealing to MPs. A political theorist as well as a presbyterian clergyman, Herle expounded presbyterian political theories that Ian Smart describes as,

parliamentarian par excellence because it exalted parliament as the sole agency entitled to remedy such a subversion, since it was co-ordinate in status with the king, and as the supreme court it could use force to bring to account those who defied it.³⁵

It has been said of Herle that parliamentarians described him as the prime man of note and power among the clergy.³⁶ This was a preacher whose views would have been persuasive.

³³ Thomas Wilson, *David's zeale for Zion* (London, 1641), Wing/W2947, 14-15, 29, 44.

³⁴ Charles Herle, *A payre of compasses for church and state, November 30th 1642* (London, 1642), Wing/H1561, 12, 44.

³⁵ Ian Smart, 'Liberty and Authority: the Political Ideas of Presbyterians in England and Scotland during the Seventeenth Century', (PhD thesis, University of Strathclyde, 1978), 73. The subversion to which Smart refers is the subversion of the particular ends for which political authority is set up.

³⁶ Smart, 'Liberty and Authority', 52, quoting Anthony a Wood. *Athenae Oxoniensis*, ed. P. Bliss, 4 Vols., London, 1830- 1820. No page number given.

The congregational preachers were perhaps easier to identify from some of their sermons although this does not amount to anything that could be described as a coordinated campaign for a congregationalist form of church government. In his sermon *Babylons downfall* William Bridge rejected in particular both English episcopal and Scottish Presbyterian patterns of church government calling instead for “God's form”.³⁷ Recently returned from the Low Countries and a future dissenting brother in the Westminster Assembly, he presumably meant by “Gods form” an essentially congregational polity, but he refrains from saying so.³⁸ His fellow dissenting brother, Thomas Goodwin, was to deliver in April 1642 a sermon that Hunter Powell describes as “perhaps the most congregational document to come out from the Apologists.”³⁹ In Nathaniel Holmes’ sermon *The New World, or the New Reformed Church* he informed MP's “now I am to present you with a map of Cosmographie, or discription of the new world of the Church”.⁴⁰ Holmes’ sermon is “almost dangerously frank in formulating a policy for the future” says William Lamont and that is “on a definitive congregational basis”.⁴¹ Holmes was a radical independent who Powell describes as an embarrassment to his more moderate fellow congregationalists, the dissenting brethren.⁴² On this basis it is not perhaps surprising that his sermon went further than other congregationalists were prepared to go at this stage.

Henry Burton, whose *Protestation Protested* is credited by some as being the first congregational text, has also been credited as making a definite plea before parliament for the establishment of a congregational form of church government.⁴³ In his sermon *England’s Bondage and Hope of Deliverance* given on 20th June 1641 in the same month as *The Protestation Protested* was published, Burton takes as his theme England’s bondage under four heads, the liturgy, ceremony, discipline and hierarchy of the episcopal church. He opens by flattering the MPs. Deliverance can be found in a thorough reformation he

³⁷ William Bridge, *Babylons downfall* (London, 1641), Wing/B4448.

³⁸ The ‘dissenting brethren’ is the name given to the five congregational ministers who made the Apologetical Narration to the Westminster Assembly in 1644. The other three were Jeremiah Burroughs, Philip Nye and Sidrach Simpson. They are also known as the Apologists.

³⁹ Hunter Powell, *The Crisis of British Protestantism, Church power in the Puritan Revolution, 1638-1644* (Manchester, 2015), 29, referring to Thomas Goodwin, *Zerubbabels encouragement to finish the temple* (London, 1642).

⁴⁰ Nathaniel Holmes, *The New World, or the New Reformed Church* (London, 1641), Wing/H2570, 9.

⁴¹ William Lamont, ‘Episcopacy and a Godly Discipline’, 78.

⁴² Powell, *The Crisis of British Protestantism*, 7, 102.

⁴³ Kirby, ‘Sermons before the Commons, 1640-1642’, 536.

says. “Who must doe it” he asks, and answers himself, “who but those whom God hath called, who but the noble house of Parliament, and those that have interest in this great business; they must doe it”.⁴⁴

Burton’s plea for zeal and his expression of admiration of parliament is not unlike that of all the other preachers, but he goes further because he gives some guidance on what should replace discipline under the bishops, and that is discipline by the congregation. He says that discipline under one man, the Archbishop in his Province or the Bishop in his Diocese “is condemned flatly and expressly in the Scripture”, and that “the power of Discipline it is not lest to one man, but indeed to the whole Congregation”.⁴⁵

Excepting the occasional examples noted in the preceding paragraphs, the sermons do not contain clear or consistent calls for a presbyterian or congregational polity. There are several reasons why this was the case. First, many of the ministers had not yet themselves come to a firm decision on which polity was according to scripture. Secondly, the ministers had agreed on at least two occasions to put aside their differences to fight the common enemy, the bishops. The first such concord is noted by Baillie in March 1641 and is noted in Chapter Two.⁴⁶ The Aldermanbury Accord followed in November 1641. This agreement between a group of presbyterian and congregational ministers not to publish or promote their respective views on church government but to concentrate on the battle against episcopacy appears to have been mostly adhered to until late 1643, early 1644.⁴⁷ Thirdly, differences between the two groups at this stage were not that great. The latter point is important as it means that it is not always possible to decide whether a particular text is espousing a presbyterian or a congregational platform or neither.

The Preachers

In his survey of those who preached before the Commons Wilson describes Stephen Marshall as “preeminent”. He spoke more frequently than any other preacher and over the entire period of Wilson’s book, 1640 to 1648. He names

⁴⁴ Henry Burton, *England’s Bondage and Hope of Deliverance* (London, 1641), Wing/B6162, 25.

⁴⁵ Burton, *England’s Bondage*, 23-24.

⁴⁶ Chapter Two, page 61, note 73.

⁴⁷ Introduction, page 24, note 69.

three others whose contributions to the parliamentary preaching were so numerous that they must rank near Marshall; Joseph Caryl, Obadiah Sedgwick and Richard Vines.⁴⁸ The similarities between these four are illuminating as they indicate a preference amongst parliamentarians for moderation, albeit of the puritan kind.

Joseph Caryl's biographer describes him as one of the London representatives to the Westminster Assembly who was "soon identified as an Independent, albeit of a moderate cast", and Edmund Calamy characterized Caryl as "a moderate Independent, a man of great piety, learning and modesty".⁴⁹ It is said of Obadiah Sedgwick that "his sympathies lay with the presbyterians but his views were not rigid".⁵⁰ Richard Vines' biographer is more circumspect, ascribing him neither label. Vines is portrayed as an Erastian, sceptical of divine right claims by some presbyterians but defending the validity of ordination by them while simultaneously deflating excessive claims for a classical presbytery from the Scots.⁵¹ The dominant role played by Stephen Marshall in the 1640s has already been noted. This role was probably possible, writes Wilson, because Marshall "whether from an instinctual preference for mediation or out of simple opportunism, was at once moderate in his Presbyterianism and open towards Independency." Wilson adds, "thus he appears to have served as a broker within the ranks of the brotherhood and in this capacity proved his great usefulness to parliament."⁵²

Marshall, Caryl, Sedgwick and Vines also have something else in common, they all seem to have been capable of delivering a sermon that would not only exhort but would entertain the MPs. Caryl's lectures at Lincoln's Inn were received with "good liking and applause" by the lawyers, and as he became "a favourite choice" of the Commons to preach at extraordinary humiliations and thanksgivings one can assume his sermons were similarly received by the MPs. Sedgwick was a successful preacher who reputedly in hot weather "unbuttoned his doublet in the pulpit that his breath might be longer, and his voice more audible to rail against the King's party". Vines' biographer writes

⁴⁸ Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament*, 109-110.

⁴⁹ P. S. Seaver, "Caryl, Joseph (1602-1673), clergyman and ejected minister." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 23 Sep. 2004.

⁵⁰ Barbara Donagan, "Sedgwick, Obadiah (1599/1600-1658), Church of England clergyman." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 23 Sep. 2004.

⁵¹ William Lamont, "Vines, Richard (1599/1600-1656), Church of England clergyman." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 23 Sep. 2004.

⁵² Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament*, 110.

that parliament “liked his message” and furthermore “may also have liked the way that message was delivered”. Some of Vine’s phrases were “made to last” he adds.⁵³

Of the many others who preached to the Long Parliament Wilson names another thirteen regular preachers, including Charles Herle and Anthony Burges, and seven who appeared before 1646 but whose involvement did not continue after the end of the First Civil War. Wilson maintains that the high proportion of presbyterians in this group of twenty is noteworthy. Of a different group who spoke almost exclusively from 1646, all but one were independents he says.⁵⁴ This of course reflects the shift in fortunes of the two groups after the First Civil War as the parliamentary Independents and the New Model Army grow in strength. For present purposes, what is of interest is the higher number of presbyterians preaching in the period covered by this thesis. Wilson does not disclose how he has come to identify a preacher as presbyterian, but often historians look at the stance taken by a minister in the Westminster Assembly, or subsequent involvement in a presbyterian classis. An examination of the early sermons does not, as I have shown, identify many ‘presbyterians’ but at some point their presbyterianism would emerge and it is not unrealistic to assume that a presbyterian system of church government was already the preferred choice of at least some of these ministers. If they were not campaigning for their choice in the pulpit some were doing so in print, and others may have been using their personal connections and established puritan networks.

MPs’ reception of the sermons

This is a chapter about clerical influence, but unfortunately little evidence exists to reveal how MPs received or were influenced by the messages contained in the sermons. An examination of the parliamentary diaries of D’Ewes and others shows that comment on particular sermons was rare. There are however a few exceptions which although they do not give a clear picture, offer some small indications.

⁵³ See notes 49, 50 and 51 above for the respective biographical sources. The quote that Caryl became “a favourite choice” is taken from Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament*, 111.

⁵⁴ Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament*, 113, 117.

The MP John Moore took extensive notes of Henry Burton's 1641 sermon, *England's Bondage and Hope of Deliverance* as these appear at the back of his diary.⁵⁵ It is not possible to say whether he did the same for other sermons, or whether other MPs took notes of the sermons they heard, but it is likely he and they did as note taking at sermons was a common exercise in this period.⁵⁶ Robert Baillie commented on it. "The most of all the Assemblie wrytes, as almost all the people, men, women and children wryte at preaching", he declared in January 1644.⁵⁷

On 12th April 1642, D'Ewes reports a request that "Mr Ashe and Dr. Burges" might have thanks given for the sermons preached at the last fast. Thanks to Dr. Burges "had been omitted thus long" D'Ewes said because "Dr Burges had given many in the house some offense by an expression or two he had in his sermon". The house ordered that Arthur Heselrig should give the thanks.⁵⁸ Cornelius Burges' sin, it would appear, was to criticise parliament for its failure to convene a synod of the divines the previous summer, the rebellion in Ireland being divine punishment for such a failure he said.⁵⁹ Interestingly, Framlingham Gawdy had made passing mention of the sermon on 30th March 1640 without further comment.⁶⁰

The diary record of 12th April's business also gives us two important examples of how an MP's choice of preacher, or the fact that a MP asked to give thanks to a preacher, offers little indication of that MPs' ecclesiological beliefs. Arthur Heselrig, the MP who asked for thanks to be given to Burges and Simeon Ash, would become a leading independent, both Burges and Ash would support the presbyterians in the Westminster Assembly. Also on this day, D'Ewes, who would be a presbyterian, nominated Joseph Caryl to preach at the next fast. Following up on the 27th April 1642, D'Ewes requested that thanks be given to Thomas Goodwin and Caryl for their sermons on that day "which I desired might be ordered because I did not conceive that they had given me offense".

⁵⁵ Fletcher, *Outbreak*, 108, citing BL Harl. MS 478 fols.728-735.

⁵⁶ For numerous examples of note taking see Ann Hughes, "Preachers and Hearers in Revolutionary London: Contextualising Parliamentary Fast Sermons", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 24, 57-77.

⁵⁷ Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, Vol. 2, 123 quoted in Hughes, "Preachers and Hearers", 66.

⁵⁸ D'Ewes, 12th April 1642, in *The Private Journals of the Long Parliament*, 3 Vols, eds. Wilson Coates, Anne Young and Vernon Snow (Vol.1 – 3rd January to 6th March 1642) and Young and Snow (Vols. 2 – 7th March to 1st June 1642, and 3 – 2nd June to 17th September 1642) (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1982, 1987, 1992 respectively), Vol. 2, 155.

⁵⁹ Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament*, 64.

⁶⁰ Framlingham Gawdy, 30th March 1642, in *Private Journals of the Long Parliament*, Vol. 2, 109.

