

A “Theological Junto”: the 1641 Lords’ subcommittee on religious innovation

Introduction

During the spring of 1641, a series of meetings took place at Westminster, between a handful of prominent Puritan ministers and several of their Conformist counterparts. Officially, these men were merely acting as theological advisers to a House of Lords committee: but both the significance, and the missed potential, of their meetings was recognised by contemporary commentators and has been underlined in recent scholarship.

Writing in 1655, Thomas Fuller suggested that “the moderation and mutual compliance of these divines might have produced much good if not interrupted.” Their suggestions for reform “might, under God, have been a means, not only to have checked, but choked our civil war in the infancy thereof.”¹ A Conformist member of the sub-committee agreed with him. In his biography of John Williams, completed in 1658, but only published in 1693, John Hacket claimed that, during these meetings, “peace came... near to the birth.”² Peter Heylyn was more critical of the sub-committee, in his biography of William Laud, published in 1671; but even he was quite clear about its importance. He wrote:

Some hoped for a great Reformation to be prepared by them, and settled by the grand committee both in doctrine and discipline, and others as much feared (the affections of the men considered) that doctrinal Calvinism being once settled, more alterations would be made in the public liturgy... till it was brought more near the form of Gallic churches, after the platform of Geneva.³

A number of Non-conformists also looked back on the sub-committee as a missed opportunity. In a biographical note on Edmund Calamy the Elder, published in 1702, his grandson wrote of him: “He was one of those divines who, An. 1641, met by order of Parliament... in order to accommodating ecclesiastical matters: in which meeting, by mutual concessions, things were brought to a very hopeful posture....”⁴ And Richard Baxter lamented the contrast between the magnanimity shown on the Lords sub-committee, and the narrow-mindedness exhibited at the Savoy Conference. He noted, regretfully, “That after twenty years calamity, they would not yield to that which several bishops voluntarily offered twenty years before (meaning the corrections of the liturgy offered by Archbishop Ussher, Archbishop Williams, Bishop Morton, Dr Prideaux and many others.)”⁵

Several contemporary scholars have also drawn attention to the sub-committee’s discussions. Conrad Russell sees the sub-committee as the centrepiece in a royal attempt to assemble a political party around the defence of a moderate Episcopal Church.⁶ John Adamson offers a political interpretation too: although he sees the sub-committee’s work as the focus of Junto, rather than royal, aspirations for Church reform.⁷ Alan Ford discusses the sub-committee’s work in the context of James Ussher’s efforts to defend episcopacy in the run-up to the Civil War.⁸ Anthony Milton suggests that the sub-committee’s endeavours were an expression of the anti-Laudian reaction, which took place during the first months of the Long Parliament, a reaction led by those who had opposed Laudian propagandists, such as Heylyn, during the 1630s.⁹ Judith Maltby sees the sub-committee as a disappointing clerical counterpart to the energetic lay efforts she charts, to preserve the traditional structures of the Church by parliamentary petitions.¹⁰ In the most detailed discussion of the sub-committee to date, Ian Atherton, focuses on the internal divisions between the members of the sub-committee over the place which cathedrals should hold, in a Church purged of Laudian excess.¹¹ Atherton also suggests that the centrality of cathedrals to the sub-committee’s conversations explains why the discussion unravelled, once the Commons began to move against deans and chapters.

Although these scholars have all discussed the Lords' sub-committee, none has made it their primary focus. As a result, there is still no coherent account of its establishment, meetings or discussions. This article will attempt to fill that gap, analysing the rise, progress and collapse of what Hacket called "this theological junto."¹²

Establishment and meetings

The London Petition against "archbishops and lord bishops, deans, and archdeacons, &c." (the "Root and Branch Petition") was presented to the House of Commons on 11 December 1640. It was referred to a committee on 9 February 1641. In that debate, Nathanael Fiennes, second son of Viscount Saye and Sele, suggested that the whole principle of Episcopal government was now up for grabs.¹³ The House explicitly reserved to itself "the main point of episcopacy, for to take into their consideration in due time."¹⁴

The idea that the Commons might discuss the future government of the Church unilaterally caused alarm on the Privy Council. There is a briefing note, written in the hand of Edward Nicholas, then clerk in ordinary to the Privy Council, which warns that the Lords would find themselves in an awkward constitutional position, if they did not take control of the debate, by establishing their own committee for Church reform.¹⁵ On 1 March, the House duly established a new committee "to take into consideration all innovations in the church concerning religion" and ordered that the committee's first business would be to discuss the Cheshire petition for episcopacy,¹⁶ which had been read to the Lords on 27 February.¹⁷

Five days later, William Fiennes, Viscount Saye and Sele, took the opportunity of a brief lull in parliamentary business, to defend himself from the charge of separatism; a charge made, he claimed, by the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud.¹⁸ In the discussion that followed (as John Warner, Bishop of Rochester, recorded in his diary), John Williams, Bishop of Lincoln, deftly distanced himself from his Metropolitan and paid court to the offended Peer. "His grace would not have called the Lord Saye, separatist," Williams averred, "had he known him so well as he. For the Lord Saye hath joined him in his chapel in all the prayers and service of the Church, but his grace (saith he) abounds in passion and rashness."¹⁹ Williams took the opportunity to complain that "many innovations are in the Church and have been maintained both in pulpit and print;" and he proposed that "the King be desired that they might have the Primate of Ireland, Dr Hackett and Dr Brownrigg called to the sitting of the committee."²⁰ John Digby, Earl of Bristol, countered "that it might be left to the new committee to send for whom they pleased;"²¹ and the order was so made.²²

However, the Lords soon had cause to worry about the kind of clergy who might advise the committee. On 10 March, they ordered that John Pocklington's two Laudian tracts, *Altare Christianum* and *Sunday no Sabbath*, should be burnt by the public hangman. They also ordered that Laud's chaplain, William Bray, who had licensed the tracts, should answer for this at the bar of the House. Clearly, men such as Pocklington and Bray could not be trusted to provide sound religious advice. So, later that day, the House determined that it was rather men such as Ussher, Prideaux, Ward, Twisse and Hacket who should be asked, ensuring that the advice which the committee received would have an anti-Arminian bias. The House reinforced this message by putting John Williams in charge of the invitations.²³ Since Williams was Laud's most celebrated clerical adversary, there could be no clearer sign that the Lords envisaged a sharp change of religious direction. Williams eventually took the chair in both of the Lords' committee and its theological sub-committee.²⁴

The Lords' committee for innovations in religion sat for the first time on 12 March. Their business began, as directed, with the Cheshire petition for episcopacy.²⁵ This struck a

defiantly conservative note at the committee's initial discussions: "Whereas divers petitions have lately been carried about this county, against the present form of Church government... which we conceiving not so much to aim at reformation as absolute innovation of government, and such as must give a great advantage to the adversaries of our religion, we hold it our duty to disavow them all."²⁶ The petitioners expressed their gratitude to Parliament for suppressing Popery, providing more clergy, eliminating religious innovations, and tempering the rigour of the ecclesiastical courts. But they also underlined the role which bishops had played in the spread of the gospel, their defence of reformed English religion against Rome, and the faithfulness of their teaching (at least in most cases) to the Scriptures and the Thirty-nine Articles.²⁷ The petitioners complained that much contemporary criticism of Episcopal government was neither just nor charitable, and suggested that its perpetrators were trying to foist Presbyterianism on the Church; a form of government incompatible with both monarchy and the parliamentary oversight of religion.²⁸

Having heard the Cheshire petition, the Lords' committee resolved that they would "consider the innovations, brought into the Church, in point of ceremony, beside or contrary to the law."²⁹ Episcopacy, in other words, was not up for grabs, whatever the Commons might think. The committee further decided that "there may come in and deliver their opinions what innovations are, or have been brought in, these men following, the Primate of Armagh, Dr Prideaux, Dr Ward, Dr Featley, Dr Twisse, Dr Brownrigg, Dr Holdsworth, Dr Hacket, Dr Westfield, Dr Sanderson, Mr Shute, Dr Burges, Mr Calamy, Mr Marshall, Mr Young, Mr Hill."³⁰

As soon as the committee had risen, Williams wrote to the nominated clergy, inviting them to advise the committee. A copy of his letter found its way to Laud, in the Tower. He recorded these developments in his diary for 21 March. His prognostic was gloomy:

A Committee for Religion settled in the Upper House of Parliament: ten earls, ten bishops, ten barons. So the lay votes will be double to the clergy. The committee will meddle with doctrine as well as ceremonies and will call some divines to them to consider of the business...; upon the whole matter, I believe this committee will prove the national synod of England, to the great dishonour of the church. And what else may follow it, God knows.³¹

The sub-committee soon began to meet in William's house in Westminster, where they also enjoyed the legendary hospitality of his table.³² John Hacket recalled that the group "had six meetings... in all which time all passages of discourse were very friendly between part and part."³³ Hacket's list of those involved is not quite the same as Warner's list of those nominated; but, as Hacket pointed out, "those which were named for the sub-committee were some fewer than did meet."³⁴ Hacket also reports that Joseph Hall, Bishop of Exeter, and Thomas Morton, Bishop of Durham generally sat with the nominated assistants. It is clear, though, that involvement in the sub-committee's discussions was not confined to the most regular participants. In his diary for 9 April, for example, John Warner recorded a meeting of a much larger group: "At the Bishop of Lincoln's met the Lord Primate of Armagh, Durham, Winchester, Lincoln, Bristol, Dr Prideaux with the Assistants and some 60 other divines who together have condemned some 50 doctrinal points which they have collected out of several sermons and tracts printed."³⁵ With meetings on this scale, Laud's fear that a national synod was in the making was not without foundation.

Nonetheless, it was clear to contemporaries who constituted the core of the sub-committee. Hacket and Fuller name the key participants as Williams, Ussher, Morton and Hall among the

bishops, and Ward, Prideaux, Twisse, Sanderson, Featley, Brownrigg, Holdsworth, Hacket, Burges, White, Marshall, Calamy and Hill among the lower clergy.³⁶ The primary unifying characteristic of these theologians was their shared commitment to Reformed orthodoxy; in Heylyn's words, "all of them [were] Calvinians in point of doctrine."³⁷ Beyond that, as Hacket indicates, they were "divines of very contrary opinions."³⁸

Heylyn calls some in the group "Presbyterian" and others "Prelatical."³⁹ As Tom Webster has shown, however, none of the advisers on the committee was publicly committed to Presbyterianism by the Spring of 1641: all were apparently sympathetic to the idea of a limited episcopacy.⁴⁰ The difference between the advisers was rather that some of them were ultimately prepared to contemplate the abolition of episcopacy, whereas others were not. Writing in 1641 as Smectynus, for example, Calamy and Marshall toyed with the idea of abolition, without endorsing it.⁴¹ However, later that year, Calamy made common cause with the Congregationalists to promote it.⁴² Ultimately, they, along with Twisse, Burges, White and Hill, committed themselves to ending Episcopal government, by continuing to attend the Westminster Assembly once Parliament had instructed it, on 12 October 1643, to bring the government of the Church of England into closer alignment with the newly non-Episcopal Church of Scotland.⁴³ The other members of the sub-committee, by contrast, remained committed to the principle of Episcopal government. Some of them were not invited to the Westminster Assembly, others refused to attend. The only exception was Featley, who was eventually expelled, he claimed, for his continuing advocacy of Episcopal government, and his consequent objection to the Solemn League and Covenant.⁴⁴

Warner's diary entry makes it possible to date one of the sub-committee's six meetings to 9 April. And since, on that day, Warner also noted that "On Tuesday next they have appointed to meet for the judgement on liturgy and ceremonies;"⁴⁵ another meeting can plausibly be dated to 13 April. The third datable meeting of the sub-committee was its last. Thomas Plume relates how the sub-committee was invited to send someone to speak for the deans and chapters at the bar of the Commons. The sub-committee chose Hacket, who immediately left to put together a defence.⁴⁶ On the morning of 12 May, Hacket began that Commons address by apologising for his lack of preparation. This was due to his "unexpectedness to be thus employed (it was imposed upon me but yesterday afternoon, as my brethren know)."⁴⁷ So the meeting of the sub-committee at which Hacket was chosen to speak for the deans and chapters must have happened on 11 May. And, since Fuller and Heylyn agree that the sub-committee had no further meetings after this Commons debate, the meeting of 11 May must have been the sixth and final meeting of the sub-committee.⁴⁸

Discussions

Although meetings of the sub-committee were not minuted, there are several sources from which the substance of its discussions can be recreated. The most important of these is a 1641 pamphlet, published under the names of Ussher, Williams, Brownrigg, Prideaux, Featley, Ward and Hacket: *A copy of the proceedings of some worthy and learned divines appointed by the Lords to meet at the Bishop of Lincoln's in Westminster.*

In addition to this pamphlet, there are a number of first and second hand accounts of the sub-committee's conversations. Warner's diary describes the one meeting which he attended. Hacket gives an account of these discussions, in his biography of Williams. There is a further account in Plume's biography of Hacket; and since Hacket was a close friend and mentor of Plume's, it seems reasonable to assume that Hacket was the source of Plume's information. Fuller is yet another source. He gives an account of the sub-committee's work in his *Church*

History of Britain, and indicates, in a marginal note, that he wrote it “out of the private notes of one of the committee.”⁴⁹

Taken together, these sources cast doubt on Atherton’s suggestion that much of the sub-committee’s discussion concerned cathedrals. Warner relates that, on 9 April 1641, the sub-committee condemned a number of doctrinal points taken from contemporary sermons and tracts and proposed to discuss the liturgy and Church ceremonies on a subsequent occasion. There is no suggestion that cathedrals were, or would be, a focus of attention.⁵⁰ In the *Scrinia Reserata*, Hacket describes the sub-committee’s discussions in similar terms.⁵¹ Plume’s account does not mention a discussion of cathedrals,⁵² and Fuller’s account echoes those of Warner and Hacket.⁵³ *A copy of the proceedings* does include three proposals that concern cathedral churches; however, the fact that there are only three such proposals, out of eighty, does not suggest that cathedrals dominated the discussion. Atherton tries to strengthen his case, by suggesting that another contemporary pamphlet which mentions cathedrals, *The humble petition of divers of the clergy*, was “associated with the sub-committee.”⁵⁴ However that pamphlet is anonymous, there is no clear evidence linking it with the sub-committee, and the proposals it makes about cathedrals are quite different.⁵⁵

Furthermore, as Atherton rightly underlines, the reason why deans and chapters were a focus of interest, when they were, was the role that they might be assigned in any scheme of Church government designed to temper the monarchical authority of bishops.⁵⁶ However, Hacket indicates that Williams had undertaken to draw up a new scheme of Church government himself, separately from the sub-committee’s deliberations.⁵⁷ This scheme was only ready to present to the Lords on 1 July, fully a month and a half after the sub-committee’s formal meetings had ceased.⁵⁸ So it is unlikely that the sub-committee had much occasion for prolonged discussion about the future of cathedrals. It seems sensible to accept, therefore, that the balance of the sub-committee’s discussions was much as it is presented in contemporary sources such as the *Copy*; with the bulk of time being devoted to doctrinal innovations, to ceremonial innovations, and to proposals for revising the Book of Common Prayer.

That said, the *Copy* is not, and does not claim to be, a complete record of the sub-committee’s deliberations. It is simply a list of the matters which were discussed. Since the sub-committee’s meetings were interrupted, the *Copy* also documents a work in progress, rather than a final statement. Furthermore, it is a list which was produced by the Conformist members of the sub-committee, and does not have the endorsement of their Puritan counterparts. So, although it is likely to have been published with the consent of those whose names appeared on it, it cannot be taken to speak for the sub-committee as a whole. The *Copy* is clearly a Conformist pamphlet, documenting a compromise formula, offered by the Conformist members of the sub-committee to their Puritan colleagues.⁵⁹ *Pace* Conrad Russell, its intention was probably not so much to reassure the Scots (who are unlikely to have been at all reassured by what it contains) as to demonstrate how reasonable the Conformists had been during the negotiations and, consequently, how unreasonable their Puritan counterparts, in walking away from the discussions. Its polemical stance, therefore, mirrors that of John Hacket in his *Scrinia Reserata*; which is hardly surprising, given that he was probably one of its authors.

