

Hakryang Seo

Episcopalian or Presbyterian?

Cornelius Burgess (1589?-1665)
on Church Government



Reformed Historical Theology

Edited by
Herman J. Selderhuis

In co-operation with
Andreas J. Beck, Emidio Campi, Irene Dingel, Benyamin F. Intan,
Elsie Anne McKee, Richard A. Muller and Risto Saarinen

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Abbreviations

BL	British Library
Bodl	Bodleian Library
CUL	Cambridge University Library
SP	State Papers

1. Introduction

1.1 Doctrinal and Ecclesiological Diversity

When considering the Reformation or the Post-Reformation eras, historians of late have focused on the doctrinal and ecclesiological diversity within these periods. This is also true when considering the religious reformation in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Previous binary classifications no longer serve as definitive systems of historical-theological analysis.

Likewise, scholars of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English Reformation have shifted away from the binary framework. In his *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, Patrick Collinson expressed a refusal “to enter at any depth into the debate over the meaning and the very existence of the concepts of Puritanism and Anglicanism.”¹ This was a paradigm shift in understanding Puritanism. Before the work of Collinson, the predominant views could be divided into two categories: “extrinsic/secular” historians and “intrinsic/denominational” historians and theologians.² Although there were differences between them, they also shared an assumption that Puritanism—those who had independent thoughts not only on theology but also on politics and culture—was contrasted with Anglicanism, which described those who tried to defend and maintain the status quo of the state and the church. However, as Collinson pointed out, the term ‘Anglicanism’ is anachronistic.³ Although it was needed as an antithesis for the explanation of Puritanism’s attempt to oppose and transform the status quo of the state and the church, the term ‘Anglicanism’ “was a term unknown to the sixteenth century, and an indication of a distinct system of divinity, an invention of the nineteenth.”⁴ Collinson described how Puritans were involved in the established Church of England and tried to reform the Church within the established episcopal system. Collinson provided one of the examples, which indicated that Elizabethan presbyterians tried to set up a “presbytery in Episcopacy.”⁵

1 Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967), 13.

2 Peter Lake, “The Historiography of Puritanism,” in *Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, ed. John Coffey and Paul Chang-Ha Lim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 351; Greg A. Salazar, *Calvinist Conformity in Post-Reformation England: The Theology and Career of Daniel Featley*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 1–16.

3 Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 13.

4 Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 13.

5 Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 329.

Although the dichotomist view of Puritanism and Anglicanism collapsed, an alternative binary system was designed to explain conflicts in the Church of England at that time. There has been a trend among historians to reevaluate the role of John Calvin in the development of Reformation and post-Reformation theology, such that many no longer view him solely as a benchmark for judging the ideas of his era but rather analyze him alongside his contemporary Reformers.⁶ In a seminal essay, Nicholas Tyacke offered an alternative to the Puritanism-versus-Anglicanism dichotomy by focusing on “the rise to power of Arminianism in the 1620s.”⁷ Tyacke argued that the royal absolutism and Arminianism in the religious policy of Charles I “became closely identified in the popular mind” so Arminianism had an important role in the bond between Calvinist Puritans and Calvinist bishops of the established Church.⁸ Other scholars attached the nickname “Calvinist consensus” to the bond.⁹ According to Tyacke, the Calvinist consensus played an important role in uniting moderate puritans and Calvinist conformists in the Church of England. However, the Arminian innovations in doctrine and practice severed the bond and even became the driving force of the English Civil War.¹⁰

According to Kenneth Fincham, Tyacke’s dichotomy posing Calvinists against Arminians was helpful in describing the interactions among bishops and the godly in the Church of England. Fincham’s argument was that due to their “rival visions of the episcopal office,” while Calvinist bishops tried to adopt the image of the “preaching pastor,” their Arminian counterparts regarded the bishop as a “custodian of order.”¹¹

However, this binary frame of Calvinism versus Arminianism was attacked by Peter White. White argued that “the model of a theological dichotomy between ‘Calvinism’ and ‘Arminianism’ was simply inadequate for understanding either the overall development of doctrine in the Reformation period, or of personal

6 Cf. Basil Hall, “Calvin Against the Calvinists,” in *John Calvin: A Collection of Distinguished Essays*, ed. Gervase Duffield (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 19–37; R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982); Richard A. Muller, “Diversity in the Reformed Tradition: A Historiographical introduction,” in *Drawn into Controversie: Reformed Theological Diversity and Debates within Seventeenth-Century British Puritanism*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and Mark Jones (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 11–30.