Both Goodwin and Caryl were congregationalist. D'Ewes may not have been aware of this save that in relation to Goodwin D'Ewes did know he had "came lately out of Holland".⁶¹

For the final example one must again look to D'Ewes. On 31st August 1642 he writes "Dr. Downing preached in the morning and made a dangerous, seditious prayer and sermon tending only to civil war and bloodshed". "Mr. Carter preached in the afternoon and made a good, honest sermon".⁶² Calybutte Downing's sermon does not appear to have been published. Some might see it as strange that Downing, a strong proponent of political resistance theory and the scourge of the royalist press, should be criticised by D'Ewes. In December 1640 Baillie called Downing "his familiar friend".⁶³ In 1643, the author of the Royalist *A letter from Mercurivs Civicvs to Mercurius Rusticus*, would describe him as "a man fitted for any base imployment", and castigated him for "Preaching to the Brotherhood of the Artillery Garden that for defence of Religion and Reformation of the Church, it was lawfull to take up armes against the King".⁶⁴

One can see from D'Ewes comments the predicament in which moderate parliamentarians found themselves in 1642, torn between war and peace, and between a desire for wholesale church reform and religious and social harmony.

So far this chapter, through its survey of the fast sermons, suggests mostly moderation and consensus amongst the puritan clergy. Whether this be consensus as to the form of church government to be adopted, consensus not to discuss it, or indecision as to the correct polity is difficult to say. Although in the early months of the Long Parliament possibly some would have accepted a reduction of episcopacy back to the way it was in primitive times, the primary goal of most was to abolish episcopacy and reform the church to conform to the word of God. The alliance, if that is what it was, between presbyterians and congregationalists began to fray before the Westminster Assembly met in 1643 but this divergence is far from obvious from the sermons. For signs of the

⁶¹ D'Ewes, 12th April 1642 and 27th April 1642, in *Private Journals of the Long Parliament*, Vol. 2, 155,232.

⁶² D'Ewes, 31st May 1642, in *Private Journals of the Long Parliament*, Vol. 2, 328.

⁶³ Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, Vol. 1, 286.

⁶⁴ Anon., *A letter from Mercurivs Civicvs to Mercurius Rusticus, or Londons confession but not repentance shewing that the beginning and the obstinate pursuance of this accursed horrid rebellion is principally to be ascribed to that rebellious city* (Oxford, 1643), 8.

fractures, it is necessary to look at the religious pamphlets and books circulating outside parliament.

Print

In his book *Radical Parliamentarians* David Como describes a press free for all in late 1640 and early 1641 which although curtailed by parliamentary action in February 1641 did not end. The core message of much of this early polemic was that the government of the current Church of England needed to be demolished and replaced by something entirely different, and Como says in the view of most of the authors this something else was a system of independent congregations.⁶⁵ Those who consider Smectymnuus' *An Answer to a Booke Entitled, An Humble Remonstrance* and Thomas Edwards' *Reasons against the Independent Government of Particular Congregations* to be presbyterian tracts may not agree with Como's assessment, but even if he is correct, this thesis needs to ascertain when and understand why 'counter' calls for presbyterianism arose.⁶⁶ More problematically, it is important to question whether parliamentarians accessed the material pouring forth from the printing presses, and how it influenced them.

The genesis of the debate in the 1640s between the presbyterians and the congregationalists can be found in two pairs of works published in 1641, Jeremiah Burroughs' *The Petition for the Prelates Briefly Examined* and Smectymanuus' *An Answer to..., An Humble Remonstrance*; and Henry Burton's *The Protestation Protested* and Edwards' *Reasons*.⁶⁷ All four have been closely examined by historians but some brief comment is needed to understand how divergence of opinion within the puritan clergy might feed into parliament.

The Petition for the Prelates Briefly Examined and *An Answer to..., An Humble Remonstrance* emanated from the Aldermanbury circle. In Hunter Powell's

⁶⁵ David Como, *Radical Parliamentarians and the English Civil War*, (Oxford University Press, 2018), Chapter 2, 50-88; 87

⁶⁶ Smectymnuus, *An Answer to a Booke Entitled, An Humble Remonstrance* (London, 1641); Thomas Edwards, *Reasons against the Independent Government of Particular Congregations* (London, 1641); Smectymnuus was the nom de plume for Stephen Marshall, Edmund Calamy, Thomas Young, Matthew Newcomen and William Spurstow.

⁶⁷ Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Petition for the Prelates Briefly Examined* (London, 1641); Smectymnuus, *An Answer to a Booke Entitled, An Humble Remonstrance*; Henry Burton, *The protestation protested, or, A short remonstrance shewing what is principally required of all those that have or doe take the last Parliamentary protestation* (London, 1641); Edwards, *Reasons*.

opinion Burroughs' *The Petition for the Prelates Briefly Examined* was a congregational text.⁶⁸ The Smectymnian tracts are often considered to be amongst the first presbyterian pieces. Historians do not always agree however on the positions espoused by Smectymnuus. In *Godly Clergy* Tom Webster describes the first Smectymnuus tract, *An Answer to..., An Humble Remonstance* (1641) and other Spectymnuan tracts as "masterpieces of ambiguity and opaqueness".⁶⁹ That said, he is able to discuss their arguments in some detail and, concluding that "they emerged from the school in favour of primitive episcopacy", he considers they are not an espousal of presbyterianism but allow for the possibility of primitive episcopacy or other options including presbyterianism.⁷⁰

Elliot Vernon however is more confident that the Smectymnian tracts can be read as espousing a presbyterian position. They are, he says, "a far cry" from calls for the primitive episcopacy sought by those who wanted to return to an "idealized" Jacobean episcopacy. Whilst the tracts perhaps allow bishops to be retained as diocesan coordinators, Vernon believes their arguments went far beyond most moderate positions and were more presbyterian than Usshers's version of primitive episcopacy.⁷¹ David Como, falling somewhere between the two, maintains that the tracts were opposed to the episcopal status quo but vague on whether primitive bishops or outright presbyterianism was preferable.⁷²

In my opinion, *An Answer to..., An Humble Remonstrance* is a presbyterian tract. While its headline argument is that bishops and presbyters were originally one and the same both in scripture and antiquity (as mentioned in Chapter One, an argument heard often at this time) it goes further. It maintains that ordination was "not by the laying on of hands of one single man.... But the Presbytery, that is the whole company of Presbyters", and adds that the presidency of the Church was in many, the censures of the Church were managed by them all "in Communi", and that "there was among them a parity".⁷³ In "antiquitie" the Churches were governed by "the Common Counsel of the Presbyters" it says, and the power of excommunication was in the

⁶⁸ Powell, *The Crisis of British Protestantism*, 22.

⁶⁹ Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1997), 320.

⁷⁰ Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 326.

⁷¹ Vernon, 'Sion College Conclave', 61.

⁷² Como, *Radical Parliamentarians*, 92.

⁷³ Smectymnuus, *An Answer to..., An Humble Remonstance*, 25-26.

“Order of Presbyters, that is, the whole clergie”.⁷⁴ Later in the book Smectymnuus warns:

Why should England that is one of the chiefest Kingdoms in Europe, that separates from Antichrist, maintain and defend a discipline different from all other reformed Churches, which stand in like separation? And whether the continuance in this discipline will not at last bring us to communion with Rome from which we are separated, and to separation from the other reformed churches, unto which wee are united.⁷⁵

It appears to me that the call is for something much closer to a presbyterian system than a reduction to primitive episcopacy would allow. The Smectymnuans are espousing ideas for church government in a direction that are entirely in harmony with presbyterianism.

There is also a complaint in *An Answer to., An Humble Remonstance* which should perhaps be viewed now as evidence of a recognition by the Smectymnuans that differences were emerging amongst the godly. The allegation is that “Divisions” of the “Antiprelactical party” are “Odiously exaggerated “ and “fermented” by the Prelates “whose practice hath beene according to that rule of Machiavelli: Divide and Imperia”.⁷⁶

Further evidence exists that the spring and summer of 1641 can be identified as the point at which presbyterian and congregational positions begin to crystallise among the godly clergy. In part this crystallisation is sparked by Henry Burton’s controversial response to the Protestation. Introduced to Parliament on 3rd May 1641 and subscribed by members of the Commons on that day and most members of the Lords on the following day, the Protestation’s religious provisions were somewhat ambiguous. Burton’s tract set forth a “remonstrance, showing what is principally required of all those that have or do take the last parliamentary Protestation”. He went on to explain that what was required was a dismantling of the Church of England and its replacement with a congregational system.⁷⁷ Presbyterian ministers such as

⁷⁴ Smectymnuus, *An Answer to., An Humble Remonstance*, 27, 38.

⁷⁵ Smectymnuus, *An Answer to., An Humble Remonstance*, 91.

⁷⁶ Smectymnuus, *An Answer to., An Humble Remonstance*, 82.

⁷⁷ Burton, *The Protestation Protested*, and see Chapter Two, page 56.

Thomas Edwards and John Geree responded to Burton with attacks on congregational independency.⁷⁸

Thomas Edwards' *Reasons* was his first major published work. It was to be followed in 1644 and 1646 respectively by *Antapologia* and *Gangraena*. The latter is well known to historians as an important, albeit biased source of information on the radical sects. In her 'book about a book', *Gangraena*, Ann Hughes writes of Edwards' contacts in the early 1640s with the divines who met at Aldermanbury, and about *Reasons*.⁷⁹ By this time the godly clergy had, Hughes maintains, formed preferences for one type of ecclesiology or another and Edwards was, she writes, clearly in the presbyterian "camp". Here Hughes appears to see clear presbyterian/congregational positions materialising earlier than other academics do. Hughes describes *Reasons* as an anti-toleration, anti-independent congregations tract and in Hughes' opinion Edwards already saw religious division as a threat to social order and political hierarchy. She adds though that "what is startling, in view of Edward's reputation, is the lack, which we shall see repeated, of any extended positive argument for presbyterian government: his stress is always on schism, the evils of separation from the church, rather [than] on the detailed arrangements for any national church."⁸⁰ This may indeed be startling, but Edwards was playing on the growing fears of many in the country, including MPs, that independency would lead to all sorts of social, political and religious ills. It is in a similar vein, though less 'popular' than the pamphlets discussed in Chapter Two at page 55. By the middle of the decade, for parliament, presbyterianism was to be the solution.

The two pairs of tracts discussed above show the arguments in favour of presbyterianism emerging in response to congregationalism, in much the same way as Nicholas Tyacke sees the puritan campaign of the early 1640s as a counter-revolution against Laudianism.⁸¹ Presbyterianism is part of that puritan campaign, it is radical, but not as radical as congregationalism. This 'moderation' in the presbyterian position is highlighted by Michael Winship who points out that as early as 1637 the fear of schism and separation from the national church was a major concern of presbyterians and indeed it was

⁷⁸ Edwards, *Reasons*; John Geree, *Vindicae voti* (London, 1641).

⁷⁹ Ann Hughes, *Gangraena and the struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford, 2004); Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena: or A Catalogue and Discovery of many of the Errors...* (In three parts) (London, 1646).

⁸⁰ Hughes, *Gangraena*, 40.

⁸¹ Nicholas Tyacke, 'Puritanism, Arminianism and counter – revolution' in Nicholas Tyacke, *Aspects of English Protestantism c.1530 – 1700* (Manchester, 2001), 132-155.

the trigger for the ministers' letter to New England discussed in the Introduction to this thesis.⁸² One of the signatories to that letter, John Ball, had followed it with his own tract, *Friendly Triall* in 1640 and in 1643 Simeon Ashe (who himself was a signatory to the letter) published the entire exchange between the group in England and the New Englanders.⁸³ In 1637 the English ministers were not arguing specifically for presbyterianism, but against the congregational way. This defence of what they saw as the traditional puritan position continued into the 1640s while at the same time the English presbyterian ecclesiology developed alongside. Seen in this light, the stance taken in Edwards' *Reasons* makes perfect sense. Although many MPs may have been familiar with the theological arguments, for those who were not, the highlighting of the risks of schism, of social and political disorder and to the national church was persuasive.

In the same way as it is difficult to know whether a particular fast sermon influenced an individual MP, the question whether a tract was read by MPs, or how it was received by its readers is problematic. Certain tracts however, because of their notoriety, came to the notice of the Commons and gain a mention in the Commons Journal and parliamentary diaries. Burton's *Protestation Protested* is one such tract. It may not have been read in parliament, but it was referred to Sir Edward Dering's Commons' Licensing Committee in July 1641, and the book was condemned because it "presumptuously assumed to interpret" the Protestation and had "assigned a sense different from the Protestation". The author had thus "given just cause of scandal and offense to the House". The book was ordered to be burned.⁸⁴ The historian must assume that some MPs, and presumably the members of the committee had read the book. A footnote in Jansson refers to a letter that comments on both the book and Burton's sermon *England's Bondage and Hope of Deliverance*,

It is thought that it was written by Mr Burton who, as it seems, have offended the House of Commons with this and before with a sermon

⁸² Michael Winship, 'Straining the Bonds of Puritanism: English Presbyterians and Massachusetts Congregationalists Debate Ecclesiology, 1636-1640', in *Puritan and Catholics in the Trans-Atlantic World 1600-1800*, eds. Crawford Gribben and Scott Spurlock, 89-111 (UK, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 105.

⁸³ John Ball, *A Friendly Triall of the Grounds tending to Separation* (Cambridge, 1640); *A tryall of the new-church way in New-England... by that learned and godly minister of Christ, John Ball* (London, 1644).