That said, the fact that the pamphlet was not confuted by the Puritans on the sub-committee does suggest that it is a reasonably accurate record of the Conformist offer. The absence of some Conformist names from the document should not be taken as indicating that they

disagreed with it. As mentioned above, Sanderson appears to have had some involvement in preparing the document for publication; and, since Hall and Morton were not, strictly speaking, among those “appointed by the Lords to meet at the Bishop of Lincoln’s,” the absence of their names is easily explained. The only other Conformist name missing is that of Richard Holdsworth. But after his provocative Commencement address, which was reported to the House of Commons on 23 July 1641 and promptly referred to a committee, it would not have been in his interests, nor would it have advanced the Conformist cause, to have his name on the pamphlet. So the *Copy* can probably be taken as a fair representation of Conformist opinion on the sub-committee.

It follows that the most prominent Reformed Conformists in England were prepared, at least in spring 1641, to distance themselves from the innovations it enumerates, and to consider the points for reform which it raises. The *Copy* therefore offers a valuable insight into the boundaries of Early Stuart Conformity; it illustrates the ground leading Reformed Conformists were prepared to concede, when under pressure, and the ground they were not.

Innovations in Doctrine and Discipline

Russell suggests that the list of doctrinal innovations in the *Copy* “disposes of some of Brownrigg’s bugbears during his Cambridge Vice-Chancellorship.”⁶⁰ This is an oversimplification. Some innovations clearly had Cambridge roots: “3. Some have preached that works of penance are satisfactory before God. 4. Some have preached that private confession, by particular enumeration of sins is necessary to salvation, *necessitate medii*; both these errors have been questioned at the Consistory in Cambridge.”⁶¹ The third innovation was advanced by William Norwich, of Peterhouse, in a sermon delivered in 1640. Brownrigg led the charge against Norwich in the Consistory, with the support of Ward and Holdsworth; but the Vice-Chancellor at the time was John Cosin.⁶² The fourth innovation was maintained by Sylvester Adams, also of Peterhouse, during the summer of 1637. On this occasion, Brownrigg was the Vice-Chancellor when the case came to Consistory, and was again supported in his demand for a recantation by both Ward and Holdsworth.⁶³ The fifth innovation, “Some have maintained, that the absolution, which the priest pronounceth, is more than declaratory,”⁶⁴ can be traced to Anthony Sparrow, a fellow of Queens’ College, Cambridge. In a 1637 sermon, Sparrow had suggested that sins were remitted by a priest “not declaratively only but judicially;”⁶⁵ but the case reached the Consistory before Brownrigg took over as Vice-Chancellor, and Thomas Comber dealt with it.⁶⁶ Cambridge is the likely origin of the ninth innovation as well: “Some have maintained the lawfulness of monastical [sic] vows.” It was in Cambridge that Peter Hausted, in a sermon preached in 1634,⁶⁷ and John Normanton, in a sermon preached in 1636, both reflected more positively on monasticism than was wise for a good Protestant.⁶⁸

So some of the doctrinal claims to which the *Copy* objected surfaced in Cambridge. However, Oxonian bugbears can be found on the list as well; and they should probably be traced to Prideaux. The first innovation is a case in point: “Quare, whether in the twentieth article these words are not inserted, *Habet ecclesia auctoritatem in controversiis fidei*.”⁶⁹ That question had been the focus of an acrimonious encounter between Prideaux and Heylyn in 1633, when Heylyn presented his DD theses.⁷⁰ Oxford is the background to the seventh innovation, too: “Some have introduced prayer for the dead, as Mr. Browne in his printed sermon....”⁷¹ The sermon in question was preached by Thomas Browne, of Christ Church, in 1633, and printed in Oxford the following year.⁷² The concern about closet Socinianism, voiced in the sixteenth innovation, probably reflects Oxford anxieties too,⁷³ in all likelihood

William Chillingworth's book, *The Religion of Protestants*, which Prideaux had been pressured into licensing in 1637, and which had been printed without his corrections.⁷⁴

The Universities were not, though, the sub-committee's only source of information about Laudian error. Williams's hand can be seen behind certain of the doctrinal positions denounced in the pamphlet. The sixth innovation is the clearest instance of this: "Some have published that there is a proper sacrifice in the Lord's Supper, to exhibit Christ's death in the *postfact*, as there was a sacrifice to prefigure the old law, in the *antefact*, and therefore that we have a true altar, and therefore not only metaphorically so called, so Doctor Heylyn...." Heylyn had used this terminology in his attack on Williams, *Antidotum Lincolnense*: "The passion of our Saviour, as by the Lord's own ordinance it was prefigured to the Jews in the legal sacrifices, *a parte ante*; so by Christ's institution it is to be commemorated by us Christians, in the holy supper, *a parte post*. A sacrifice it was in figure, a sacrifice in fact; and so by consequence a sacrifice in the commemorations, or upon the *post-fact*."⁷⁵ The eleventh innovation, with its condemnation of the Roger Maynwaring and Robert Sibthorpe's views on the extent of royal authority, probably reflect the fact that Williams had led the attack on such views during the 1628 Parliament, along with his friend and ally the Earl of Essex.⁷⁶ Featley might well lurk behind the twelfth innovation: "Some have put scorn upon the two books of Homilies, calling them either popular discourses, or a doctrine useful for those times wherein they were set forth." Featley⁷⁷ took exception to the dismissive statements about the Homilies made in Richard Montagu's *Appello Caesarem*,⁷⁸ and underlined their ongoing doctrinal authority in one of his published responses to that book, *A second parallel*.⁷⁹

The doctrinal concerns raised in the *Copy* represent a broader cross-section of Reformed opposition to Laudianism than Russell suggests. Even the innovations which do have Cambridge origins cannot be identified more closely with Brownrigg than with Ward or Holdsworth, helpful as it was to Russell's argument that Brownrigg was related by marriage to John Pym. The *Copy* represents the authentic complaint of a widespread but embattled theological tradition within the English Church; it is not the charge-sheet of one well-connected cleric.

The *Copy*'s list of doctrinal innovations was intended to re-assert the Reformed theological identity of the Church of England, as the basis for understanding between Conformist and Puritan. Heylyn recognised this, though he was unsympathetic to that aim.⁸⁰ But the *Copy* outlined a more prescriptively Reformed allegiance for the Church, than had previously obtained. The ambiguity within the Articles and Prayer Book, which writers such as Montagu had exploited, to argue for an alternative reading of the Church's identity, was closed down; and it was closed down in the way that Reformed theologians had long desired. The *Copy*'s condemnation of the view "That the justified man may fall finally from grace,"⁸¹ for example, was precisely the doctrinal concession which John Rainolds had requested, but not been granted, at the Hampton Court Conference in 1604;⁸² and in 1641, Rainolds was clearly still a name to reckon with. At around the time when the sub-committee was meeting, Ussher published a tract arguing, tendentiously, that Rainolds had supported episcopacy.⁸³

Having dealt with doctrinal errors, the sub-committee turned to consider some recent innovations in liturgy: once again, it set its face against the developments of the previous decade and a half. Indeed, the twenty-one innovations condemned in the *Copy* are virtually a catalogue of Laudian liturgical taste.

Having condemned the idea that the Eucharist is a proper sacrifice, the *Copy* naturally rejected liturgical acts which supported that doctrine. The eleventh innovation was “offering of bread and wine by the hand of church-wardens, or others, before the consecration of the elements;” and the thirteenth was “introducing an offertory before the communion, distant from the giving of alms to the poor.”⁸⁴ These elaborations of the communion rite were intended to underline that the bread and wine are offered to God in the Eucharist in a particular way, quite distinct from the way alms are presented. Such actions had been pioneered in Lancelot Andrewes’s chapel and imposed in the Scottish Prayer Book of 1637.⁸⁵

Laudian devotion to the altar was also a particular focus of complaint. Top of the list of objectionable innovations was “The turning of the holy table altar-wise and most commonly calling it an altar.”⁸⁶ This was one of the accusations made against Pocklington⁸⁷ on 13 January;⁸⁸ and the offensive tract of Pocklington’s, which was condemned on 10 March, just as the sub-committee’s membership was being settled, was a defence of the Christian altar. Turning the Lord’s Table into an altar was also high on the list of the charges levelled at John Cosin.⁸⁹ Those charges were discussed at a conference of the two Houses on 16 March, a conference reported to the Lords by Williams. In the Spring of 1641, altars were at the top of the reforming agenda: they were the architectural counterpart to an offensive theology of the Eucharist.