7 Nicholas Tyacke, “Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution,” in *The Origins of the English Civil War*, ed. Conrad Russell (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1973), 119.

8 Tyacke, “Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution,” 140.

9 Lake, “The Historiography of Puritanism,” 353.

10 Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590–1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), xii–xiii.

11 Kenneth Fincham, *Prelate as Pastor: The Episcopate of James I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 5.

allegiances within it.”¹² White demonstrated this by examining the doctrine of predestination from the Elizabethan period to the beginning of the Civil War in the Church of England. Although White indicated the differences between Reformed theologians’ understanding of the doctrine of predestination, hence questioning the term ‘Calvinists,’ he reused the term Anglicanism to describe William Laud’s theological notions, which were not, according to White, opposed to Calvin nor Beza but followed the traditional Anglican ideas. Kevin Sharpe also agreed that the program of Laud for “the reformation of the church of England” was regarded as a “broader quest for an earlier order.”¹³

Peter Lake in his *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* provided Puritans who “sought to negotiate that choice and still retain both their self-image as ‘Puritan,’ principled members of the most godly and committed section of English protestant opinion, and their active role within the established church.”¹⁴ Puritans now were to be explained not in binary terms but by various degrees in “style of piety, vision of the nature of the godly community and of that community’s relations with both the national church and the wider social order.”¹⁵ Therefore, not all Puritans “were formally nonconformists.”¹⁶

Anthony Milton also argued that in terms of religious matters in the Jacobean and Caroline period, people quarreled with each other not about “single doctrinal issues” but about various doctrinal issues.¹⁷ It is misleading to divide “the church along either simple Anglican/Puritan or Calvinist/Arminian lines.”¹⁸ Therefore, Milton argued for “a broad spectrum of views running from crypto-popish ‘Arminian’ zealots on the one hand, through to die-hard Puritan nonconformists on the other.”¹⁹ There was flexibility among “Calvinists,” “anti-papal divines,” and a “non-Laudian position.”²⁰ Furthermore, Milton also pointed out the process of change or development from 1600 to 1640 in religious thoughts. “All patterns of thought, all groupings within the English Church” had changed and developed.²¹

12 Peter White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic: Conflict and Consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 11.

13 Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), xix.

14 Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 3–4.

15 Lake, “The Historiography of Puritanism,” 355.

16 Lake, “The Historiography of Puritanism,” 355.

17 Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 4.

18 Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 4.

19 Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 5.

20 Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 534.

21 Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 534.

While various doctrinal disagreements indicate a degree of diversity, such diversity did not break the bond among “the godly,” as the Puritans liked to style themselves. Tom Webster explored clerical networks based on the principle of sociality. Although Webster preferred to use the term “godly” instead of “Calvinists” or “Puritans,” he pointed to aggressive Laudian pressure as antagonistic to those godly networks. While Webster acknowledged “variations” and “disagreements” among “the godly ministers,” he pointed out that the bedrock of the godly networks was not only “puritan spirituality”; as Webster noted, “religion had a primary meaning of attitude of worship or way of being pious,” but also “an extremely tight consensus on the minutiae of soteriological theology.”²² This also indicates that there were groups with different opinions existing outside of the mainstream “godly network” (or mainstream Puritans). This includes not only Roman Catholic recusants but also individuals who originated from the Puritan movement and held even more divergent or extreme opinions, which was explored by David Como.

In his work *Blown by the Spirit*, David Como argued there was an underground Antinomian movement before the English Civil War that emerged out of mainstream Puritanism. “Such godly dissidents,” who came to be known as “antinomians,” “Familists,” or “libertines,” says Como, “objected to what they saw as legalistic and literal-minded tendencies inherent in mainstream Puritanism.”²³ However, the reason why such thoughts were regarded as very dangerous was that “they remained members of the godly community, sharing large portions of the cultural and intellectual heritage that defined puritans as a group within the world.”²⁴

In addition to diversity in doctrinal issues, diversity in liturgical and ecclesiological issues continues to be considered as vital to understanding theological developments in post-Reformation England. Webster revealed that liturgical and ecclesiological issues were foremost in creating fissures within the godly groups. In terms of the liturgy of Laudian style, conformists regarded Laudian ceremonies as “adiaphora” (or “things indifferent”), while nonconformists who suffered from persecution, deprivation, and limited ministry fled England for continental Europe. Webster also highlighted the skillful and ingenious strategies by which the godly ministers in the diocese of Essex evaded trouble and appeared “conformable.” However, they failed because “committed Laudians were looking for conformity without exception.”²⁵ When Webster considered the Puritan diaspora, he stressed

22 Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England: The Caroline Puritan Movement, c. 1620–1643* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 2, 130, 283.