⁸⁴ Commons Journal, Vol.2, 205-206; Sir Edward Derings speech on The Protestation Protested, Stowe, 354, f. 111; both in *Proceedings in the Opening Session of the Long Parliament, House of Commons*, ed. Maija Jansson, 7 Vols., (New York, University of Rochester Press, 2000 – 2007), Vol. 5, 585, 688.

which he preached before them, so as the report is that his brain is cracked.⁸⁵

It is not obvious now what had offended the Commons. From the Commons Journal it appears that it may have been the usurpation of parliamentary privileges and audacious interpretation of their Protestation, rather than any call for a particular type of church government.

Puritan Connections

The formal preaching programme and print were not the only means by which the puritan clergy sought to influence MPs. Indeed, the connections that individual clerics had with individual MPs, whether as friends, advisers, or chaplains, was likely to have been the more direct and at least as effective a means of persuasion. These connections, fostered over several years in the puritan networks discussed in the Introduction, were to prove invaluable to both the puritan ministers and the puritan MPs in the early 1640s. An enquiry of the links between presbyterian clergy and MPs is therefore of value.

The leaders of parliament worked closely with the Aldermanbury circle of divines who helped to organise opposition to the canons and calls for religious reform. Cornelius Burges named “Mr [John] White of Dorchester, Mr [Stephen] Marshall, Mr [Edmund] Calamy my self and one or two ministers more” as meeting twice every week at some of their lodgings together with several of the Lords and Commons. These included, Burges said, “the Earl of Warwick, the Lord Say, Lord Brooke, with some other Nobles, Mr [John] Hampden, Mr [John] Pym etc.” According to Burges, “not one was for totally abolishing of... any, but usurped Episcopacy.” At this time, he said, they merely wanted to reduce it to the Primitive.⁸⁶ This may well have been the case, but Elliot Vernon sees how the presbyterians and the congregationalists within the circle drew self-definition from the debates amongst themselves and in the public domain although united for the time being behind a common cause, the abolition of episcopacy. He adds however that “looking to the future we can see that the spine of London presbyterianism was already in place”.⁸⁷ It is unlikely that the

⁸⁵ Letter, R. Hobart to J. Hobart, Tanner 66 f. 109, in Jansson, *Proceedings*, Vol. 5, 585.

⁸⁶ *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter*, eds. N.H Keeble and G.F. Nuttall, 2 Vols. (Oxford,1991), Vol.1, 409-10, quoted in Como, *Radical Parliamentarians*, 90.

⁸⁷ Vernon, ‘Sion College Conclave’, 70.

peers and MPs who attended the meetings of the Aldermanbury circle were unaware of the issues that both united and divided the clergy.

The meetings of the group in Aldermanbury are a prime example of the connections which enabled ministers to bring influence to bear on MPs, but it is certainly not the only one. A number of MPs are known to have had links to presbyterian clergy, and it is likely others did too. Sir Robert Harley was in frequent correspondence with godly ministers such as Stanley Gower and William Bourne, both of whom were supporters of presbyterianism. Gower was one of the ministers responsible in the winter of 1640/1641 for drawing up the Herefordshire survey on the state of the ministry there. The survey advised that episcopacy should be abolished altogether or reduced to its 'first order'. The decision should rest with Parliament, but if bishops were retained they should share the ultimate authority in the church with the 'presbyters'.⁸⁸ On 8th January 1641 William Bourne wrote to Harley, warning him that Parliament should opt for total abolition of episcopacy in order to establish agreement with Scotland. Bourne added, "because there will be some difference betwixt the conformists and others what discipline shall be raised, I think you may do well to conform the same to the Apostles' times, whereof we have precedence in France, Geneva and Scotland, and other reformed churches. The which if you do, you shall make a most comfortable and perpetual accord betwixt the kingdoms."⁸⁹ It was Sir Robert Harley who presented the Ministers' Petition and Remonstrance to parliament in January 1641, and he called for the debate on the Root and Branch Bill to go ahead on 11th June 1641.

Other examples of patronage given by MPs to presbyterian ministers include Nathaniel Barnardiston, MP for Suffolk, who protected the minister Samuel Fairclough from persecution from the Laudian regime throughout the 1630s and was undoubtedly responsible for Fairclough's invitation to preach to the Commons on 4th April 1641. His sermon, *The Troublers Troubled*, was dedicated to his patron when it was published. Barnardiston's biographer tells that Barnardiston told Winthrop that he loved pious independents such as those who supported the governor in New England, but not those in England

⁸⁸ Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads*, 111, citing a letter, Stanley Gower to Harley, 23 January 1640/41, BL Loan, 29/119.

⁸⁹ Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads*, 112, citing a letter from William Bourne to Harley, 8 January 1640/41, BL Loan 29/119.

who championed religious toleration. Sectaries should be curtailed and presbyterian discipline employed to restore order he believed.⁹⁰ Edmund Calamy's friendship with the Earl of Warwick enabled Calamy to evade Bishop Wren's harassment in the 1630s and eventually to obtain the curacy at Aldermanbury.⁹¹

Work done by historians on the godly networks shows the potential for influence by the godly clergy on godly MPs. But the opposite was also true. MPs, relying on the appreciation of the subjects of their patronage, were able to use the pulpit for propaganda. Clarendon would describe the clergy as the parliamentarians' "instruments".⁹² In his book Wilson gives details of several instances where the content of sermons was evidently tailored to the immediate needs of a particular political policy, and often one of Pym's.⁹³

Summary

This chapter has analysed the role of the puritan clergy in forming parliament's policy in relation to church government. The purpose of such analysis was to see whether the clergy had influenced MPs in the direction of a presbyterian polity. From the analysis it is possible to draw two important conclusions.

First, given puritan beliefs and the emphasis placed on preaching it is inconceivable that puritan MPs were not influenced by the sermons from the puritan clergy. The sermons contained three key messages; that the church must be reformed, that it must be reformed in accordance with the word of God, and that it is parliament's job to do it. If the message contained a call for a presbyterian polity it was well hidden.

Secondly, notwithstanding that cracks appear in the unified face of the godly clergy in 1641, these appear to have been mostly contained and there is little evidence of presbyterian or congregational arguments influencing MPs. That said, given MPs' knowledge and understanding of theology it is likely that many of them were aware of the issues and might be forming their own opinions. If, like Sir Robert Harley, they had preexisting connections with

⁹⁰ Richard L. Greaves, "Barnardiston, Sir Nathaniel (1588–1653), politician and ecclesiastical patron." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 Sep. 2004.

⁹¹ Vernon, 'Sion College Conclave', 40.

⁹² Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion*, Vol.1, 121.

⁹³ Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament*, 68-72.

ministers who were beginning to espouse a presbyterian polity then it is possible that they would do so also. Unlike their clerical brethren however, the MPs were also accountable for the government of the nation. Quite apart from the exigencies of civil war, MPs took seriously their duties as governors to protect the liberties of their citizens, defend the country from its enemies (both internal and external) and manage the economy. In the summer of 1643 MPs' choice of church government was bound to be impacted by politics and what was right for the church must also be right for the country.

The following chapter of this thesis will discuss the lead up to the Westminster Assembly. Most religious reforms carried out by parliament prior to 1643 were negative, for example, removal of the altars, but once it had decided to abolish episcopacy it needed to take positive action to put something in its place. MPs understood that clerical guidance and advice was absolutely necessary for this. The clergy could influence parliament on matters of church government because parliament needed its help.

Chapter Four

Hopes for an assembly

As the previous chapters have shown the question of church government was difficult. Whilst most MPs believed it was parliament's job to decide upon the future of the church, they also accepted that any new form of government must have scriptural warrant and for this parliament needed to consult the religious experts. When in late January 1642 the Commons began to hammer out details for an assembly of divines they were heeding the calls made by many of their supporters to not only reform the church but also to seek advice how to do it from the clergy. Over the next few months the Commons took constructive steps forward on both counts.

It is not the purpose of this chapter to go beyond 1643 and investigate the workings of the Westminster Assembly, rather it will seek to understand the context in which the assembly was conceived and eventually convened, exploring first the arguments made by MPs and contemporaries why such an assembly was necessary. The chapter will scrutinise the way parliament selected the assembly's clerical and lay members and their choices and ask what, if anything, this signals for the future direction of the church. Later the chapter will consider the reasons for the delay in summoning the assembly from the first bill of May 1642 to the summoning ordinance of June 1643, looking at the part played by extraneous factors including events in the Civil War. Finally, this chapter will explore the development of parliament's ideas on the role of the divines in the decision-making process and explain how and why in the summer of 1643 parliament set out to assert its authority over the assembly and the church. The overall aim is to show that by 1643 parliament was determined to effect a root and branch reform of the church and it saw the Westminster Assembly as a necessary part of the process to achieve such a reformation. The assembly was neither a 'kick for touch' nor a direct response to Scottish pressure. Furthermore, the chapter will show the further development of MPs' ideas on church government to enable the thesis to conclude that the settlement in 1646 of a presbyterian system of church government moderated by Erastianism was entirely consistent with the ideas of MPs when the assembly first met three years earlier.

Westminster Assembly timeline

To aid understanding, this chapter will begin by summarising the history of the Westminster Assembly from that first move in parliament in January 1642 to the first meeting of the Assembly on 1st July 1643.

On 22nd January 1642 the Commons resolved to call an assembly of divines. On 12th February 1642 it ordered the knights and burgesses of the counties to bring forward the names of such ministers as they thought fit “to be employed for the Settling the Affairs of the Church”.¹ On the 26th March the Grand Committee was appointed to consider “what is fit to be done for the present in the matter of religion, and what will be further necessary to be done for the future”.² On 7th April the following Declaration was reported to and accepted by the house:

The Lords and Commons do declare, That they do intend a due and necessary Reformation of the Government and Liturgy of the Church; and to take away nothing in the One or the other but what shall be evil and justly offensive, or at least unnecessary and burthensome: And, for the better effecting there-of speedily to have Consultation with godly and learned Divines...³

The House of Lords ordered that the Declaration be printed and published throughout England and Wales.⁴

By 20th April 1642 the Commons was in a position to commence its selection of divines for the assembly and this was concluded on 25th April.⁵ A bill calling the assembly was introduced to the Commons on 9th May 1642 and by the end of that month had been considered in the Lords and sent back to the Commons with the Lords’ amendments, including the addition of 14 more

¹ Commons Journal, Vol. 2, 427-429; Framlingham Gawdy, 12th February 1642 in *The Private Journals of the Long Parliament*, 3 Vols, eds. Wilson Coates, Anne Young and Vernon Snow (Vol.1 – 3rd January to 6th March 1642) and Young and Snow (Vols. 2 – 7th March to 1st June 1642, and 3 – 2nd June to 17th September 1642) (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1982, 1987, 1992 respectively), Vol. 1, 364.

² William Shaw, *A History of the English Church during the Civil Wars and under the Commonwealth* (London, 1900), Vol 1, 123.

³ Commons Journal, Vol. 2, 514-516. The declaration went on to say “and because this will never of itself attain the End sought therein, they will therefore use their utmost Endeavours to establish learned and preaching Ministers, with a good and sufficient Maintenance, throughout the whole Kingdom” – an acknowledgement that the assembly itself could not deal with all ills.

⁴ House of Lords Journal, Vol. 4, 707-709.

⁵ D’Ewes, Gawdy and Roger Hill, 20th to 25th April 1642, *Private Journals of the Long Parliament*, Vol. 2, 190 – 220.

divines. On the 3rd of June the bill had its third reading in the Lords and was sent to the King for his assent. This was not forthcoming and it was to take another year (and several further bills) for the assembly to be summoned.⁶ The Westminster Assembly finally met on 1st July 1643.

Calls for an assembly

The Westminster Assembly was convened in the summer of 1643 to assist parliament to reform the Church of England. It had taken parliament's puritans and their most ardent supporters nearly three years to get to this point. The Root and Branch Bill had contained a provision for an assembly, and a call for a synod was contained in clause 185 of the Grand Remonstrance. The clause did not state how the synod would be summoned or governed, but it called on the King to consent to "a general synod of the most grave, pious, learned and judicious divines of this island; assisted with some from foreign parts, professing the same religion with us". The determinations of the synod would then be delivered to parliament, and with parliament's "stamp of authority" would "find passage and obedience throughout the kingdom". The Grand Remonstrance was sent to the King on 1 December 1641.⁷

In a speech before the Commons during the debates on the Grand Remonstrance, Sir Edward Dering, having argued for the clergy to be included in any decision about the future of the church, sought "a well chosen and well tempered National Synod".⁸ There were other instances of demands for an assembly from within parliament, and as shown below several more from outside. But what system of church government did those calling for an assembly hope would come out of it?

Most who called for an assembly were in favour of radical reform. The Ministers' Petition and Remonstrance of January 1641 had been followed by another on 20th December 1641. The latter, acknowledging that the grievances in the Church could not "receive a perfect cure" but by authority of parliament suggested that a free synod of the nation differing in "the whole

⁶ Shaw, *A History of the English Church*, Vol 1, 124-127 contains a detailed narrative of the "extraordinarily chequered" legislative career of this measure.

⁷ The Grand Remonstrance, 1641, in Samuel R. Gardiner, ed. *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution 1625-1660* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1899), 152.