The sub-committee equally objected to the fashion for emphasising and embellishing the “altar so called”, by placing candlesticks on it, and surrounding it with canopies and traverses. These furnishings had been adopted in a number of university chapels during the 1630s⁹⁰ but not at Exeter College, Oxford, where Prideaux was Rector, nor at Sidney Sussex, St Catharine’s or Emmanuel, Cambridge, which were under the direction of Ward, Brownrigg and Holdsworth respectively. The Conformist members of the sub-committee had seen what they disliked. Objection was also made to the practice of reading part of the morning service at the table, even when there was no communion. This practice had been introduced in the Chapel Royal by Laud and subsequently copied elsewhere;⁹¹ and it again suggested that the altar was a special and holy place, which a number of Laudians believed.⁹²

Moving outwards from the table, the sub-committee condemned the insistence of some clergy that communicants should receive only at the rail.⁹³ This practice was not focussed on the table *per se*, but intended to inculcate greater reverence for the sacrament.⁹⁴ The *Copy*’s concern points towards another member of the sub-committee. A couple of years earlier, Holdsworth, had rebuked an incumbent within his Archdeaconry, for refusing the sacrament to those who would not kneel at the rail; the *Copy* reflects Holdsworth’s decision in that case.⁹⁵ That said, rails themselves were not condemned. And this is no surprise; Williams had enthusiastically enforced the railed communion table within the Lincoln diocese.⁹⁶

A similarly nuanced view was taken over ceremonial gestures in worship. The second innovation complained of “bowing towards it [i.e. the table], or towards the east, many times, with three congees; but unusual [sic] in every motion, access or recess in the Church.” This wording is designed to distinguish between the extravagant acts of men such as Pocklington, who “bows to or before this altar as often as either he passeth by it, or makes his approach thereunto,”⁹⁷ or Cosin, who “used extraordinary bowing to it,”⁹⁸ from the comely stipulation of Canon XVIII, that when “in time of Divine Service the Lord *Jesus* shall be mentioned, due and lowly reverence shall be done by all persons present.” In a widely circulated letter to the Vicar of Grantham, a letter to which Prideaux referred approvingly during an Oxford lecture,⁹⁹ Williams had made a similar distinction: “It is well done...” he wrote, “that you do

the reverence appointed by the canons to that blessed name of Jesus, so it be done humbly and not affectedly, to procure the devotion & not move the derision of your parishioners....”¹⁰⁰

Nuance is again evident in the sub-committee’s approach to religious iconography. The only reference to images in the *Copy* is the sixth innovation: “advancing crucifixes [sic] and images upon the parafront or altarcloth so called.”¹⁰¹ There is no condemnation of images elsewhere in the church building, whether in the form of stained glass, embroidery or statuary. This stands in marked contrast with the aggressive stance of the Commons, which, on 23 January, had instructed that “Commissions... be sent into all countries, for the defacing, demolishing, and quite taking away of all images, altars, or tables turned altarwise, crucifixes, superstitious pictures, monuments, and relicts of idolatry, out of all churches or chapels.”¹⁰² Once again, the personal preferences of members of the sub-committee probably account for this. Williams had restored the statuary at Westminster Abbey, where he was Dean.¹⁰³ He also took a close interest in the scheme of figurative stained glass, incorporating a crucifix, which graced the new chapel of Lincoln College, Oxford, of which he was the principal benefactor.¹⁰⁴ Sanderson had preached in defence of religious imagery during a visitation in Boston in 1621,¹⁰⁵ and even Brownrigg apparently tolerated images of the saints in his chapel at St Catherine’s.¹⁰⁶ So the Conformist members of the sub-committee were not instinctive iconoclasts. They were content for English churches to retain much of the religious imagery they had recently re-acquired: only imagery which highlighted the altar raised objection.

The *Copy*’s concern about what had been added to the Church’s worship in recent years was matched by its concern about what had been taken away. It complained about the practice of “prohibiting ministers to expound the catechism at large to their parishioners” and about “suppressing the lectures partly on Sundays in the afternoon, partly on weekdays.” These innovations reflect the royal instructions to the episcopate, issued in December 1629. The instructions laid down “That in all parishes the afternoon sermons be turned into catechising by question and answer....”¹⁰⁷ Those instructions were interpreted in different ways across the dioceses, but Bishops Matthew Wren and William Piers certainly used them to suppress preaching in the afternoon.¹⁰⁸ And during his Metropolitan Visitation of 1634-1635, William Laud had asked whether the local clergy took care to “examine and instruct the youth and ignorant persons of the parish in the ten commandments, articles and belief and in the Lord’s Prayer, and the sacraments, according as it is prescribed in the catechism, set forth in the Book of Common Prayer only.”¹⁰⁹ Williams, by contrast, ordered the Lincoln clergy to catechise first by question and answer on Sunday afternoons, and then to give their congregation a sermon on the topics set out in the catechism.¹¹⁰ When he conducted his own visitation of Lincoln diocese, a provocative year after Laud’s, his articles did not require the minister to use the Prayer Book catechism “only.”¹¹¹ The *Copy*’s enthusiasm for sermons is again evident in the memorandum about cathedrals, which stipulates: “two sermons to be preached every Sunday by the Dean and Prebendaries... and likewise every holiday, and one lecture at least to be preached on working days every week.”

The *Copy* did not just promote preaching; it addressed the intelligibility of divine service as a whole: the Conformists on the sub-committee wanted God’s Word needed to be heard in the liturgy, as much as from the pulpit. The pamphlet therefore took exception to Laud’s introduction of a Latin communion service in Oxford,¹¹² and of Wren and Beale’s introduction of Latin prayers in Cambridge,¹¹³ complaining that “some young students and the servants of the Colleges do not understand their prayers.” The principle of intelligibility again underlies the memorandum on cathedral music, which required “That the music used in

God's holy service in cathedral and collegiate churches be framed with less curiosity, that it may be more edifying and intelligible."

Since audibility is a prerequisite to intelligibility, the *Copy* also complained about restrictions on galleries in overcrowded churches,¹¹⁴ and established that, in cathedral churches, "the reading desk be placed in the church where divine service may best be heard of all the people." Concerns about audibility, as much a symbolism, may lie behind the sub-committee's objections to part of the morning service being read at the communion table even when there was no communion, and also to "the minister's turning his back to the west, and his face to the east when he pronounceth the creed, or reads prayers."¹¹⁵ This emphasis on audibility reflects Williams's approach. In his letter to the Vicar of Grantham, Williams underlined that the need for audibility was sufficient reason for not placing the communion table at the east end of the chancel, as the Vicar had proposed.¹¹⁶ As Williams pointed out, "Though peradventure you be... master of your own, yet you are not of other men's ears, and therefore your parishioners must be the judges of your audibleness in this case, and upon complaint to the Ordinary, must be relieved."¹¹⁷

The *Copy* denounced the specious antiquarianism deployed to justify the liturgical innovations of the previous decade, complaining of clergy "pretending for their innovations the injunctions and advertisements of Queen Elizabeth, which are not in force, but by way of commentary and imposition, and by putting to the liturgy printed *secundo, tertio Edwardi sexti* which Parliament hath reformed and laid aside."¹¹⁸ This was precisely the kind of argument Heylyn had deployed against Williams's Grantham letter, in *A coal from the altar*: Heylyn's tract is littered with references to Edwardian and Elizabethan liturgical regulation.¹¹⁹ The *Copy* also rejected the overly restrictive interpretation of such rules as were in force. It complained about "prohibiting a direct prayer before the sermon, and bidding of prayer." The intention here was to preserve a space for extempore prayer, or prayers composed by the minister. By contrast, Wren insisted that "the prayer before the sermon be exactly according to the 55th canon (*mutatis mutandis*:) only to move the people to pray, in the words there prescribed and no otherwise."¹²⁰ Instructions of this sort closed down the latitude left by the canon itself, which merely enjoined that "before all sermons, lectures, and homilies, the preachers and ministers shall move the people to join with them in prayer, in this form or to this effect, as briefly as conveniently they may." Such canonical latitude had been exploited by Conformists quite as much as Puritans.¹²¹

In its treatment of worship, therefore, the *Copy* was seeking to rebalance the devotional life of the Church. The Laudian preoccupation with the communion table was to be abandoned. Extravagant or misleading liturgical gestures were to be restrained. The Word, both preached and read, was to be restored to its rightful place. The latitude left to the clergy by the rubrics and canons was to be preserved. But, despite Heylyn's fears, the Conformist members of the sub-committee clearly had no intention of turning the Church of England into the Church of Geneva. Religious imagery would still be tolerated in English Churches; canonical gestures would not be neglected; choral music would be retained. In its liturgical provisions, the *Copy* most closely echoes the known preferences of Williams, whose liturgical tastes were anything but minimalist.