23 David R. Como, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in pre-Civil-War England* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 3.

24 Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 8.

25 Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 205.

ecclesiology, which caused further disintegration of the godly networks.²⁶ Thus, Webster showed a spectrum of thought and practice among Puritans in the Caroline period, blurring the binary image too often limited to Calvinists and anti-Calvinists.

Similarly, Polly Ha pointed out that “many puritans would never fit the agenda of any one party; their theology evolved throughout their careers, and cannot be placed consistently in any one ecclesiological camp.”²⁷ When it comes to the ecclesiastical development, Ha also indicated that “the presbyterians contributed to the birth of congregational ‘independency,’ which made new claims to popular sovereignty within the puritan mainstream.”²⁸ The diversity in ecclesiological issues within the networks of the godly stemmed from the nature of the English Reformation. Even Milton rejected the assumption that “Elizabeth’s religious settlement was clear in its content and meaning and that this meaning was universally accepted by contemporaries.”²⁹ He argued not only that “the content and meaning of the basic formularies of the Elizabethan settlement were far from clear,” but also that there existed “fundamental ambiguities and inconsistencies” among the different elements of the religious settlements presented during each ruler’s reign.³⁰ Therefore, Milton adopted the term “*Quasi-Lex*” (semi-official) to describe the situation of the Church of England.³¹

In sum, scholarly analysis of theological perspectives in post-Reformation England has shifted from the paradigm that such theological perspectives form a dichotomous system—such as Puritanism/Anglicanism or Calvinism/anti-Calvinism—to a new paradigm that such theological perspectives formed a multifaceted framework that represents a broad spectrum of opinions among Puritans and their contemporaries. Even Tyacke later acknowledged that his “concentration on the ‘single issue of predestination’ does now seem excessive,” causing him to stress more of “a nexus of associated orthodoxies.”³² However, without denying the importance of diversity among the Puritans, it is necessary to employ certain labels loosely—not strictly or rigidly—because of the existence of principles and fundamental causes that were debated and opposed to each other.

26 Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 253–332.

27 Polly Ha, *English Presbyterianism, 1590–1640* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 126.

28 Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, 3.

29 Anthony Milton, *England’s Second Reformation: The Battle for the Church of England 1625–1662* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 12.

30 Milton, *England’s Second Reformation*, 13.

31 Milton, *England’s Second Reformation*, 20.

32 Nicholas Tyacke, *Aspects of English Protestantism. c. 1590–1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 10. Tyacke cites sources from Milton and Lake, which can be seen as influenced by his perspective on diversity.

There still remains room for categorizing individuals into distinct groups based on consensus amid diversity. Nevertheless, ecclesiology (especially disparate Puritan views on church government) more clearly reveals diversity within those groups. Ha's point remains valid in that many people of the time did not neatly fit "in any one ecclesiological camp."³³ This was unlikely to have caused significant discomfort for the English as they had experienced successive rulers slightly altering various elements of the religious settlement. However, considering people's dedication to theological principles at the time, it is worthwhile to examine how they could navigate between different ecclesiological camps. Was church government considered entirely indifferent, or could it be flexibly applied based on certain underlying thoughts? Although the English godly divine Cornelius Burgess (1589?–1665) may not comprehensively represent his contemporaries, his study on church polity shows that it was not entirely indifferent and subject to change freely, but could vary in different circumstances based on certain theologically reasoned principles.³⁴

1.2 Church Government

Among theological doctrines, the topic of church government might be considered more practical than theoretical. As a product of ecclesiological reflection, church government requires a certain visible form, although the visible form is necessary to deal with spiritual, invisible things that happen in the church. Thus, Richard Hooker offered a definition of "church politie, which is a forme of ordering the publique spirituall affaires of the Church of God."³⁵

King Henry VIII severed the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England. With the passing of the Act of Supremacy in 1534, Henry VIII became the supreme head of the Church of England. Although Lutheran and Reformed expressions of Protestant theology from the continent spread throughout England during the reign of Edward VI (1547–1553), the English episcopacy—rooted in Roman Catholic polity—remained untouched. English theologians who favored Reformed theology did not "reform" the episcopal ecclesiology of the

33 Ha, *English Presbyterianism*, 126.

34 Many seventeenth-century documents spell his surname as "Burges." Even in Burgess's own published works, the spelling "Burges" can be observed. However, due to orthographic fluidity common at the time, alternative spellings such as "Burgess" began to appear in certain contemporary documents, and even "Burgis" can be found in the ordination register. Despite these variations, most modern scholars prefer the spelling "Burgess," and this study follows the practice to maintain consistency.