⁸ Edward Dering, Sir, *A most worthy Speech of the truly Honourable and worthy Member of the House of Commons, Sir Edward Deering, Spoken in Parliament* (London, 1642), Wing/D1114, 6.

Constitution from the present Convocations of the Clergy now in use might be (as the Petitioners apprehend) of great use for that purpose". The petition asked Parliament to authorise a "free Synod of Grave, Learned and Judicious Divines" to undertake a "more thorough and fruitful debate" of religious matters "to expedite" a full reformation "by the High Court of Parliament".⁹ The message was clear. Only parliament could give effect to the required reformation, an assembly of divines could help but it must be "free", and reformation was urgent. In a sermon to the Commons of 22 December Edmund Calamy quickly followed the second ministers' petition with an appeal to parliament "to command....the faitfull and learned ministers of this Kingdom to meet in a free Nationall Synod".¹⁰ Some three months later, Cornelius Burges was to reprimand the Commons for its lack of action, telling them that the rebellion in Ireland was divine punishment for the failure to convene a synod the previous summer.¹¹ As noted in Chapter Three, the Commons did not take kindly to this criticism.

In *Reasons*, Thomas Edwards used his Epistle Dedicatory to call on parliament to "early find out meanes and remedies to heale the great rents about the Church and Church Government" praising Cyprian and Cornelius who "by the helpe of a Councell" did timely suppress the errors of Novatus, and pointing out that the Independents will take advantage of delays "all their hopes and strength standing in this, that it will be long before there be a Synod, or before Church Government be settled".¹² Edwards feared (correctly as it turned out) that independency would gain a hold unless a synod was called soon to resolve the matter of church government.

Calls for an assembly were not only made by presbyterians such as Edwards, or root and branch ministers such as Burges and Calamy, calls were also made by others such as the religious controversialist Thomas Du Moulin. In *Vox Populi*, Du Moulin, writing under the pseudonym Irenaus Philadelphus, would urge both houses of parliament to appoint a committee or convocation of 40 or 50 English divines who were not of the last convocation and are "unpartiall,

⁹ *The Humble Petition of Sundry Ministers* (London, 1641), Wing (2nd ed., 1994)/B5686A. As noted in Chapter One no copy of the January petition exists.

¹⁰ Edmund Calamy, *England's Looking Glass, December 22 1641* (London, 1642), Wing/C235, 47-48.

¹¹ Cornelius Burges, *Two Sermons preached to the honourable House of Commons at two publike fasts, the one March 30, 1642, the other April 30, 1645*, (London, 1645), Wing/B5688.

¹² Thomas Edwards, *Reasons against the Independent Government of Particular Congregations* (London, 1641), xvii.

learned and uncorrupt in their lives and Doctrine”, together with 10 Scottish divines and 8 foreign divines, so that they “may treat and agree upon a settled platforme of Church Government, suitable to the monarchy of Great Britain, which ought to be ratified and enacted by parliament”.¹³ Du Moulin is described by his biographer as a moderate critic of episcopacy and an Erastian, neither presbyterian nor Independent he appears to have favoured aspects of both.¹⁴

Even supporters of episcopacy could see a need for an assembly. The Kentish Petition of March 1642 called for the solemn liturgy and episcopal government of the Church of England to be upheld, and for all differences concerning religion and ceremonies to be referred to “a lawful, free national synod” of most “grave, pious, learned and judicious Divines”, but it differed from most parliamentarians in wanting the choice of such divines to be made “by all the Clergy of the Land, because all the Clergy are to be bound by their Resolutions”.¹⁵ Conrad Russell makes the point that this read more like a call for a convocation than for an assembly, but Dering had asked for the clergy to be involved, and we will see later in this chapter others in parliament also wanted the divines to be selected by the clergy.¹⁶

One of several demands made by those calling for an assembly of divines was that it should be “free”. By “free” it is likely that they mean to differentiate the desired assembly from convocation. One of the principal complaints against convocation, going back over many years, was its unrepresentative character. Like parliament, convocation consisted of two houses. The archbishop and the bishops sat in the Upper House, while in the Lower House sat deans, archdeacons, proctors of chapters and of the clergy. The Upper House dominated the Lower House and so the bishops were able to govern the church and make canons without reference to those who would be bound.¹⁷ Convocation’s unrepresentative character was used as a basis for attacking the validity of its decisions in the parliament of 1629, and some critics believed

¹³ Thomas Du Moulin, (aka Irenaus Philadelphus), *Vox Populi...being the generall voice and the humble and earnest request of the people of God in England ...* (1641, London).

¹⁴ Vivienne Larminie, "Du Moulin, Lewis (1605?–1680), physician and religious controversialist", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 Sep. 2004.

¹⁵ House of Lords Journal, Vol 4, 677-688.

¹⁶ Conrad Russell, *Fall of the British Monarchies 1637 – 1642* (Oxford, 1991), 498-500; and see Dering’s speech cited at note 8 above.

¹⁷ Esther S., Cope ‘The Short Parliament of 1640 and Convocation’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. XXV, No. 2, April 1974, 167-168

that convocation should not only allow the lower clergy a greater share in its deliberations but also include laymen, who as members of the church had an interest in Church government.¹⁸

As we have seen in Chapter One, convocation's canons of May 1640 were the touch paper for the battles that were to follow and claims that the canons bound not only the clergy but also the lay members of the church were a source of much complaint. Thus, those demanding an assembly wanted one that was representative of, at the very least, all the clergy, and many also wanted it to represent the lay members of the church. What they did not want was an assembly of divines elected by the clergy and possibly controlled by the bishops. Hence when as mentioned below D'Ewes pressed for the Commons and not the House of Lords to make the initial nomination of divines to the assembly, he did so to protect the rights of the people acting through their representative body, the Commons.

Calls for an assembly came from many sides, and from people of varying religious persuasions. There is little evidence that callers wanted a presbyterian system to be the outcome although the reference to "divines of this island" in Clause 185 of the Grand Remonstrance allows for the inclusion of the Scots and might be an acknowledgement that a presbyterian system is a possibility. Tai Lui asserts that it is rather doubtful that the English puritan clergy did not have something of a presbyterian church government in mind when they pressed for the calling of a national synod to design the religious settlement.¹⁹

Organisation of the assembly and appointment of its clerical members

When calling for an assembly the root and branch supporters in parliament ran the risk of the assembly making choices with which they did not agree, so it was important that they set the agenda. Their efforts to do this can be seen in the manoeuvres discussed below.

In January 1642 the House of Commons began to hammer out the details for the assembly. D'Ewes journal entry of 22nd January states there was some

¹⁸ In 1629 Pym defended parliament's claims to deal with religion by dismissing convocation as a provincial synod - *Commons Debates for 1629*, eds. Wallace Notestein and Frances Relf, (Minneapolis, 1921), 21.

¹⁹ Tai Lui, *Discord in Zion: The Puritan Designs and the Puritan Revolution, 1640 – 1660* (The Hague, 1973), 36-37.

difference of opinion whether the body should be called an ‘assembly’ or a ‘synod’ but signalling the strength of opinion in the house against the bishops he (and a majority in the house) preferred the former as the word ‘synod’, he said, “hath been so long abused in the Church to evil, the bishops’ chancellors calling their very senes or visitations ‘synods’”.²⁰

The debate then turned to the question who should appoint the divines. In *Englands Looking Glass*, Calamy, having urged parliament to convene a national synod, warned:

your Wisedomes will be carefull to make such qualifications both of the Persons that are to choose, and to the chose, that no Minister lyable to any lust exception, should have a voice in this Synod, for fear lest our greatest remedy prove to be our greatest ruins.²¹

The Commons may have had this in mind when deciding how to appoint the divines for the assembly. D’Ewes and John Moore report some differences of opinion, noting that D’Ewes, Hampden, and St. John favoured appointment by parliament whereas Hopton thought the divines should be chosen by the clergy and Reynolds moved that the King should make the choice with the consent of parliament. Eventually the house agreed that parliament should appoint the divines.²² Thomas Fuller ascribed their decision to the fact that,

they thought it not safe to instruct the clergy with their own choice, of whose general corruption they constantly complained; And therefore adjudged it unfit that the distempered patience should be, or choose of, their own physicians.²³

Further debate followed whether the Commons, or the Lords, or both should nominate the ministers for the assembly. It was proposed that the Commons should first nominate them and then present their names to the Lords. D’Ewes summed up his arguments for this approach. He feared that to do otherwise “might destroy the business” because it was necessary to satisfy the commons and clergy of England that this was a free election and only the Commons as

²⁰ D’Ewes and John Moore, 22nd January 42, in *Private Journals of the Long Parliament*, Vol. 1, 133.

²¹ Calamy, *Englands Looking Glass*, 47-48.

²² D’Ewes and Moore, 22nd January 1642, in *Private Journals of the Long Parliament*, Vol. 1, 133-139.

²³ Thomas Fuller, *The Church History of Britain, From the Birth of Jesus Christ until the Year MDCXLVIII*, Vol.6, Book X1 (London, 1845), 247.

the representative body of all could do this.²⁴ Furthermore, he warned, “the lords, conceiving themselves the greater men and to have priority of us, will be ready enough to name men before us, and then it must breed differences and distrusts between us if we refuse them”.²⁵ There was likely also a fear that while the bishops and their supporters still held their seats in the Lords the Lords might pick divines unacceptable to the Commons.

The Commons resolved it would appoint the clerical members of the assembly. Unfortunately, the available sources cast little light on the selection criteria. On 12th February 1642 the Commons ordered the knights and burgesses of the counties to bring forward the names of such ministers as “they shall think fit” to be consulted on the settlement.²⁶ The intention was to have two divines nominated for each English county, one for each Welsh county and four for London, but on 22nd January D’Ewes reports that the house agreed that the choice need not be local, and if there were not able divines resident in the county, the knights and burgesses may choose from elsewhere.²⁷ It appears that the counties therefore had relative freedom of choice, restricted only by the qualification that the nominees be “fit” and “able”. This might signify both the Commons desire that the assembly be ‘free’ and evidence the traditional, decentralised approach to government that still pertained in the early 1640s.

In April the counties brought in their nominees. On only two occasions did any of the members of the Commons object to a county’s choice. D’Ewes reports on 21st April that Mr Holland objected to Richard Dawes and Lancelot Smith, both nominated by Cumberland, because they were prebends and double beneficed men.²⁸ Then on 23rd April there was “much debate” about Matthew Levet, one of the Yorkshire nominees, as he had been “a forward man for the late innovations”. The house divided on the question and Mr. Levet was narrowly allowed.²⁹ Smith, Dawes and Levet were subsequently replaced. The only other record of the Commons objecting to nominees for the assembly at this time is in respect of 14 nominees sent to the Commons by the House of Lords on 31st May. The Commons rejected Dr Henry Hammond and some

²⁴ D’Ewes, Moore, Gawdy and Hill, 22nd January 1642, in *Private Journals of the Long Parliament*, Vol. 1, 133-142.

²⁵ D’Ewes, 22nd January 1642, in *Private Journals of the Long Parliament*, Vol. 1, 135.

²⁶ Commons Journal, Vol. 2, 427-429; Gawdy, 12th February 1641/42, in *Private Journals of the Long Parliament*, 364.

²⁷ D’Ewes, 22nd January 1642, in *Private Journals of the Long Parliament*, Vol. 1, 134.

²⁸ D’Ewes, 21st April 1642, in *Private Journals of the Long Parliament*, Vol. 2, 197.

²⁹ D’Ewes, 23rd April 1642, in *Private Journals of the Long Parliament*, Vol. 2, 208-209.

objected to Dr James Marsh, the latter going to a Commons vote which was resolved narrowly in his favour. Hammond having been rejected by the Commons, was reinstated the following day after appeals made by certain of the Lords.³⁰ The reasons for the challenges to Drs. Hammond and Marsh are not given in *Private Journals*, but in the case of Hammond it is perhaps obvious. He did not take up his seat in the assembly and was to emerge as a leading apologist for episcopacy in the mid-1640s, criticizing the assembly's printed works and engaging in pamphlet wars with its members.³¹

The primary sources do not explain how the Lords came to be making nominations of their own. On 26th May 1642 the Lords Journal reports: "Next, this House took into Consideration the Bill for the Assembly of Learned Divines; and the Bill was read; and this House thought fit to nominate, by Way of Addition, these Divines following:...", perhaps indicating that the Lords simply took it upon itself to act.³² The Commons Journal lists the 14 names that came to be considered by the Commons on 31st May, and although both D'Ewes and Gawdy report briefly the votes on Marsh and Hammond, neither makes comment on the submission of names by the Lords. The Lords continued to add clerical members to the assembly on subsequent renewals of the bill and, for example, on 19th October the Lords added Dr Westone who was Bishop of Bristol, and Mr Martyn objected, but it passed.³³

It would be an interesting, but too large a project for this thesis to investigate how each county chose its nominees. The examples of Herefordshire and Derbyshire highlight different approaches. Sir Robert Harley's Herefordshire nominated Stanley Gower and John Green, both local puritan ministers well known to Harley himself. Gower was already identifiable as presbyterian.³⁴ Derbyshire on the other hand selected William Gouge, a puritan patriarch, and Richard Love, a 'moderate' episcopalian. Gouge did not have any obvious connection to Derbyshire, and Love, although rector at Eckington in Derbyshire spent most of his time at Cambridge where he was master of Corpus Christi

³⁰ D'Ewes, 31st May 1642 and 1st June 1642, in *Private Journals of the Long Parliament*, Vol. 2, 392; 398.