Possibilities for Prayer Book Revision

The *Copy*'s treatment of doctrine and discipline did not offer much that would count as a Conformist concession to Puritan opinion: the opinions and practices which it denounces

were things which most of the Conformist members of the sub-committee did not like any more than their counterparts. The same was slightly less true of the *Copy*'s treatment of the Prayer Book; though it was undoubtedly revision that was offered, not thorough-going reform.

As Hacket remarked, Puritan objections to the Prayer Book were long-established and well-rehearsed.¹²² In 1605, a petition had been presented to King James I by some Lincolnshire clergy, which had offered a detailed critique of the Church's established liturgy. In 1641, this petition was still in the minds of the godly, since there appeared a pamphlet entitled *The Abolishing of the Book of Common Prayer, by reason of above fifty gross corruptions in it... Being the substance of a book which the ministers of Lincoln Diocese delivered to King James, the first of December, 1605.*¹²³ It is not clear whether the sub-committee actually had this pamphlet before them, or whether it merely bears witness to concerns which were widespread within the godly community; but it is striking how many objections raised in this pamphlet elicit responses in the *Copy*.¹²⁴

Nonetheless, Hacket's suggestion that the Conformists on the sub-committee bent over backwards to accommodate Puritan scruples is clearly an exaggeration. On several of the issues of concern to the godly, the *Copy* offered no room for negotiation: and on most of the others, the room for negotiation which it offered was much less extensive than the problem raised. Furthermore, the *Copy*'s discussion of the Prayer Book is more subjunctively phrased than its discussion of doctrinal and liturgical innovations. The doctrinal and liturgical innovations are set out as propositions of fact: certain things have been said and done, which are innovations, and consequently unlawful. With regard to the Prayer Book, by contrast, only "considerations" are offered: a series of open-ended questions to initiate discussion. So there is concession to Puritan opinion, but only in the sense that the *Copy* opens the possibility of Prayer Book revision on a limited number of controversial issues.

Top of the list of Puritan anxieties about the Prayer Book was the way it handled the Bible. The first four objections in *Abolishing* were: the restriction on what could be read during services, imposed by the Prayer Book lectionary; the lectionary's inclusion of lessons from the Apocrypha; the Prayer Book's old-fashioned translation of the psalms; and the alleged misapplication of Scripture to inappropriate festivals.¹²⁵ The *Copy* opened the door to discussion about whether the Authorised Version might be used throughout the Prayer Book, and about "whether lessons of canonical scripture should be put into the calendar instead of Apocrypha;"¹²⁶ but it conceded no ground on the principle of whether there should be a lectionary in the first place, nor did it suggest any change to the existing allocation of lessons; so its concession on Scripture was both limited and partial.

Turning to the three ceremonies that had long been the focus of controversy between Puritans and Conformists, *Abolishing* began with the requirement to wear a surplice. It quoted a number of Reformed authorities which urged the complete abandonment of any ceremony tainted by association with Roman Catholic worship, and it argued that the surplice had clearly been so tainted.¹²⁷ The *Copy*, however, chose not to address the question of the surplice at all. Instead, it merely asked "whether the rubric should not be mended, where all vestments in them of divine service are now commanded which were used 2. Ed. 6." But, as many Puritans knew, this rubric was not the justification for imposing the surplice, since the vestments required in the second year of Edward VI's reign were an alb with either a cope, or a traditional Eucharistic vestment, such as the chasuble.¹²⁸ So the *Copy* was offering to revise an obsolete rubric, it was not offering to discuss, let alone abandon, the use of the surplice.

The sign of the cross was next on the list of Puritan anxieties. *Abolishing* complained that it “is notoriously known to be abused to superstition and idolatry by the papists... and this hath caused many of our chief divines to condemn the use of it in baptism.”¹²⁹ On this point, the Conformists on the sub-committee were more accommodating. The *Copy* asked:

Whether it be not fit to have some discreet rubric made to take away all scandal from signifying the sign of the cross upon the infants after baptism, or if its shall seem more expedient to be quite disused, whether this reason should be published, that in ancient liturgies no cross was consigned upon the party, but where oil also was used, and therefore oil being now omitted, so also may that which was concomitant with it, the sign of the cross.¹³⁰

Given that the Conformist membership the sub-committee included perhaps the most celebrated literary champion of the cross in baptism, Thomas Morton,¹³¹ this can only be seen as a significant concession. It stands out for that reason.

The third of the most hotly disputed ceremonies was kneeling at the reception of Holy Communion. *Abolishing* underlined that “the gesture also of kneeling in the very act of receiving the bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper is notoriously known to have been of old, and still to be abused unto idolatry by the Papists, for it grew first from the persuasion of the real presence.”¹³² Here, the Conformists, once again, refused to give ground. The *Copy* suggests only that an explanatory rubric might be added to the Prayer Book, explaining that the purpose of the ceremony was to “comply in all humility with the prayer which the minister makes, when he delivers the elements”¹³³ and not, therefore, an expression of worship directed towards the consecrated bread and wine. The rubric proposed here sounds like the “Black Rubric” that had been included in the 1552 communion service, but removed in the 1559 revision, and which would be added, in modified form, in 1662.

The other Puritan concerns about the Prayer Book, raised in *Abolishing*, were also met, on the whole with rather limited concessions, or they were passed over in silence. On the calendar, for example, the *Copy* asked “Whether the names of some departed saints and others should not be quite expunged...” This was a significant gesture, because several Conformist members of the sub-committee actually supported saints’ days. Daniel Featley, for instance, had argued that, on such days, “no religious devotion or worship is performed to the creature, whose name the day carrieth, but to their and our Lord; whose special benefits derived to his church by those golden conduits of his bounty and grace, are upon such anniversary solemnities recounted and their memory refreshed.”¹³⁴ But this was still only a partial concession: the Church’s other fast and festival days were not mentioned. So the *Copy* was not addressing the underlying Puritan scruple about non-biblical holy days;¹³⁵ the Church’s liturgical seasons therefore remained intact. The only gesture towards Puritan anxieties about Lent, and the observances associated with it,¹³⁶ was the trifling question “May not the priest rather read Commination in the desk, than go up to the pulpit.”¹³⁷

On marriage, the godly objected to the phrase “with thy body I thee worship,” and also to the use of the ring. Of these, the use of the ring was undoubtedly the more important point: it was the objection that had been raised in the Millenary Petition and subsequently discussed at the Hampton Court Conference. The *Copy*, however, confined itself to the offending words: suggesting that they might be changed to “I give thee power over my body.” It passed over the ring without comment.¹³⁸ Another partial concession was offered on repetition within the

liturgy. *Abolishing* complained that “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost” could be said up to twelve times in a service, and the Lord’s Prayer sometimes eight.¹³⁹ The *Copy* indeed wondered “whether the *Gloria Patri* should be repeated at the end of every psalm.”¹⁴⁰ But it had nothing at all to say about the repetition of the Lord’s Prayer.