35 Richard Hooker, *Of the Lavves of Ecclesiasticall Politie* (London, 1604), 131.

Church of England at that time. For example, under Edward VI, *Reformatio legum ecclesiasticarum*—a draft written by a committee of eight, including Archbishop Thomas Cranmer and Peter Vermigli (a Reformed theologian from the continent), and finalized by a committee of thirty-two—outlines the offices of deacon, presbyter, archpresbyter, archdeacon, dean, bishop, and archbishop.³⁶ Furthermore, the well-known Elizabethan theologian William Perkins acknowledged the power of the Church to “prescribe ordinances rules, or traditions, touching time & place of Gods worshippe, and touching order and comelines to be used in the same,”³⁷ although he argued that “all errors in doctrine”³⁸ should be rejected.

As Anthony Milton noted, Perkins was “prepared to specify that a doctrinal succession alone—without an accompanying institutional succession—was ultimately sufficient for the continuance of the true church”³⁹ with the concept of an invisible church. As such, Perkins “avoided dealing with issues of ecclesiastical polity directly.”⁴⁰ Thus, the concept of “doctrinal succession” played a significant role in the development of the English Reformation. Although the practical aspects of the Church of England may have somewhat resembled those of the Roman Catholic Church, these could be considered *adiaphora* (“things indifferent”), according to Perkins. What was crucial, Perkins insisted, was the preservation of orthodox, apostolic, and catholic doctrine; the form of ecclesiological practices, in the meantime, could be disregarded to a degree.

Despite the concept of doctrinal succession, the episcopacy of the Church of England required a theoretical explanation. During the reign of Elizabeth I from 1558–1603, for instance, there were debates on church government within the Church of England, both internally between Thomas Cartwright and John Whitgift, and externally, between Hadrian Saravia and Theodore Beza.⁴¹ These debates on

36 Commissioners on Revision of the Ecclesiastical Laws, 1550–1552, *Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum Ex Auctoritate Primum Regis Henrici. 8. Inchoata: Deinde Per Regem Edouardum 6.* (London, 1571), 47–52; Henry Maxwell Lyte, ed. *Calendar of the Patent rolls preserved in the Public record office. Prepared under the superintendence of the Deputy keeper of the records. Edward VI. Pub. by authority of His Majesty's principal secretary of state for the Home department v.4 (1550–1553)* (London: H.M. Stationery off., 1924), 114.

37 William Perkins, *A Reformed Catholike: Or, A Declaration Shewing How Neere We May Come to the Present Church of Rome in sundrie points of Religion.* ([Cambridge], 1598), 137.

38 William Perkins, “The Author to The Christian Reader,” in *A Reformed Catholike: Or, A Declaration Shewing How Neere We May Come to the Present Church of Rome in sundrie points of Religion.* ([Cambridge], 1598).

39 Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 280.

40 Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 456.

41 John Whitgift, *An Ansvvere to a certain Libel intituled, An admonition to the Parliament* (London, 1572); Thomas Cartwright, *A Replye to an ansvvere made of M. Doctor VVhitgifte Againste the Admonition to the Parliament* (Hemel Hempstead, 1573); John Whitgift, *The Defense of the Aunsvvere to the Admonition against the Replie of T.C. by Iohn VVhitgift Doctor of Diuinitie* (London, 1574);

ecclesiological issues were crucial not only within the Church of England and with neighboring Reformed churches, but also with the Roman Catholic Church because it was necessary for the Church of England to argue that the episcopal form of the Roman Catholic Church was flawed, even though the two churches shared a similar form of church government.⁴² However, this theoretical development eventually produced a *iure divino* episcopacy. The essential and logical outcomes of the *ius divinum* concept triggered various reactions among the godly, particularly when there were growing doubts about the episcopalian doctrinal position (i. e., their doctrine of apostolic succession).