³¹ Hugh de Quehen, "Hammond, Henry (1605–1660), Church of England clergyman and theologian", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 Sep. 2004.

³² House of Lords Journal, Vol. 5, 83-85.

³³ Walter Yonge, 19th October 1642, in *Walter Yonge's Diary of Proceedings in the House of Commons 1642 – 1645*, Vol. 1, transcribed by Christopher Thompson (Essex, The Orchard Press, 1986), 65.

³⁴ Jaqueline Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads: The Harleys of Brampton Bryan and the outbreak of the English Civil War (Cambridge, 1990)*, 101-122 for the relationship between Harley and Gower and Gower's presbyterianism, and 123-148 for Green.

College.³⁵ In the event Love, an episcopalian, did not take his place at the assembly. Three out of four of Derbyshire's MPs were parliamentarians, and several of its local county leaders such as Sir John Gell, the future parliamentary general, would be presbyterian, but the Royalists also had some strength in the county.³⁶ Their choice of ministers, reflecting a spread of religious opinion, could indicate local attempts to satisfy a similar spread of beliefs in the county.

It is notable that the nominations were delivered into the Commons at a time when the King's supporters were leaving in some numbers. The editors of *Private Journals* comment that by mid-May 1642 the King's cause in the Commons had very few committed supporters.³⁷ In April some Royalists did remain in the house, and, for example, three of the five Cumberland MPs whose choices for the assembly were objected to were to support the King in the Civil War. It is most likely the case that nominees reflected the religious persuasions of their nominators, and as the shifting balance of power in parliament meant that their nominators were mostly puritans or, at least, not supporters of episcopacy, it was to be expected that most of the divines appointed at this time were in favour of root and branch reform.

This was certainly the case in London, whose four nominees were each well respected puritan divines with political connections. Edmund Calamy was an obvious choice and was to become a leading presbyterian in the assembly and the City. Lazarus Seaman was a lecturer, and subsequently minister at All Hallows, Bread Street. He would be a leading presbyterian in the assembly and would be considered by Robert Baillie as one of the divines who supported the Scottish position. Joseph Caryl, as discussed in Chapter Three, was an independent who was called on to preach frequently to the house. Finally, George Walker had been prominent in puritan circles in London since the early 1620's. He had been a vociferous opponent of Laudian policies and imprisoned for such. On his release and pardon by parliament in 1641 he thanked prominent politicians including Sir Thomas Barrington and Sir Gilbert Gerard for their support. He also would be a strong supporter of the presbyterian

³⁵ E. T. Bradley, and S. L. Sadler, "Love, Richard (1596–1661), college head", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 03 Jan. 2008.

³⁶ Brian Stone, *Derbyshire in the Civil War* (Scarthin Books, Cromford, 1992) for information in relation to the Derbyshire MPs and Gell.

³⁷ *Private Journals of the Long Parliament*, Vol.2, xxii.

church.³⁸ Thus, three out of four of the divines nominated by London in April 1642 would be staunch supporters of presbyterianism in the assembly, probably reflecting the strong position that presbyterianism was to gain in the City in the mid 1640s.

A second question that arises from the selection at county level is whether local ministers were consulted. Without conducting the county-by-county investigation noted above it is difficult to say, however, at the end of Liverpool MP Moore's diary there is a list of ministers who met "to advise whereof two or more to be chosen", which list includes Richard Heyrick and Charles Herle who were nominated by Lancashire. Presumably, suggests the editors, these men were responsible for suggesting Lancashire's representatives for the assembly.³⁹

Notwithstanding that the choice of county nominees likely reflected the religious beliefs of their nominators, parliament wished to ensure a free and fair, or at least the appearance of a free and fair, assembly by ensuring a spread of ecclesiological positions amongst the clerical members of the assembly. Richard Baxter wrote that:

because [parliament] would seem Impartial, and have each party to have liberty to speak, they over and above the number chose many Episcopal Divines, even the most learnedest of them in the Land, as Archbishop Ussher, Dr. Holdsworth, Dr. Hammond, Dr Wincop, Bishop Westford, Bishop Prideaux, and many more.⁴⁰

Baxter was mistaken when he says the episcopalians were appointed "over and above" the county nominees. Dr. Prideaux, Bishop of Worcester was nominated by Worcestershire although Lawrence Whitaker tells us that he was excluded from the list on 9th October 1642 "by reason that he had declared himself to be a malignant against the Parliament".⁴¹ Bishop Wincop was

³⁸ S. Achinstein, 'Calamy, Edmund (1600–1666), clergyman and ejected minister', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 3 Oct. 2013; T. Liu, 'Seaman, Lazarus (d. 1675), clergyman and ejected minister', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 3 Jan. 2004; P. S. Seaver, 'Caryl, Joseph (1602–1673), clergyman and ejected minister', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 23 Sept. 2004; D. R. Como, 'Walker, George (bap. 1582?, d. 1651), Church of England clergyman', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 Sept. 2004.

³⁹ *Private Journals of the Long Parliament* Vol. 2, note 24, 218.

⁴⁰ Richard Baxter, *Reliquiæ Baxterianæ* (London, 1696), 73.

⁴¹ H.F., Coxon, 'The Parliamentary Diary of Lawrence Whitaker, 1642 -43' (MA Thesis, University of Adelaide, 1980), 1.

appointed for Cambridgeshire, and Daniel Featley represented Surrey.⁴² Nevertheless, Baxter's point is a good one, and the House of Lords did themselves nominate several episcopalians such as Drs. Holdsworth, Hammond and Westone. Baxter adds that "six or seven Independents were joined with them, that all sides may be heard".⁴³

Baxter is not the only contemporary writer to assert parliament's efforts to ensure fairness. Thomas Fuller described the assembly "as first intended and chosen" as "a quintessence of four parties", namely, "men of episcopal persuasion"; secondly, "those who in their judgement favoured presbyterian discipline, or in the process of time were brought over to it"; thirdly, some zealous ministers who "formerly disliking conformity", were to be the Dissenting Brethren, and fourthly members of the Lords and Commons who "mingled amongst them".⁴⁴ "For what speedier way to make peace in a distracted church, than to take all interests and consult together?" he asked. He continued "if all men's arguments, objections, complaints, desires, be indifferently admitted, an expedient may be sooner found out for their general satisfaction".⁴⁵ This was the hope of many in 1642 and 1643.

Baxter and Fuller were of course writing with the benefit of hindsight about the presence of 'Independents' in the list of nominees in 1642. At this time ecclesiastical positions were not so clear cut, and although as Chapter Three has shown some English divines were beginning to exhibit presbyterian or congregational leanings these were not necessarily apparent or of concern to others. That said, the 'theologians' amongst the puritan MPs will have been aware of the fissures arising between the more moderate, legalistic or conservative puritans and those holding congregational or more radical ecclesiological positions, and a letter to New England raises as many questions as it answers.

In 1642 an invitation was made to the New Englanders John Cotton, John Davenport and Thomas Hooker to attend the assembly. A letter sent by five peers and thirty-four members of the Commons urged them to "come over with all possible speed" because of the "greate need there is of the healp of

⁴² The information on county appointments is taken from Appendix E, of *Private Journals of the Long Parliament*, Vol 2, 490.

⁴³ Baxter, *Reliquiæ Baxterianæ*, 73.

⁴⁴ Fuller, *The Church History of Britain*, 247-249.

⁴⁵ Fuller, *The Church History of Britain*, 249.

prayer and improvement of all good meanes, from all parts for the settling and composing the affairs of the church". The signatories went on to express their belief that the advantages that would come from the divines' attendance would outweigh the inconveniences to them of the voyage and their absence from their churches and plantations.⁴⁶ One interpretation of this letter is that it is another example of parliaments' attempt to ensure a free and fair assembly. Van Dixhoorn considers however that the letter might also indicate early attempts by congregationalist peers and MPs to ensure their views were represented. The theological character of the five peers was well-known and varied, writes Van Dixhoorn, ranging from Brooke and Saye and Sele to Manchester and Warwick. He adds that "the majority of the thirty-four MPs on this list were, by 1642, thoroughly opposed to episcopacy, and many leaned toward congregationalism or something more radical".⁴⁷ Van Dixhoorn might be correct, but his interpretation is not without its difficulties. Though the list of signatories included Nathaniel Fiennes, Oliver Cromwell and Arthur Heselrige, who are usually identified as independents, the letter was also signed by Nathaniel Barnardiston, Thomas Barrington, John Gurdon and Gilbert Gerrard all of whom have been identified by historians as presbyterians.⁴⁸ Given the difficulties of determining religious beliefs at this time, the better use of this letter as historical evidence may be as an example of the enthusiasm, hopes and desires (with which it resonates) that root and branch supporters in general had for the forthcoming assembly.

In the event, the plea in the letter fell on deaf ears. The New Englanders did not come, citing their own reasons. Thomas Hooker apparently "did not like the business", fearing it might interfere with the vindication of congregational churches that he was writing at the time, and indeed that had they appeared as members of the assembly, greater exception might have been taken to their

⁴⁶ A copy of the letter can be found in Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay from 1628 to 1691*, Second Edition (London, 1756), 115-116.

⁴⁷ Van Dixhoorn, *Minutes and Papers*, Vol. 1, 12-13, citing Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay*.

⁴⁸ The names of the signatories appear in the copy of the letter referenced in note 46; George Yule, *Puritans in Politics, The Religious Legislation of the Long Parliament 1640 – 1647* (Sutton Courtney Press, 1981), Appendix 1, identifies Barnardiston, Gerrard and Gurdon as presbyterian; Como, *Radical Parliamentarians*, 269/270 also identifies Gurdon as presbyterian; Mary Keeler, *The Long Parliament, 1640 - 1641, A Biographical Study of its Members* (Philadelphia, 1954), 97, 185, describes Barrington and Gerard as presbyterians.

framing their own form of government in New England.⁴⁹ Hooker, perhaps, was aware of the likely presbyterian majority in the assembly.

The New Englanders were not the only ones not to appear at the assembly. Richard Baxter recalled that the “Episcopal Divines would not come, because it was not a Legal Convocation and because the King declared himself against it. Dr Dan Featley and very few more of that party came” he added.⁵⁰ Thomas Fuller agrees. He notes that at the opening meeting Dr. Westfield and “some few others” stood out because they “seemed the only non-conformists amongst them, for their conformity whose gowns and canonical habits differed from all the rest”. He adds that of those very few who appeared, scarce any continued anytime in the house (save Dr. Daniel Featly), “alleging privately several reasons for their absence or departure”.⁵¹ It is likely that episcopalians who remained left, at the very latest, when Featley was expelled from the gathering on 29th September 1643 or when the Solemn League and Covenant was signed.⁵²

In fact, when the assembly met on the 1st July 1643, of the 121 divines named in the summoning ordinance 25 were never to attend. One or two may have died, but the others failed to attend fearing the displeasure of the King or preferring episcopacy.⁵³ This may indicate that parliament was fairer than historians generally believe in its initial choice of members, or that the MPs and leaders in the counties were not so unanimously puritan in their beliefs as is often assumed.

The Scottish Commissioners

Shaw sees the period from January 1642 to the summer of 1643 as a period when the Long Parliament could pass religious legislation with its judgement “untrammelled” by the Solemn League and Covenant.⁵⁴ This is not to say however that the Scots did not play their part.

⁴⁹ Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay*, 117.

⁵⁰ Baxter, *Reliquiæ Baxterianæ*, 73.

⁵¹ Fuller, *The Church History of Britain*, 251.

⁵² A. Hunt, (2008, January 03). Featley [Fairclough], Daniel (1582–1645), Church of England clergyman and religious controversialist, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 3 Jan. 2008.

⁵³ W. A., Hetherington, *History of the Assembly of Divines* (Edinburgh, 1843), 110.

⁵⁴ Shaw, *History of the English Church*, Vol. 1, 102.