The *Copy* gave ground on one or two expressions obviously capable of theological misinterpretation. So a change in the form of absolution used in the Visitation of the Sick from “I absolve thee” to “I pronounce thee absolved” was mooted, in order to underline that the priest’s action was merely declaratory.¹⁴¹ A change to the words at the committal was proposed, from “in sure and certain hope of resurrection to eternal life” to “knowing assuredly that the dead shall rise again,” presumably to avoid any eschatological presumption.¹⁴² The claim in one confirmation rubric that “children being baptised, have all things necessary for their salvation, and be undoubtedly saved,” and which had been used to attack the doctrine of perseverance, was abandoned.¹⁴³ However, another provocative statement which the Prayer Book made about those recently baptised - “Seeing now, dearly beloved, that these children be regenerate...”¹⁴⁴ - was left untouched. Since Cornelius Burges had defended the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, the Conformists may have been seeking to keep him on board.¹⁴⁵

The Conformists on the sub-committee were receptive to Puritan concerns about the profanation of the Lord’s Supper by inadequately prepared communicants. *Abolishing* had complained that clergy in cathedrals and collegiate churches were required to receive communion every Sunday; that the faithful could decide whether they were going to receive after Morning Prayer on the day when the sacrament was celebrated; and that married couples were required to receive communion immediately after their wedding.¹⁴⁶ The *Copy* suggested that a switch to monthly reception in cathedral and collegiate churches might be entertained, that communicants might be expected to give notice before Morning Prayer, and that the requirement to communicate immediately after marriage might be lifted.¹⁴⁷ The *Copy* also raised the prospect of greater clarity on “how far a minister may repulse a scandalous and notorious sinner from the Communion.”¹⁴⁸ So the desirability of greater reverence for Holy Communion was something which Puritans and Conformists could agree on.

Given that the sub-committee was not discussing issues of Church government, it is not surprising that the *Copy* made no attempt to address the numerous Puritan complaints about the Ordinal. Nor is it surprising that, beyond the slight rewording of the rubric mentioned above, it did not address the rite of Confirmation; this would have encroached on the question of bishops. But the *Copy* equally refused to address the godly objection to non-preaching ministers, and *Abolishing*’s consequent litany of irritations with the Book of Homilies.¹⁴⁹ In other words, however committed the Conformist members of the sub-committee were to the office of preaching, they did not agree with their Puritan brethren that it was an indispensable part of ordained ministry.

For different reasons, Hacket and Heylyn were both keen to suggest that the Conformists on the sub-committee offered sweeping concessions to Puritan opinion. Hacket was intending to show how unreasonable the Puritans were to withdraw from the discussions. Heylyn was intending to show that the Conformist members of the sub-committee were prepared to sell the Church of England down the river. A close examination of the *Copy* reveals, instead, how little the Conformists on the sub-committee were actually prepared to concede. With the notable exception of the sign of the cross in baptism, none of the major Puritan concerns was fully met. Instead, partial and frequently irrelevant concessions were offered, while the

objectionable underlying principles were retained. Lessons and translations were altered, but the principle of the lectionary was maintained. The abandonment of some saints' days was mooted, but the observation of the liturgical seasons, including Lent, was not considered. One or two unfortunate phrases were put up for discussion, but the Prayer Book's endorsement of baptismal regeneration was not. Rubrics might be altered, ambiguities clarified, but abandoning the surplice and kneeling reception was not an option.

So, despite their impeccably Reformed theological credentials, the Conformists on the sub-committee appear to have been doggedly attached to the very aspects of liturgical practice which alarmed their Puritan brethren, and set the Church of England apart from her Reformed sisters elsewhere. Even in the depths of an ecclesiastical crisis, Reformed Conformists were not prepared to give up the eccentric aspects of traditional English ritual. Commitment to, and affection for, the Book of Common Prayer, had evidently infected the leading Reformed theologians of England, quite as much as it had infected the lay people who supported the Prayer Book petitions.

The collapse of the sub-committee and its afterlife

On 12 May 1641, the day Thomas Wentworth was executed, the Commons invited the supporters and the opponents of English cathedrals and collegiate churches to make their case at the bar of the House. The supporters present in the Chamber were Isaac Bargrave, Dean of Canterbury, and three of the Conformist members of the Lords' sub-committee: Ward, Brownrigg and Hacket.¹⁵⁰ Their opponents were three of their Puritan counterparts: Burges, Marshall and White.¹⁵¹ The principal speakers were Bargrave and Hacket, who spoke in the morning, and Burges who spoke in the afternoon. There are accounts of these addresses in the Parliamentary diaries of the period, and the full text of Hacket's speech was later published with his collected sermons.¹⁵²

Heylyn argues that this parliamentary confrontation caused the collapse of the sub-committee's discussions. He describes the sub-committee "being scattered, about the middle of May, upon the bringing in of a bill against deans and chapters, which so divided the convenors, both in their persons and affections, that they never after met together."¹⁵³ There are grounds for questioning Heylyn's account of the sub-committee's demise. The speeches uttered on both sides were forthright, but courteous: Burges even went out of his way to acknowledge that his opponents were all eminent preachers.¹⁵⁴ So this was not an exchange which would naturally give rise to personal acrimony. Furthermore, both sides agreed that, whatever happened to the Cathedral foundations, their lands and revenues could not be siphoned off for secular uses without sacrilege.¹⁵⁵ In other words, these exchanges revealed significant consensus, as well as disagreement, between the members of the sub-committee.

Ian Atherton has recently reiterated Heylyn's claim that the Commons exchange of 12 May was what brought an end to the sub-committee's discussions. He also contends, as Heylyn does not, that the reason it did so, was that it exposed the profound differences that existed between the members of the sub-committee over the structure of reduced episcopacy.¹⁵⁶ As has been pointed out, however, there is not much evidence that the sub-committee discussed the possible structure of reduced episcopacy at any length. Furthermore, although the role which deans and chapters might play in limiting Episcopal authority was referred to by both Hacket and Burges, it was not the primary focus of their speeches; nor do any of the contemporary commentators suggest that it was the principal point of contention at this juncture. It therefore seems unlikely that the exchanges of 12 May were responsible for the

termination of the sub-committee's discussions, even if it is clear that the sub-committee never again formally met, after they had taken place. *Post hoc* and *propter hoc* need to be distinguished here.

Furthermore, some contemporary sources are rather less clear than Heylyn that the debates of 12 May were responsible for the demise of the Lords' sub-committee. At first glance, Fuller might appear to agree with Heylyn's reading of the situation. He writes of the sub-committee:

The consultation continued till the middle of May, and the weaving thereof was fairly forward on the loom, when *Atropos occat*, the bringing in the Bill against dean and chapters, root and branch, cut off all the threads, putting such a distance betwixt the foresaid divines that never their judgements, and scarce their persons met after together.¹⁵⁷

But Fuller has clearly confused the bill against deans and chapters, with the Root and Branch Bill to eliminate the entire Church hierarchy, which was presented to the Commons on 27 May.¹⁵⁸ And if Fuller's intended meaning here is that it was the Root and Branch Bill, rather than the earlier bill against deans and chapters, which derailed the sub-committee's discussions, then he would find support from others. Edmund Calamy the Younger, for example, when describing his father's work on the Lord's sub-committee, lamented that "the whole design was spoiled by the bringing into the House the bill against Bishops & c." And John Hacket also believed that it was Root and Branch, not deans and chapters, that brought down the sub-committee. He wrote:

The Presbyterians understood, that they should expose themselves and their cause to the censure of wise men, if they did adventure nor further in conference at the sub-committee. Therefore, to cut off the meeting in the heat and great hopes of it, they had a champion that brought a bill into the House of Commons, to take away forever Archbishops, Bishops, Deans, Archdeacons, Chancellors & c. call'd the Bill of Root and Branch.¹⁵⁹

So, as far as Hacket was concerned, the sub-committee's work was eventually derailed, when a number of its Puritan members colluded with the introduction of the Root and Branch Bill, and its proposal to demolish the Church's structure and government wholesale.¹⁶⁰ Hacket's suggestion finds support in the work of a recent commentator.

