

# The 1595 Lambeth Articles and the so-called “Calvinist Consensus” (2)

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## The Aftermath

The purpose of the Lambeth Articles can be partly ascertained by examining their immediate impact. Several historians like Porter, Lake and White appear to insist that the purpose of the document was to produce a temporary peace and draft a compromise confession for Calvinists and non-Calvinists alike.<sup>1</sup> Gilliam readily quotes Peter Lake’s comment that “the opinions of every English divine of significance could be accommodated, without undue strain” within the Articles.<sup>2</sup> This is surprising as the first significant reaction against the Articles came within a few weeks of the Articles being produced. As early as December, 1595 (and again on 27th January, 1596), Peter Baro the French theologian, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, made clear his distaste for the Articles.<sup>3</sup> Peter White admits that Baro did not find the statements acceptable to his moderate predestinarian position.<sup>4</sup>

Baro was a Huguenot (French Calvinist) refugee who had serious reservations about the Reformed doctrine of reprobation. He believed that man’s sin was the cause of damnation not God’s will so he objected to some of the articles.<sup>5</sup> Like Richard Hooker he also held to the concept that God’s will changes as men sin from an antecedent will to save to a consequent will to damn.<sup>6</sup> Tyacke believes the Lambeth Articles (or at least some of them) “goaded” Baro into a “counter-attack.” Baro preached against aspects of the Articles in a sermon dated 12th January 1596. (Incidentally, Baro main-

<sup>1</sup>See H. C. Porter, *Reformation and Reaction*, p. 365; P. Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, pp. 218, 224; P. White, *Predestination*, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>E. Gilliam, “To ‘Run with the Time,’” p. 327; P. Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, p. 226.

<sup>3</sup>The Baro incident is documented in H. C. Porter, *Reformation and Reaction*, pp. 379-386; V. H. H. Green, *Religion at Oxford and Cambridge*, p. 124; N. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, pp. 29, 30, 35; P. White, *Predestination*, pp. 113-116.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>5</sup>H. C. Porter cites Trinity College MS B/14/9, p. 135 (*Reformation and Reaction*, p. 379).

<sup>6</sup>See H. C. Porter, *Reformation and Reaction*, pp. 381-382. Baro also, like many moderates, saw grace as an offer for man to accept or receive, so he would have rejected Article VII too.

tained that the atonement was for all the world, a topic the Lambeth Articles clearly avoided).<sup>7</sup> Baro clearly felt the Articles were not able to accommodate his views, so if the Articles were a compromise Baro and his supporters, at least, remained unconvinced.

Baro was not alone in his concerns about the mention of “reprobation” in Article I. Lancelot Andrewes drafted a document entitled, *Judgement of the Lambeth Articles*, which, although it made some favourable comments, stated that predestination was too great a mystery to be discussed. He urged silence on the doctrinal differences especially in relation to preaching.<sup>8</sup> Andrewes, a friend to the Dutch Hugo Grotius (both later accused of “Arminianism”), certainly did not see the Lambeth Articles as a compromise document that he could easily adhere to.<sup>9</sup> Tyacke’s observation that the Articles displayed “the Calvinist unanimity of the clerical leadership of the English Church” seems somewhat inappropriate in the light of Andrewes’ reaction. Andrewes was a pillar of the church who regularly preached before James I in the years 1605-1625. Having examined the Lambeth Articles though, it is difficult to disagree with Tyacke’s alternative conclusion that “the Lambeth Articles embody the doctrine of double and absolute predestination, which largely explains the profound distaste felt for them by English Arminians.”<sup>10</sup> Moderate Calvinists and Arminians were both offended by these nine phrases. This may explain partly why thirty years’ later Laud and his closest supporters could describe the Articles as “fatal opinions.”<sup>11</sup>

The reaction of Archbishop Whitgift to the Articles is also extremely valuable to anyone who wishes to uncover the underlying purpose behind the 1595 debate. Whitgift informed the Heads that he believed God “doth not hate and reject any man without an eye to sin.”<sup>12</sup> Despite his careful words, Whitgift was patently at odds with Whitaker over the cause of

<sup>7</sup>N. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, p. 35.