As the country slipped towards civil war the English and the Scots recognised their interdependency. Baillie observed in a letter of 28th May 1642 that if the “courtiers” could get the parliament of England overthrown by forces, “that all, either they have done or our Parliament has done already, or whatever any Parliament should mint to do hereafter, is not worth a figg”.⁵⁵ The English parliament, being well aware of Scottish ambitions for religious uniformity, recognised that if they wanted Scottish help, then they would have to make at least a gesture of cooperation with these ambitions. Bulstrode Whitelocke speaks of the parliament “courting” the Scots “with very kind expressions” during this period.⁵⁶ Russell opines that the revival in April 1642 of the proposal for an assembly of divines was connected with parliament’s desire for Scottish support but accepts that there is no proof of this.⁵⁷

The spring and summer of 1642 saw several “declarations” of intent exchanged between parliament and the Scots. From the English, these started with a short declaration by parliament to the Scottish Council in April, and for present purposes culminated in parliament’s resolution of 1st September to abolish episcopacy and its ‘Answer to the Declaration of the General Assembly of Scotland, about Church Government’ of 10th September 1642.⁵⁸ D’Ewes tells us that the motion to abolish episcopacy was made by Mr. Rous, and that his motion was followed by many speeches, “I cannot say debate” he wrote, “for all men argued for the abolition of bishops, and scarce a man spoke for them”.⁵⁹ The Answer of 10th September conveniently summarises parliament’s position in the autumn of 1642 and shows how much has changed since the beginning of the year. It reads:

That this Government, by Archbishops, Bishops, their Chancellors and Commissaries, Deans, Deans and Chapters, Archdeacons, and other Ecclesiastical Officers depending upon the Hierarchy, is evil, and justly offensive and burthensome to the Kingdom, a great Impediment to Reformation and Growth of Religion, very prejudicial to the State and Government of this Kingdom, and that we are resolved that the same shall be taken away; and according to our former Declaration of the 7th

⁵⁵ Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, Vol 2, 34, quoted in Russell, *Fall of the British Monarchies*, 491.

⁵⁶ Bulstrode Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English Affairs* (1682). New edition, (Oxford University Press, 1853), 57.

⁵⁷ Russell, *Fall of the British Monarchies*, 492.

⁵⁸ Commons Journal, Vol.2, 747-749.

⁵⁹ D’Ewes, 1st September 1642, *Private Journals of the Long Parliament* Vol. 3, 329.

of *February*, our Purpose is, to consult with Godly and Learned Divines, that we may not only remove this, but likewise settle such a Government as may be most agreeable to God's Holy Word, most apt to procure and conserve the Peace of the Church at Home, and a happy Union with the Church of *Scoteland* and other Reformed Churches abroad, and to establish the same by a Law, which we intend to frame for that Purpose, to be presented to His Majesty for His Royal Assent; and, in the mean Time, humbly to beseech His Majesty, that a Bill for the Assembly may be passed in Time convenient for the Meeting to be by the Fifth of *November* next, the miserable Estate of the Church and Kingdom not being able to endure any longer Delay.⁶⁰

At the same time the Scottish General Assembly was asked to send some of its own ministers to the assembly.⁶¹

The Scottish Commissioners, comprising ministers and lay elders, joined the assembly in October 1643 after The Solemn League and Covenant was signed. They opted for non-voting participation, the lay Commissioners taking up a similar role to the MPs and peers, the ministers taking an active part in theological debates.⁶²

Lay members

In addition to Scottish representatives, parliament was to send some of its own. One difficult question for historians is when and why parliament decided to add some of its own members to the assembly. The first time they appeared in a proposed legislative enactment was on 6th June 1643 when the Lords proposed a material amendment to the Commons' ordinance of 20th May 1643 adding ten peers and a proportionate number (twenty) from the Commons. This was the sixth, and finally, successful attempt to convene the assembly. Not one of the previous five bills named MPs or peers as members.⁶³ At the same time, the Lords added a provision expressly excluding any right of jurisdiction, power or authority ecclesiastical to the assembly, other than as

⁶⁰ House of Lords Journal, Vol. 5, 348-350.

⁶¹ Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, Vol 2, 55.

⁶² For more detail see Van Dixhoorn, *Minutes and Papers of the Westminster Assembly*, Vol 1, 23-27.

⁶³ Shaw, *History of the English Church*, Vol. 1, 126.

expressly set out in the ordinance.⁶⁴ Taken together, the two Lords' amendments are an indication of parliament's determination to maintain authority over the Church. Both amendments were accepted by the Commons. A third Lords' amendment, an attempt to eliminate mention of uniformity with Scotland, did not meet with favour in the Commons. Although this thesis argues that the assembly was not convened to induce the Scots to join the war on the side of parliament, the Commons was mindful of its value for this purpose.

The primary sources are also unhelpful to the historian seeking to understand the logic behind the identity of the lay assessors selected from parliament's own ranks. Lawrence Whitaker records that when the ordinance came back from the Lords on 7th June together with the names of their ten members to join in consultation with the Divines, "we added twenty names", but Whitaker makes no further comment.⁶⁵ The Commons Journal for 7th June gives detail of the amendments proposed by the Lords (referred to above) but as for its twenty members, simply lists their names.⁶⁶ The House of Lords Journal for the same date is similarly silent as to the reasoning behind its list of names.⁶⁷

Van Dixhoorn writes that the ten peers who were originally named to the assembly were all radical war party men. The more moderate Robert Devereux, third earl of Essex, was not invited until later in the assembly's history.⁶⁸ Of the members of the Commons, their positions on the war covered the whole gamut from radical war party men to those who wanted a peaceful settlement, but as for their positions on religion most, says Van Dixhoorn, were presbyterians. This left the congregationalists better represented in the two houses than in the assembly he adds.⁶⁹ Given the difficulty of assessing the religious beliefs of individual MPs at this time it is hard to see how Van Dixhoorn could reach this conclusion save with hindsight. Perhaps it would be better to say most MPs appointed to the assembly in 1643 would become presbyterians, if indeed that were the case.

The lay members of the assembly were non-voting.

⁶⁴ Commons Journal, Vol. 3, 7th June 1642, 118-119.

⁶⁵ Coxon, 'Lawrence Whitaker's Diary', 131; 141.

⁶⁶ Commons Journal, Vol. 3, 118-119.

⁶⁷ House of Lords Journal, Vol. 6, 85-86.

⁶⁸ Van Dixhoorn, *Minutes and Papers*, Vol. 1, 14.

⁶⁹ Van Dixhoorn, *Minutes and Papers*, Vol. 1, 14.

Delays in convening the assembly

There was a period of over a year from the time when parliament selected the divines to attend the assembly and the date it eventually sat. Historians suggest two possible reasons for the delay. First, although when Charles raised his standard at Nottingham on 22nd August 1642 he probably put paid to any chance that he would assent to a bill convening the assembly of divines, some MPs, while hopes of peace persisted, continued to hope that he would. The editors of *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum* put it thus,

During the war the authority of the Ordinances of Parliament was co-extensive with the influence of its arms, but whenever there was a prospect of a peaceful settlement the extent to which these ordinances were to be confirmed, or substantially re-enacted, was always one of the points at issue in the negotiations.⁷⁰

The second reason, suggested by Lawrence Kaplan and Rosemary Bradley, is that questions of religion were discounted at this time in favour of “the vital and pressing issue of war and peace”.⁷¹ Yule however would dispute this, he notes that negative religious legislation was passed and he believes that parliament did all that it could on religion during this period whenever it was expedient to do so.⁷² Van Dixhoorn accepts that war distracted from the work on the draft legislation for the assembly, and yet can see that the “dogged resistance on the part of most members of both houses to gain Charles’ consent” was probably the major reason.⁷³ The MP Walter Yonge’s diary of proceedings for the months September 1642 to March 1643 tends to support Van Dixhoorn’s view. It presents the reader with the impression that the focus of the Commons was certainly on the war, but the bill came up for debate in October, January and March and it is clear MPs were still waiting, hopefully, for the King’s assent.⁷⁴ On 6th October there appears to have been a determination

⁷⁰*Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660*, eds. C H Firth and R S Rait, (London, His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1911).

⁷¹Coxon, ‘Whitaker’s Diary’, xliii, quoting Kaplan, L., ‘Presbyterians and Independents in 1643’, *English Historical Review*, 84 (1969) 244 – 256; Rosemary Bradley, ‘Jacob and Esau struggling in the Womb’: A study of Presbyterian and Independent religious conflict 1640 – 1648’, (PhD Thesis, University of Kent, 1975), 58.

⁷²Yule, *Puritans in Politics*, 129.

⁷³Van Dixhoorn, *Minutes and Papers*, Vol. 1, 6.

⁷⁴Yonge, 19th September 1642 – 7th March 1643, *Walter Yonge’s Diary of Proceedings in the House of Commons 1642 – 1645*, Vol. 1.

that the bill be given legislative force without the King's assent, but presumably the house was persuaded against it.⁷⁵

Peace negotiations with the King absorbed much time through to April 1643, and after their failure the Commons showed greater resolution in prosecuting the war. This is apparent in their attempts to bring the Scots into the war on their side. That the alliance with the Scots should be formalised was broached on 13th July 1643, and the Solemn League and Covenant would follow, gaining the assent of the Assembly of Divines on 7th September and the Commons on 25th September.⁷⁶ This has led some to argue that the assembly was convened under pressure from the Scots, or as an inducement for their military assistance. The evidence says otherwise. The discussions with the Scots on the Solemn League and Covenant post-dated the first meeting of the Westminster Assembly by some weeks, and although it is unarguable that parliament was keen to gain Scottish support in the war, and that the summoning of the assembly may have helped secure that support, the assembly was conceived by parliament over a year before and mooted even earlier. Indeed, Rosemary Bradley suggests that parliament was determined to have church government discussed in an assembly and believes parliament may have called the assembly when it did to deliberately avoid Scottish demands for a direct presbyterian settlement.⁷⁷

Parliamentary supremacy

As conceived the assembly of divines was to be a body which parliament would consult and from which it would receive advice. Ultimately, the Westminster Assembly was an institution it would control. By 1643 Parliament had no intention of replacing one system of clerical suppression with another. Richard Baxter accurately made the point that parliament was not “intending to call an Assembly which should pretend Divine Right to make obliging laws or Canons to bind their Brethren, but an Ecclesiastical Council to be Advises to themselves”. He went on to add that the assembly was confined by parliament to debate only such things as they proposed to them; “and many Lords and Commons were joined in Commission with them, to see they did not go

⁷⁵ Yonge, 6th October 1642, *Walter Yonge's Diary of Proceedings in the House of Commons 1642 – 1645*, Vol. 1, 39.

⁷⁶ Details from Coxon, 'Whitaker's Diary', xxxviii; Commons Journal, Vol. 3, 25th September 1643, 254.

⁷⁷ Bradley, 'Jacob and Essau Struggling in the Womb', 58.

beyond their Commission".⁷⁸ The summoning ordinance of 12th June 1643 reads:

It is thought fitt and necessary to call an Assembly of Learned Godly and Judicious divines to consult and advise of such matters and things touching the premisses as shall be proposed unto them by both or either of the houses of parliament and to give their advice and counsell therein to both or either of the said houses when and as often as they shall be thereunto required

The ordinance, desiring to make sure there could be no misunderstanding, went on to give the assembly's members authority to debate only such matters concerning discipline and church government which have been proposed to them by parliament.⁷⁹

A few days later and to emphasise that MPs had a role in the debating process the Commons added the words in italics as follows: "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*, to consult", etc., a change reflected in Wing (2nd ed., 1994), E1952C.⁸⁰

Parliament next set out eight rules for the assembly, including a quasi-right of appeal to itself for any minority vote in the assembly, and sought to instruct the assembly's members how they should debate and reach decisions by requiring each to make the following protestation:

I A. B. do seriously and solemnly protest, in the Presence of Almighty God, That in this Assembly (wherein I am a Member) I will not maintain any Thing, in Matters of Doctrine, but what I think in my Conscience to be Truth; or in Point of Discipline, but what I shall conceive to conduce most to the Glory of God, and the Good and Peace of His Church.⁸¹

Sometime later Baillie would accurately lament that it was "no proper Assembly but a meeting called by the Parliament to advise them in what things

⁷⁸ Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianæ*, 73.

⁷⁹ This copy of the ordinance is from Van Dixhoorn, *Minutes and Papers*, Vol.1, Appx 1, 165-169. There are several printed copies extant with minor variations.

⁸⁰ Commons Journal. Vol 3:132, 17 June 1643. The version of the ordinance at Wing (2nd ed., 1994), E1952C shows this minor variation.

⁸¹ See Van Dixhoorn, *Minutes and Papers*, Vol. 1, Appx. 6 for the rules and the protestation.

they were asked” and that “they have no power to write one line to any soul but as the Parliament directs ”.⁸²

The question arises whether any of this should have come as a surprise to Baillie. The history of parliament's relationship with the church in England since the Reformation suggests that it should not. In *Godly Kingship in Restoration Britain* Jacqueline Rose describes the English Reformation as an extreme version of the magisterial Reformation.⁸³ She points out that the Royal Supremacy founded by Henry VIII meant monarchical control of church law and the churches legislative body, convocation. The Act of Submission of the Clergy in 1534 decreed that convocation needed a Royal licence to meet, permission to debate new canons, and ratification of these before they became legally binding.⁸⁴ It was arguably the case that because Royal ratification was ordained by statute, parliament must also consent and this opened up a loophole for later parliamentarians to argue, as we have seen in Chapter One, that without parliament's consent the convocation of 1640 and its canons were unlawful. Furthermore, the fact that the Royal Supremacy was enforced through statute implied that parliament had a role in church government, and this led to ambiguities as to the location of supremacy, monarchical or parliamentarian.⁸⁵ These ambiguities came to the fore in the early 1640s when parliament voted down the canons of 1640 thus enabling, as Conrad Russell put it, “the triumph of one version of the Royal Supremacy over another.... Of John Pym over Archbishop Laud”.⁸⁶

The Commons debates on the canons took place on 14th to 16th December 1640 and are discussed in Chapter One. There were several reasons why contemporaries disliked the canons of 1640, but for the purposes of this Chapter it is the challenge to the power of parliament that is of interest. In his speech against the canons Nathaniel Fiennes complained “these Canons doe containe sundry matters, which are not onely contrary to the Lawes of this Land, but also destructive of the very principall and fundamentall Lawes of this *Kingdome*.” He asserted that convocation had assumed “unto themselves

⁸² Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, Vol. 2, 186.