As noted above, the Root and Branch Petition was first discussed by the Commons in February 1641. But the prospect of abolishing the Church hierarchy then sank below the surface, only re-emerging in the middle of May. John Adamson has observed that Strafford's execution on 12 May, and the king's announcement of his journey to Scotland, were quickly followed by a resurgence of Junto enthusiasm for far-reaching religious reform. This was intended, Adamson argues, to reassure the Junto's Scottish supporters, and to ensure that the Anglo-Scottish peace process was not derailed.¹⁶¹ The Junto's change of tack was made public on 17 May, when one of the group's key allies in the Commons, Denzil Holles, argued, during a Commons debate on the treaty with Scotland, that the future of episcopacy should be reconsidered. The House duly resolved that day "That this House doth approve of the affection of their brethren of Scotland, in their desire of a conformity, in Church government, between the Two Nations," and it expressed the intention of working towards the reformation of the hierarchy in due course. Some of the Junto's allies in the Commons

began drafting a bill to put this into effect, a bill which became known as the Root and Branch Bill. At around the same time, Adamson suggests, “Warwick’s and Brooke’s network of godly clergy, hitherto deeply sceptical about Scottish-style Church government, equally abruptly changed its tune and began singing the praises of Presbyterianism.”¹⁶² The ministers Adamson singles out for mention here, Marshall, Calamy and Burges, were all members of the Lord’s sub-committee.¹⁶³

It can plausibly be argued, therefore, that the real cause of the sub-committee’s collapse was not the debate about deans and chapters, but the withdrawal of Junto political support for the sub-committee’s work (as evidenced by the resuscitation of Root and Branch) and the ensuing change of direction by the Junto’s clerical allies on the sub-committee. This suggestion is perfectly compatible with the way Hacket recalled events; and, although Hacket clearly intends to paint the Puritans in a negative light as possible, his account of the sub-committee’s demise comes from within it, whereas Heylyn’s does not. Acknowledging that the sub-committee’s discussions were undermined by some of its Puritan members does not, of course, mean that all its Puritan members agreed with this approach. In his biography of Hacket, Plume suggests that some of the leading Puritan clergy were perfectly content with the compromises that the Conformists had offered, “save that the furious party of them put the Commons upon the violent way;” and he indicates that at least one member of the sub-committee deplored his colleagues’ more confrontational approach. “In particular” he writes “old Mr John White told many of the party who still pressed at conference for further abatement of conformity, and the laws established; time would come when they would wish they had been content with what was offered.”

England’s “Theological Junto” collapsed, in other words, not because agreement proved impossible, but because political support for its discussions was withdrawn, and because some of its Puritan members consequently began to press for more radical reform.

Conclusion

The 1641 sub-committee on religious innovations represented an ambitious attempt to reshape the ecclesiastical landscape. It assembled England’s most prominent Reformed theologians, under the chairmanship of Laud’s Episcopal nemesis, to prune the noxious growths of Laudianism and hammer out a new ecclesiastical settlement. The documentary evidence provides a reasonable idea of the Conformist position during these discussions. They aspired to re-unify the Church around a more tightly focussed commitment to Reformed orthodoxy. They renounced the doctrinal innovations of the 1630s, and the liturgical expression of those ideas. They wished to reassert the centrality of the Word within the life of the Church. However, they made only limited concessions on long-standing Puritan concerns. Revision was their goal, not fundamental reform. Heylyn and Hacket both had reason to overplay the Conformists’ flexibility during these discussions. In fact, given the political situation, they proved remarkably resolute in the defence of the Jacobean settlement. Commitment to the Book of Common Prayer defined these clergy quite as much as their Reformed theological identity. The 1641 sub-committee therefore bears witness to the hardening of Conformist opinion, even outside Laudian circles, which has been observed by Anthony Milton.¹⁶⁴ The malleability of “Conformity” as a polemical concept has been rightly underlined,¹⁶⁵ but the Conformists on the 1641 subcommittee clearly felt that it was only negotiable up to a point. Amongst the most prominent English Reformed theologians, in other words, the Erastian latitude of Whitgift or Bridges had been displaced by a growing loyalty to the idiosyncratic features of the English religious settlement.

Notes

- ¹ Fuller, *Church History of Britain*, iii 416-417.
- ² Hacket, *Scrinia Reserata*, ii p 147.
- ³ Heylyn, *Cyprianus*, 445.
- ⁴ Calamy, *An abridgement*, 186.
- ⁵ Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, 338.
- ⁶ Russell, *Fall*, p271.
- ⁷ Adamson, *The Noble Revolt*, 322. On the identity and religious preferences of the “Junto” see Van Duinen, “Pym’s junto,” 1-5
- ⁸ Ford, *James Ussher*, 247-248.
- ⁹ Milton, *Laudian and royalist polemic*, 116.
- ¹⁰ Maltby, *Prayer Book and People*, 157.
- ¹¹ Atherton, “Cathedrals,” 101.
- ¹² Hacket, *Scrinia*, ii p 147.
- ¹³ Fiennes, *A Speech*, 5-8.
- ¹⁴ House of Commons Journal, 9 February 1641.
- ¹⁵ TNA SP 16/477/72
- ¹⁶ House of Lords Journal, 1 March 1641. This was the first of two conformist petitions from Cheshire: the second, in support of the Book of Common Prayer, was presented to Parliament on 20 December. Maltby, *Prayer Book and People*, 239 & 242.
- ¹⁷ House of Lords Journal, 27 February 1641.
- ¹⁸ Fiennes, *Two Speeches in Parliament*, 8-14. The speech is undated, but John Warner’s diary indicates that it was delivered on 6 March 1641. BL MS Harley 6424, 44v.
- ¹⁹ BL MS Harley 6424, 45r.
- ²⁰ BL MS Harley 6424, 45v.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² House of Lords Journal, 6 March 1641.
- ²³ House of Lords Journal, 10 March 1641.
- ²⁴ Fuller, *Church History of Britain*, iii 415.
- ²⁵ BL MS Harley 6424, 49r.
- ²⁶ Judith Maltby, “Petitions for Episcopacy,” 116.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ Maltby, “Petitions for Episcopacy,” 117.
- ²⁹ BL MS Harley 6424, 49r.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Fuller, *Church History of Britain*, iii 415.
- ³² Fuller, *Church History of Britain*, iii, 415.
- ³³ Hacket, *Scrinia*, ii 147.
- ³⁴ Hacket, *Scrinia*, ii 146.
- ³⁵ BL MS Harley 6424, 54r.
- ³⁶ Hacket, *Scrinia*, ii 146; Fuller, *Church History of Britain*, iii 415.
- ³⁷ Heylyn, *Cyprianus*, 443.
- ³⁸ Hacket, *Scrinia*, ii 146.
- ³⁹ Hacket, *Scrinia*, ii 147; Heylyn, *Cyprianus*, 443. Plume agreed. Plume, “Account,” xvii & xxvi
- ⁴⁰ Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 319-326.
- ⁴¹ Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 322.

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- ⁴² Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 330.
- ⁴³ Paul, *Assembly of the Lord*, 90. The Church of Scotland had abolished bishops at the Glasgow Assembly of 1638.
- ⁴⁴ Featley, *Sacra Nemesis*, 92.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ Plume, "Account," xvii.
- ⁴⁷ Plume, "Account," xviii.
- ⁴⁸ Fuller, *Church History of Britain*, iii 417; Heylyn, *Cyprianus*, p 445.
- ⁴⁹ Fuller, *Church History of Britain*, iii 416 n.
- ⁵⁰ BL MS Harley 6424, 54r.
- ⁵¹ Hacket, *Scrinia*, ii p 147.
- ⁵² Plume, "Account", xvii.
- ⁵³ Fuller, *Church History*, iii 415-416
- ⁵⁴ Atherton, "Cathedrals," 101.
- ⁵⁵ Anon. *Humble petition*, 4-5. The *Copy* mentions preaching, cathedral music and the reading desk. The *Humble petition* suggests that prebends be annexed to parish churches of the cathedral cities, that prebendaries be elected, that they should preach in the parishes, as well as in the cathedrals, and that they should act as council to the bishop in exercising his jurisdiction. The bulk of the pamphlet is a request to call a national synod.
- ⁵⁶ Atherton, "Cathedrals," 101-102.
- ⁵⁷ Hacket, *Scrinia*, ii p 147. See also Fuller, *Church History*, iii p 416.
- ⁵⁸ House of Lords Journal, 1 July 1641.
- ⁵⁹ As Baxter puts it, the *Copy* details "the corrections of the liturgy offered by Archbishop Ussher, Archbishop Williams, Bishop Morton, Dr Prideaux and many others." Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, 338
- ⁶⁰ Russell, *Fall*, p 251.
- ⁶¹ *Copy of the proceedings*, 1.
- ⁶² Hoyle, *Reformation and religious identity*, 199-205.
- ⁶³ Hoyle, *Reformation and religious identity*, 177.
- ⁶⁴ *Copy of the proceedings*, 1.
- ⁶⁵ Sparrow, *Confession of sins*, 16.
- ⁶⁶ Hoyle, *Reformation and religious identity*, 175.
- ⁶⁷ Hausted, *Ten Sermons*, 176, 177-178. For the date of the sermon, see Hoyle, *Reformation and religious identity*, 172
- ⁶⁸ Hoyle, *Reformation and religious identity*, 173.
- ⁶⁹ *Copy of the proceedings*, 1.
- ⁷⁰ Milton, *Heylyn*, 49-50.
- ⁷¹ *Copy of the proceedings*, 1.
- ⁷² Browne, *Sermon before the University*. Marshall, *Beliefs and the dead*, 184.
- ⁷³ MacLachlan, *Socinianism*, 63-89 & 103-117
- ⁷⁴ Ed. Tyacke, *Seventeenth-Century Oxford*, 588-589.
- ⁷⁵ Heylyn, *Antidotum Lincolniense*, ii p 6.
- ⁷⁶ Snow, *Essex the Rebel*, 176.
- ⁷⁷ Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 332 n 41
- ⁷⁸ Montagu, *Appello Caesarem*, 260.
- ⁷⁹ Featley, *A second parallel*, ii 76.
- ⁸⁰ Heylyn, *Cyprianus*, 443.
- ⁸¹ *Copy of the Proceedings*, 2.