1.3 Reformed Episcopalians

Looking through a binary lens, Nicholas Tyacke explained that the Arminian religious innovations of Charles I and William Laud stimulated reactions from Calvinists such as “root and branch’ remedies,” such as “the Root and Branch Petition of December, which called for the abolition of bishops.”⁴³ Tyacke put some bishops, such as John Preston and John Davenant, in the “mainstream of Calvinist Episcopalianism.”⁴⁴ Although “the hallmark of opposition to the Arminian policy of the government was still Calvinist Episcopalianism” in the 1620s, the failure of the Reformed episcopate resulted in it “being discredited as a viable church system.”⁴⁵ Tyacke identified a certain group of bishops who were in favor of the Reformed doctrine in particular (such as predestination) as well as the episcopal form of church government.

Thomas Cartwright, *The second replie of Thomas Cartwright: agaynst Maister Doctor Whitgiftes second answer, touching the Churche discipline* ([Heidelberg], 1575); Thomas Cartwright, *The rest of the second replie of Thomas Cartvuriht: agaynst Master Doctor Vuhitgifts second ansvuer, touching the Church discipline* (Basel, 1577); Hadrian Saravia, *D. Sarauia. 1. Of the diuerse degrees of the Ministers of the Gospell. 2. Of the Honor vvhich is due vnto the Priestes and Prelates of the Church. 3. Of Sacrilege, and the punishment thereof.* (London, 1591); Theodore Beza, *Ad Tractationem de Ministrorum Evangelii Gradibus ab Hadriano Saravia editam, Theodori Bezae responsio* (Genevae, 1592).

42 Robert Bellarmine, *Disputationes de Controversiis Christianae Fidei, Adversus Huius Temporalis Haereticos, Tribus Tomis comprehensae* (Ingolstadt, 1586); George Carleton, *Consensus Ecclesiae Catholicae contra tridentinos Demonstrans vnam ac perpetuam doctrinam è sacris scripturis excerptam, & in Ecclesia Catholica conseruatam vsque ad concilium tridentinum, in grauissimis sidei controuersas, quæ sunt de scripturis, siue regula fidei. ecclesia. fide iustificante. gratia* (Frankfurt, 1613).

43 Tyacke, “Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution,” 142–143.

44 Tyacke, “Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution,” 128–129.

45 Tyacke, “Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution,” 137.

Kenneth Fincham also indicated that based on the indulgent “Calvinism” in early Stuart England, Reformed conformists and nonconformists alike “shared a common opposition to the Church of Rome.” However, the conformists still maintained “the formularies and government of the Church, and the supreme governor’s authority to determine rites and discipline,” and even “the *ius divinum* status of episcopacy,” taking the advantage of “the descent of the episcopal office from apostolic times.”⁴⁶ Fincham also pointed out that although there was a movement for the abolition of the episcopal order in the 1640s, “much contemporary opinion was not hostile to bishops” between 1603 and 1642.⁴⁷

Anthony Milton illustrated the Laudian anxiety and strategy to reinterpret “the writings and actions of Calvinist conformists such as Morton, Davenant, Hall or Prideaux in order to present them as supporters of Laudian ideas and policies, and as opponents of Puritanism.”⁴⁸ This indicated not only that Laudians did not belong to the Reformed conformist group but also that they kept their distance from moderate or reformed figures, even including Episcopalians, in the previous generation.⁴⁹ Likewise, Milton argued “it was precisely the more rigid Calvinists, the most dedicated anti-papal writers, who were the strongest and most consistent early supporters of *iure divino* episcopacy,” while “avant-garde conformist divines” did not regard episcopacy as “an immutable system” of church polity.⁵⁰ Although there were various understandings of the term *iure divino*, the Laudian driving force to remove the ambiguities of the term resulted in “a polarization of opinion and allegiance.”⁵¹

Marcus Harmes also examined reformed bishops during the Reformation and post-Reformation era. Harmes described their interaction not only with “a broader landscape of political demands,” including their advisory role in the House of Lords, but also with “a much broader world of continental reforms, where non-episcopal and episcopal reformed churches provided the substance of both attack against and defence of bishops.”⁵² Although Harmes offered the image of bishops as agents of reform, he explored a comparatively small numbers of cases.

46 Kenneth Fincham, “Introduction,” in *The Early Stuart church, 1603–1642*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), 9.

47 Kenneth Fincham, “Episcopal Government 1603–1640,” in *The Early Stuart church, 1603–1642*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), 88.

48 Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 539.

49 Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 539.

50 Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 455.

51 Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 461.

52 Marcus K. Harmes, *Bishops and Power in Early Modern England* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 119.