⁸³ Jacqueline Rose, *Godly Kingship in Restoration Britain: The Politics of the Royal Supremacy* (Cambridge, 2011), 4.

⁸⁴ Rose, *Godly Kingship*, 4.

⁸⁵ Rose, *Godly Kingship*, 23.

⁸⁶ Rose, *Godly Kingship*, 23, quoting Conrad Russell, ‘Whose supremacy? King Parliament and the Church, 1530 – 1640’, *Ecclesiastical Law Journal*, 4, (196-7), 700-8.

a Parliamentary power, and that too in a very high degree”, and that this “was an act of such presumption as no age can parallel: so is it of such dangerous consequence as nothing can be more.”⁸⁷

Many other members spoke to condemn the canons and their complex legal arguments give the reader a flavour of parliament’s opinion of its own ecclesiastical supremacy, even while for some at least this still included the concept of the King in parliament.⁸⁸ On 15th December 1640 the Commons unanimously resolved: “That the Clergy of England, ... have no Power to make any Constitutions; Canons or Acts, whatsoever, in Matter of Doctrine, Discipline or otherwise, to bind the Clergy, or the Laity of this Land without common consent of Parliament”. And coming back to the subject the following day they condemned the Canons as containing “many Matters contrary to the King's Prerogative, to the fundamental Laws and Statutes of the Realm, to the Right of Parliaments, to the Property and Liberty of the Subjects, and Matters tending to Sedition, and of dangerous consequence.”⁸⁹

The resolutions of 15th and 16th December 1640 could not have been clearer, and from thereon parliament increasingly assumed unto itself jurisdiction over matters that would hitherto have been the domain of the church. The Committee for Scandalous Ministers was formed in December 1640 and charged with the question of how to set up and maintain preaching ministers, and to consider the removal of scandalous ministers, and the later Committee for Plundered Ministers was set up initially to assist those clergy who had been evicted from their livings by Royalists. Both Committees dealt with the clergy who previously would have only been amenable to their own spiritual courts.⁹⁰

Perhaps even more compelling in pointing the way forward to its future relationship with the Westminster Assembly, parliament showed a willingness to assume authority over doctrine. For instance, on 18th May 1641 the Commons ordered the Stationers Company to suppress a book called *The Saints' Belief*, and directed the author, John Turner to be sent for as a delinquent, “for his boldness in causing a new belief to be printed without

⁸⁷ *A Second Speech of the Hon. Nathaniel Fiennes touching the Subjects Liberty against the late Canons and the new Oath...* (London, 1641), 2, Wing / F878.

⁸⁸ D'Ewes, 15th December 1640, in *The Journal of Sir Simonds D'Ewes : from the beginning of the Long Parliament to the opening of the trial of the Earl of Strafford*, ed. Wallace Notestein, (Oxford University Press, 1923), 147-156.

⁸⁹ Commons Journal, Vol 2, 15 Dec 1640 and 16 Dec. 1640, 51-52.

⁹⁰ See Shaw, *History of the English Church*, Vol. 2, 177-178 for more on these committees.

authority, sitting in Parliament”.⁹¹ The Commons also made several orders aimed at suppressing innovations, removing superstitious images, altars and the like.⁹² Furthermore, parliament intended to attempt a reform of the Liturgy, as stated in its Nineteen Propositions to the King of June 1642, and also of course to reform Church government: “That Your Majesty will be pleased to consent, that such a reformation be made of the Church government and liturgy, as both Houses of Parliament shall advise; wherein they intend to have consultations with divines...”⁹³

As time passed, as Royalists left parliament and as prospects of peace waned, parliamentarians grew more confident in their battle to reform the church and more determined in their insistence on state control of the church by parliament. A simple comparison of Clause 185 of the Grand Remonstrance with the assembly’s summoning ordinance reflects this. Clause 185 indicates a willingness by parliament to accede to the wisdom of the divines. It says that the divines “may consider of all things necessary for the peace and good government of the Church” and having represented the results of their consultations to parliament, parliament is merely to allow it and give it the stamp of its authority.⁹⁴ On 12th February 1642 parliament ordered the knights and burgesses of the counties to bring forward the names of such ministers as they thought fit “to be employed for the Settling the Affairs of the Church”.⁹⁵ The order did not say ‘to be consulted on the Settling the Affairs of the Church’. No such ambiguities can be found in the summoning ordinance of 12th June 1643 nor the eight rules parliament made for the assembly.

Parliament’s assumption of control of the Westminster Assembly was the natural conclusion not only of the debates of the previous three years but of arguments that had been ongoing between parliament, the clerical hierarchy and the Monarchy since the time of Henry VIII.

⁹¹ Commons Journal, Vol. 2, 18th May 1642, 148-149.

⁹² Details can be found in Shaw, *History of the English Church*, Vol.1, 103 – 107. See for example ‘An Act for Suppressing of divers Innovations in the Churches or Chapels of *England*, or Dominion of *Wales*’, which had its first reading in the Commons’ on 16th February 1642 and was committed the following day, Commons Journal, Vol. 2, 434, 437.

⁹³ The Eighth Proposition of The Nineteen Propositions, Gardiner, *Constitutional Documents*, 252.

⁹⁴ The Grand Remonstrance, 1641, Clause 185, Gardiner, *Constitutional Documents*, 229.

⁹⁵ Commons Journal, Vol. 2, 427-429; Gawdy, 12th February 1642, *Private Journals of the Long Parliament* Vol. 1, 364.

Summary

This chapter shows how quickly and how far the religious climate in England had changed since the assembly was first mooted. By the time of the Westminster Assembly's first meeting in July 1643 parliament had decided unequivocally that although episcopacy had not yet been formally abolished, its ultimate demise was a given.⁹⁶ This was confirmed by its order to the assembly of 12th October 1643 that a new "Discipline and Government" be settled in the Church "in Stead and Place of the present Government which [parliament] is resolved to be taken away".⁹⁷ Furthermore, parliament had put itself in a position of authority over the assembly such that it could direct the settlement.

Some historians are of the opinion that the assembly's subsequent decision to recommend a presbyterian system of church government was inevitable. Bremer argues that the outcome of the assembly's debates on ordination and the role of the synod only reinforced what was already evident, that the assembly would recommend a presbyterian style settlement. He maintains that it was because the dissenting brethren anticipated this that they brought forward the Apologetical Narration in January 1644.⁹⁸

It is certainly the case that most of the divines in the assembly were presbyterian, or at least could be persuaded to support a presbyterian platform of church government. Baillie commented on the presbyterian majority in 1644, writing that the independents' arguments in the assembly against "Presbyterie" were "found to be light, unanimouslie by all but themselves".⁹⁹ Thus to this extent the recommendation of a presbyterian polity was certainly to be expected. What is less clear is whether parliament chose to have a presbyterian majority in the assembly. The study of the initial selection process reveals nothing to suggest that parliament consciously picked a presbyterian assembly, indeed, there appears to have been some attempt to ensure a spread of ecclesiological positions. Furthermore, this thesis has shown that it is unlikely MPs could have identified many presbyterian divines when the selection process took place. It is probably the case that the

⁹⁶ Van Dixhoorn, *Minutes and Papers*, 13.

⁹⁷ House of Lords Journal, Vol 6, 254-255.

⁹⁸ Francis Bremer, *Lay Empowerment and the Development of Puritanism* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2015), 110.

⁹⁹ Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, Vol.2, 145. Baillie named the Independents as Goodwin, Bridges, Burroughs, Nye, Simpson and Caryll.

presbyterian majority in the assembly reflected the moderate beliefs of the majority of puritan divines in the country. They also represented a moderate strand of puritanism that appealed to most MPs.

This chapter has also shown that parliament had resolved to undertake a significant reform of church government by January 1642, if not earlier. This resolution had little to do with pressure from the Scots and was the result of the beliefs of its own MPs and pressure from its own supporters. It knew it needed advice from the experts and an assembly was the obvious way to obtain this. Any arguments that parliament was seeking to avoid making a decision are not borne out by the evidence.

Overall, I believe parliament convened the assembly for the best of reasons, at the earliest expedient time, and staffed it with the best available divines to achieve its purpose. That purpose was not, yet, to introduce a specifically presbyterian polity but the past three years of debate had allowed MPs' ideas to crystallise sufficiently to a point where such a polity, moderated by Erastianism, was the highly likely outcome.

Conclusion

This thesis began in November 1640 with a parliamentary attack on Laudian episcopacy, it has ended with the summons of an assembly to advise parliament on a new form of church government. In November 1640 MPs merely desired to reform episcopacy by taking away the worst innovations of Laud's regime, but by the summer of 1643 they had decided to abolish it. In the intervening years MPs' negative attitudes to episcopacy grew stronger, and the prospect of root and branch reform caused MPs to think more deeply about what they wanted from church government. As the Introduction has shown, most historians consider that in November 1640 English presbyterianism did not exist. I believe that by the summer of 1643 MPs had developed and clarified their ideas to a point where a presbyterian system, moderated by Erastianism, was the obvious answer even if it had not yet been articulated.

Because of the political connection between the bishops and the King there can in 1643 have been no going back to an episcopal system, however widely reformed. This left in reality only two options, a form of presbyterianism or a form of congregationalism. MPs feared an oppressive clerical presbyterianism but they feared sectarianism and anarchy even more. To the mind of most MPs in 1643 congregationalism and separatism were, if not the same then closely linked, and thus congregationalism threatened the very existence of a national church. That the MPs wanted a national church is without doubt. The presbyterian majority in the assembly meant it was highly likely to recommend a presbyterian system, and parliament's control of the assembly meant it could modify that system. The Erastian presbyterian solution would not be found quickly however.

Contribution to existing knowledge

This thesis deals with the questions how, and why, did the MPs in the Long Parliament come to choose a presbyterian system of church government. It challenges the traditional view that the Long Parliament merely bowed to

pressure from the Scots, the exigencies of war demanding it.¹ In seeking answers my review of the vast and dense historiography reveals that few historians have interrogated the primary sources to ascertain the ideas and opinions of the MPs on church government in the early years of the Long Parliament.² This is perhaps understandable. Historians focus on their own areas of interest and their current projects. For the years 1640 – 1643 historians of high politics have focused on the causes of the Civil War, where the foremost politico-religious issues are first the battle against Laudianism and then the battles for or against episcopacy, and where the Scots play a significant part. In her book *The Causes of the English Civil War* Ann Hughes is able to write about the period with barely a mention of presbyterianism.³ A similar focus led Conrad Russell to espouse the traditional view.⁴ For historians who are more interested in religion the focus in this short period has been on the battle between the puritans and the episcopalians, or on the puritans more generally, but primarily they have studied clerical beliefs.⁵ Both sets of historians will come to investigate the politico-religious debates between presbyterians and congregationalists or independents, but these mostly happen later in the decade.⁶

There is a lacuna; in the years 1640 – 1643 historians have not looked at MPs debates on church government for emergent presbyterianism in parliament. Thus, most have failed to recognize that throughout this short period not only were MPs cognizant of the theological issues, they developed their own ideas and took a proactive approach to the problem of church government per se. By 1643 the MPs had arrived at a position where in response not only to events in

¹ William Shaw, *A History of the English Church during the Civil Wars and under the Commonwealth*, 2 Vols. (London, 1900) and Conrad Russell, *The Fall of the British Monarchies 1637 – 1642* (Oxford, 1991).

² George Yule is a notable exception. George Yule, *Puritans in Politics, The Religious Legislation of the Long Parliament 1640 – 1647* (Sutton Courtney Press, 1981), 72-82. Shaw also studied parliamentary debates and this brought him to the traditional view. Shaw, *History of the English Church*.

³ Ann Hughes, *The Cause of the English Civil War* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1998)

⁴ Russell, *Fall of the British Monarchies*.

⁵ For studies on the debates between presbyterian and independent divines in the period 1640 – 1643 see Hunter Powell, *The Crisis of British Protestantism, Church power in the Puritan Revolution, 1638 - 1644* (Manchester, 2015). The later chapters of Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1997) also deal with clerical debates in this period.