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- ⁸² Barlow, *Sum and substance*, 28.
- ⁸³ Ussher, *Judgement of Doctor Rainolds and Ford, Ussher*, 238
- ⁸⁴ *Copy of the Proceedings*, 3.
- ⁸⁵ Mccullough “Absent Presence,” 64.
- ⁸⁶ *Copy of the Proceedings*, 2
- ⁸⁷ *Petition and articles*, 1.
- ⁸⁸ Journal of the House of Lords, 13 January 1641.
- ⁸⁹ Ed Jansson, *Proceedings*, ii 686.
- ⁹⁰ Fincham and Tyacke, *Altars Restored*, 229 & 236
- ⁹¹ Fincham and Tyacke, *Altars Restored*, 230 & 249.
- ⁹² Fincham and Tyacke, *Altars Restored*, 146-150.
- ⁹³ Davies, *Caroline Captivity*, 219-221.
- ⁹⁴ Ed Fincham, *Visitation Articles*, ii 149.
- ⁹⁵ Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 460, 41b. Copy of a letter of April 4 1639. Although, in another case, Holdsworth had taken a different line. Cf *ODNB* s.v. “Richard Holdsworth.”
- ⁹⁶ Davies, *Caroline Captivity*, 235-239
- ⁹⁷ *Petition and articles*, 1.
- ⁹⁸ Jansson, *Proceedings*, ii 686.
- ⁹⁹ Hacket, *Scrinia*, ii 102.
- ¹⁰⁰ Williams, *Holy Table*, 13.
- ¹⁰¹ Fincham and Tyacke, *Altars Restored*, 228, 230 & 234.
- ¹⁰² Journal of the House of Common 23 January 1641.
- ¹⁰³ Roberta, *Mitre and Musket*, 33.
- ¹⁰⁴ Spraggon, *Puritan Iconoclasm*, 21.
- ¹⁰⁵ Sanderson *XXXVI Sermons*, 34.
- ¹⁰⁶ Ed Cooper, *Journal of William Dowsing*, 167.
- ¹⁰⁷ Ed Fincham, *Visitation articles*, ii 38.
- ¹⁰⁸ Davies, *Caroline Captivity*, 140-143.
- ¹⁰⁹ Ed Fincham, *Visitation articles*, ii 88.
- ¹¹⁰ Davies, *Caroline Captivity*, 140-141.
- ¹¹¹ Davies, *Caroline Captivity*, 103.
- ¹¹² *Autobiography of William Laud*, 212-216.
- ¹¹³ Parry, *Glory, Laud and Honour*, 167. *Journal of William Dowsing*, 169.
- ¹¹⁴ Fincham and Tyacke, *Altars Restored*, 244-245.
- ¹¹⁵ *Copy of the proceedings*, 3.
- ¹¹⁶ Williams, *Holy Table*, 19.
- ¹¹⁷ Williams, *Holy Table*, 20.
- ¹¹⁸ *Copy of the proceedings*, 3.
- ¹¹⁹ Heylyn, *Coal from the altar*.
- ¹²⁰ Ed Fincham, *Visitation Articles*, ii p 157.
- ¹²¹ Doerkson, *Conforming to the Word*, 65.
- ¹²² Hacket, *Scrinia*, ii p 147
- ¹²³ Anon., *Abolishing*. Cf Prior, *Defining the Jacobean Church*, 163.
- ¹²⁴ They also referred at two points to Ephraim Udall’s *Directions Propounded and Humbly Presented*.
- ¹²⁵ E.g. the application of Revelation 14:5 (misprinted as 14:15) to the feast of Holy Innocents. Anon. *Abolishing*, 1-2.
- ¹²⁶ *Copy*, 4.
- ¹²⁷ Anon. *Abolishing*, 3-4.

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- ¹²⁸ Anon., *Survey of Common Prayer*, 42.
- ¹²⁹ Anon. *Abolishing*, 5.
- ¹³⁰ Anon. *Abolishing*, 5.
- ¹³¹ Thomas Morton, *Defence of the innocency*, quoted in David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage & Death*, 129.
- ¹³² Anon. *Abolishing*, 5.
- ¹³³ *Ibid.*
- ¹³⁴ Featley, *Ancilla Pietatis*, 410. Cf also Williams, *Manual*, 79 and Prideaux, *Euchologia*, 26.
- ¹³⁵ Anon. *Abolishing*, 6-7.
- ¹³⁶ Anon. *Abolishing*, 6.
- ¹³⁷ *Copy*, 6.
- ¹³⁸ Anon. *Abolishing*, 8 and *Copy*, 6.
- ¹³⁹ Anon. *Abolishing*, 10.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Copy*, 4.
- ¹⁴¹ Anon. *Abolishing*, 8 and *Copy*, 6.
- ¹⁴² Anon. *Abolishing*, 9 and *Copy*, 6.
- ¹⁴³ Anon. *Abolishing*, 7 and *Copy*, 6. Montagu, *Appello Caesarem*, 35-36.
- ¹⁴⁴ Anon. *Abolishing*, 7.
- ¹⁴⁵ Spinks, *Sacraments, Ceremonies*, 77-78.
- ¹⁴⁶ Anon. *Abolishing*, 8.
- ¹⁴⁷ *Copy*, 5 & 6.
- ¹⁴⁸ *Copy*, 5.
- ¹⁴⁹ Anon. *Abolishing*, 6 & 11 .
- ¹⁵⁰ Jansson, *Proceedings*, iv 337.
- ¹⁵¹ Jansson, *Proceedings*, iv 348.
- ¹⁵² Hacket, *Century*, xviii-xxv.
- ¹⁵³ Heylyn, *Cyprianus*, 445.
- ¹⁵⁴ Jansson, *Proceedings*, iv 341.
- ¹⁵⁵ Jansson, *Proceedings*, iv 345.
- ¹⁵⁶ Atherton, "Cathedrals", 102.
- ¹⁵⁷ Fuller, *Church History of Britain*, iii 417.
- ¹⁵⁸ Adamson, *Noble Revolt*, 328. The text of this bill is printed in Anon., *Abolishing of bishops*, 4. It is clearly inspired by the Root and Branch Petition, although it does not actually contain the phrase "Root and Branch" as the London ministers' petition had done.
- ¹⁵⁹ Hacket, *Scrinia*, ii p 148.
- ¹⁶⁰ This claim is reiterated by Hacket's biographer. Plume, "Account," p xvi.
- ¹⁶¹ Adamson, *Noble Revolt*, pp 327-328.
- ¹⁶² Adamson, *Noble Revolt*, p 328.
- ¹⁶³ Adamson, *Noble Revolt*, p 328 n.
- ¹⁶⁴ Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 496.
- ¹⁶⁵ Eds Lake and Questier, *Conformity and Orthodoxy*, xx.

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