⁶ For recent studies on the presbyterian divines see Ann Hughes, *Gangraena and the struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford, 2004); Elliot Vernon, 'The Sion College Conclave and London Presbyterianism during the English Revolution' (Unpublished PHD Thesis, University of Cambridge, 1999); Chad Van Dixhoorn, 'Presbyterian Ecclesiologies in the Westminster Assembly' in *Church polity and politics in the British Atlantic world, c. 1635 – 66*, eds Elliot Vernon and Hunter Powell (Manchester, 2020) 104-129. For events leading up to Prides's Purge in December 1648 see, David Underdown, *Prides Purge, Politics in the Puritan Revolution* (Oxford, 1971).

the war but to the needs of the church and the country the majority sought a Reformed church. The MPs recognized the need to consult the clerical experts on the church's system of government and discipline but were clear that parliament should control the consultation process and must ultimately enjoy supremacy of a national church. They were not prepared to let go of the reins of discipline as this risked heterodoxy and social unrest. As such a presbyterian church settlement was likely inevitable, not just because the Scots or a majority of the divines in the Westminster Assembly desired it, but because most MPs recognized it as best meeting parliament's and the country's needs. This thesis therefore supplements existing knowledge by seeking to fill the aforementioned lacuna and casting new light on the reasons for the adoption of presbyterianism.

1643 to 1646 and beyond

For the divines in the Westminster Assembly appointed to advise parliament of the system of church government most agreeable to God's Holy Word, the ecclesiological questions were difficult, and consensus could not be reached. Once it became clear to the congregationalists that they were losing the argument the Dissenting Brethren issued their Apologetical Narration.⁷ Although conciliatory in tone, the document stated the brethren's firm belief that each local church must retain 'complete power of jurisdiction' over their own affairs. This was a public appeal for latitude in matters of discipline, but in the assembly at least it was to fall on deaf ears. It also signaled the end of unity in the root and branch campaign, and hopes for a speedy reformation of the church faded.⁸ The Dissenting Brethren and other congregationalists would continue to fight for toleration.

This split amongst the godly was serious. As we have seen, in sermons before the Commons preachers had stressed the need for a complete reformation based on the pattern of scripture. In 1641 Nathaniel Holmes, for example, had urged that an assembly of divines should "draw nakedly out of the scriptures those clear truths concerning this new state" of the church. Here, he said,

⁷Thomas Goodwin and others, *An apologetical narration humbly submitted to the honourable Houses of Parliament by Tho: Goodwin, Philip Nye, Sidrach Simpson, Jer: Burroughes, William Bridge*, (London, 1643/44).

⁸John Morrill, 'The Puritan Revolution', in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, eds. John Coffey and Paul Lim (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008) 71-73; See Powell, *The Crisis of British Protestantism*, chapters 4 and 8 for more on the Apologetical Narration and the Dissenting brethren.

“shall be the righteousness of Christ’s discipline. Christ himself by the sceptre of his mouth, not of men's brains, shall order and dispose all things”.⁹ Everyone had assumed that there was a pattern of church government laid down in the Bible and parliament had directed the assembly to show it. The fact that the pattern was not sufficiently clear to command unanimity was a major concern. Indeed, George Yule describes the loss of this essential instrument for reformation of the church as “ultimately shattering”.¹⁰

The divergence of the divines within the assembly also presented parliament with another dilemma. MPs believed that church and state formed one Christian commonwealth and that a national church was an essential part of this. There could only be one form of government in a national church, and if the assembly brought forward two different polities, parliament would have to choose one of them. 1644 and 1645 would see much political and ecclesiological debate and attempts at accommodation with the Dissenting Brethren, all of which would fail. Eventually parliament would support the imposition of a presbyterian system of church government, but true to the ideas and beliefs discussed in this thesis it would not be the theocracy the presbyterian majority in the assembly wanted.

The Erastian controversy ran from 1644 through to 1646. Complex arguments were rehearsed on both sides and will not be set out here save to note how the arguments MPs had made before 1643 on the supremacy of parliament were now applied against the assembly.

John Selden, one of the few members of the Commons who was to take an active part in the debates in the assembly, was one of the first to respond to the assembly’s clerical direction of travel when in January 1644 he opposed the idea of ecclesiastical censures, arguing that the scriptures allowed civil ones only.¹¹ The nub of the argument was that the assembly had decided that godly discipline was an essential mark of the church and could only be administered by the clerical elders who had been appointed by divine right. Having strongly resisted the Laudian bishops’ claims to *jure divino* episcopacy, the Commons would not readily accept similar claims from the presbyterian divines. The most parliament was prepared to concede was that it would grant the church

⁹ Nathaniel Holmes, *The New World...* (London, 1641), Wing/2570, quoted in Yule, *Puritans in Politics*, 132.

¹⁰ Yule, *Puritans in Politics*, 132.

¹¹ Van Dixhoorn, *Minutes and Papers*, Vol. 2, 489. The assembly’s minutes for this period have been lost but Van Dixhoorn has reconstructed them.

the power to discipline particular sins. The power of excommunication was to extend to the eldership only for such matters of scandal as was passed by the house, and even then suspension from the sacraments was to be only pro tempore.¹²

At this juncture one must wonder how MPs dealt with the contradictions in their stance. On the one hand, their firm belief that scripture ruled and their being advised by the assembly that in scripture the church elders had the right to administer discipline *jure divino*, and on the other hand their equally firm belief in the supremacy of parliament in matters of discipline. Here the puritan divine and assembly member Thomas Coleman came to their rescue. A presbyterian and an Erastian, in an important sermon to the Commons delivered on 30th July 1645 he questioned how there could be *jus divinum* in church government if both the Scots and the independents claimed it for their own, and he told the Commons that he was not convinced by the assembly's scriptural arguments to back up the *jus divinum* of clerical church governance. "Place no more burdens of government upon the shoulders of ministers than Christ has plainly laid upon them" he urged, for this may lead to ambition and take them from their real work. He continued, "a Christian magistrate as a Christian magistrate is a Governor in the church ... of other Governments, besides Magistracie, I find no institution".¹³

The argument between the assembly and the Commons rumbled on into 1646, and on the 5th and 13th March 1646 respectively the Commons and the Lords passed an ordinance for an Erastian presbyterian church government which included lay commissioners to determine ecclesiastical offences and lay involvement at every level.¹⁴ The assembly did not like it and on the 23rd March 1646 Stephen Marshall carried to parliament a petition from the assembly asserting the *jus divinum* of Christ's censures and challenging parliament's position on church government.¹⁵ Parliament reacted angrily, with many MPs arguing that the assembly deserved censure and should be charged with breach of privilege if they could not show their reasons as *jure divino*. MPs

¹² Commons Journal, Vol. 4, 3rd May 1645, 131.

¹³ Thomas Coleman, *Hopes Deferred and Dashed ... 30th July 1645*, (London, 1645), Wing/C5054, 24, 27.

¹⁴ March 1646, 'An ordinance for keeping of scandalous persons from the sacrament of the Lord's supper, the enabling of congregations for the choice of elders, directions of parliament concerning church government', in *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660.*, eds..C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait (London, His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1911), 833-838.

¹⁵ Commons Journal, Vol.4, 23rd March 1646, 484-487. A copy of the petition can be found in Van Dixhoorn, *Minutes and Papers*, Vol. 5, Document 104.

were alarmed by clerical pretensions but ultimately they would not go against the Word of God expressed in the Bible and hoped that clarity on this could be found. Their solution was to order the assembly to answer nine queries on the *jus divinum* of church government, and to require the divines to deliver “their Proofs, from Scripture; and to set down the several Texts of Scripture, in the express Words of the same”.¹⁶ When the queries were delivered to the assembly on 30th April by Sir John Evelyn, he, Nathaniel Fiennes and Samuel Browne all acknowledged the supremacy of the Bible. “We all agree that the word of God is the rule & must be the rule. But say ther be noe positive rule in the word?” said Browne.¹⁷ Sir Benjamin Rudyard, who also spoke to the assembly that day was more forceful and skeptical of *jus divinum* claims: “The matter you are now about, the *jus divinum*, is of a formidable & tremendous nature. It will be expected you should answer by cleare, practical & expresse scriptures, not by farre fetched arguments which are commonly tould before you come to the matter”.¹⁸

Eventually a compromise was reached, not least because political events intervened. The King surrendered to the Scots on 8th May 1646 and parliament, fearing the Scots next move, had to moderate their arguments with the presbyterians in the assembly. The City of London was also roused to come to the presbyterians aid, submitting a petition to parliament bemoaning “the swarms of Sectaries which discover themselves everywhere” and urging parliament to establish church discipline and require all equally to yield obedience to it.¹⁹ The compromise saw local commissioners being replaced by a standing committee of MPs who would try unenumerated scandals for which men might be debarred from the sacrament, and the ordinance was to remain in force for only three years. Presbyterianism in a modified Erastian form would be established and parliament set about “with energy” to erect a presbyterian system throughout the country.²⁰ In some places such as London, Essex, Derbyshire and parts of Lancashire this met with early success, in others it barely got off the ground.²¹

¹⁶ Commons Journal, Vol. 4, 22nd April 1646, 518-520.

¹⁷ Van Dixhoorn, *Minutes and Papers*, Vol. 4, Sess. 631. April 30, 1646. Thursday morning – Translation.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *To the Honourable the House of Commons Assembled in the High Court of Parliament: The Humble Remonstrance and Petition of the Lord Mayor etc, 26th May 1646* (London, 1646).

²⁰ Yule, *Puritans in Politics*, 194.

²¹ See Shaw, *History of the English Church*, Vol. 2, 1-84, and Yule, *Puritans in Politics*, 263-278 for the extent of the presbyterian system set up.

There are several reasons why the presbyterian system parliament and the assembly set out to erect in 1646 was ultimately to fail, primary amongst them being the toleration issue, that is, the independents continuing fight for toleration within the system, and the commitment of the New Model Army to free forms of worship. As the independents gained the upper hand in politics, government support for the presbyterian church was withdrawn and eventually the national presbyterian system withered away.

Some contemporaries would lay the blame for the continuing religious turmoil on the assembly, others on parliament. The future regicide, and independent John Cook wrote in 1647:

and now I have named that which is the great Apple of contention in this kingdome; ...though I beleieve most of the Assembly are men regenerate, and good Christians, and therefore I love them; yet had they never met, I am as confident as confidence it selfe can make me, that this kingdome had long since been settled in a peaceable posture; for we may thank them for their learned distinction of *Presbyter* and *Independent*, between whom lovers of peace desire to make the difference very small, but contentious spirits study to make it a wound incurable.²²

Richard Baxter however believed parliament to blame because in his opinion it did not do enough to bring about an accommodation between the presbyterians and the congregationalists in the assembly:

above all, I could wish that the Parliament and (the Assembly) ...had done more than was done to heal our Breaches and had hit upon the right way either to unite with the Episcopal and independants., or at least had pitched on the Terms that are fit for Universal Concord.²³

There is some truth in both views.

²² John Cook, *Redintegratio amoris* (London, 1647), Wing (2nd Ed., 1994)/C6026, 45-46, quoted in Rosemary Bradley, 'Jacob and Esau struggling in the Womb': A study of Presbyterian and Independent religious conflict 1640 – 1648', (PhD Thesis, University of Kent, 1975), 671.

²³ Ricard Baxter, *Reliquae Baxterianae*, ed. Matthew Sylvester (London, 1696), 73, quoted in Bradley, 'Jacob and Esau struggling in the Womb', 673.

Summary

As stated in the Introduction the demise of the presbyterian church should not disguise the support that it did achieve not only in the Westminster Assembly but also in parliament. This thesis does not argue that all MPs supported the presbyterian system for principled reasons of religious belief, for some or indeed many this may not have been the case. Most however were prepared to support the presbyterian system for other equally principled reasons worked out in the early years of the Long Parliament. These reasons include their commitment to a national church where ultimate power rests with the secular magistrate; their acknowledgment of the need for peaceful relations with Scotland; and in the turbulence of civil war the political imperative of stability which only a strong institutional church could afford. The long standing fear of popery and heterodoxy, and the traditional 'puritan' emphasis on the need for a strong preaching ministry to provide edification and to ensure piety, had each been threatened by the Laudian church and MPs believed only a cohesive Reformed church could suppress the former and provide the latter. Finally, a desire to retain the traditional, familiar structures of early modern society in which local leaders enjoyed status and an integral role in the parish also played its part. These beliefs were evident in 1643, and in 1646 a presbyterian church, modified by Erastianism fulfilled the need.

This quote from an anonymous obituary dedicated to Sir Philip Stapleton MP after his death in 1647 perhaps sums up the position of many MPs, and is a fitting way to end this Conclusion.

nor was he [Stapleton] easily engaged into anything of change, no not into that way he so much sustred for (the Covenant and Church-government by Presbytery) though afterwards he looked upon it both in divine and prudent considerations, as the way of God suiting most, and best with the union of the Nations, and in that the welfare of both, and the next way under God (moderately advanced) to make the three Kingdomes happy; And upon those very grounds, with most Christian and indefatigable endeavours was a Cordiall promoter of it.²⁴

²⁴ Anon, *A short and true narrative of the departure from England, sicknesse, and death, of that late worthy knight, Sir Philip Stapleton, attested under the hands of foure of those gentlemen that went with him. With a briefe character of his person, &c.*, (London, 1647), Wing (2nd ed.) / S3554, 11; Yule, *Puritans in Politics*, 208, attributes *A short and true narrative* to Denzil Holles.

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