<sup>8</sup>See P. A. Welsby, *Lancelot Andrewes 1555-1626* (London, 1958), pp. 43-44, for one biographers summary of Andrewes’s book. See also J. Platt, “Eirenical Anglicans at the Synod of Dort,” in D. Baker (ed.), *Reform and Reformation*, p. 223.

<sup>9</sup>See K. Stevenson, *Covenant of Grace Renewed* (London, 1994), pp. 41-43.

<sup>10</sup>See N. Tyacke and P. White, “Debate: The Rise of Arminianism Reconsidered,” *Past and Present* 115 (1987), p. 205. See also J. P. Kenyon (ed.), *The Stuart Constitution* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 137; N. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup>W. Laud, *The Works of William Laud*, 7 vols. (Oxford, 1847-1860), vol. 6, pp. 244-246. This refers to a document from Laud, Howson and Buckeridge to Buckingham on 2nd August, 1625.

reprobation. Gilliam does not believe Whitgift was a high predestinarian because he tried to keep the Articles secret from the Queen and directed the Heads to do likewise.<sup>13</sup> This, however, does not mean that Whitgift supported the anti-predestinarians. Indeed, the Archbishop made it evident on several occasions that he considered the theory of free will an error.<sup>14</sup> His views on the certainty of salvation and election are also well documented.<sup>15</sup> So Whitgift certainly was a predestinarian, albeit a tactful one. He was all too aware of the danger of polarised opinions within the church.

Whitgift's attempt to hold the central ground in the 1595 dispute was enhanced by the support he received from Matthew Hutton, Archbishop of York. Hutton altered the Articles but did not insist on the inclusion of his other views regarding predestination avoiding also any reference to his view of the atonement in his modification of the Articles. He held to the moderate predestinarian view of the sufficiency of the atonement for all (but efficient only in the case of the elect). He was probably well aware that many Heads at Cambridge did not share his views.<sup>16</sup> Peter Lake believes Hutton saw Whitgift as a moderate ally and in 1613 Matthew Hutton did publish his own Latin treatise on predestination showing his position on some of the disputed issues.<sup>17</sup> Lake believes, "Hutton can be taken as a representative of a certain essential protestant consensus," but it appears Hutton was more interested, like Whitgift, in a consensus of silence and peace rather than a clarification of doctrine. In 1596 theologians could have agreed to avoid discussion of the disputed points but for many the Lambeth Articles made a consensus of "silence" impossible to maintain.<sup>18</sup> The Articles, in fact, made its advocates shout even louder.

<sup>12</sup>See *Trinity College MS.B/14/9*, pp. 2-3; J. Strype, *The Life and Acts of John Whitgift*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1822), vol. 2, pp. 239-240. Cited by P. White, in N. Tyacke and P. White, "Arminianism Reconsidered," *Past and Present* 115 (1987), p. 221.

<sup>13</sup>E. Gilliam, "To 'Run with the Time,'" p. 316.

<sup>14</sup>Whitgift chided Cartwright for praising those who held to free will (J. Whitgift, *Works* [1851-1853], vol. 3, p. 552). See also D. Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination*, p. 36.

<sup>15</sup>J. Whitgift, *Works*, vol. 3, pp. 143, 622.

<sup>16</sup>See P. White, *Predestination*, p. 120.

<sup>17</sup>P. Lake, "Matthew Hutton - A Puritan Bishop?" *History* 64 (1979), pp. 200-202. See M. Hutton, *Brevis et dilucida explicatio verae, certae et consolationis plenae doctrinae de electione, praedestinatione et reprobatione* (Harderwijk, 1613).

<sup>18</sup>P. Lake, "Matthew Hutton," p. 182. See also P. Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, p. 223.

High predestinarians rightly saw (and should still see) the Articles as a triumph and a long-awaited vindication of their views. Robert Some, Head of Peterhouse in 1596, wrote in defence of Article V and the doctrine of ultimate perseverance in his *Three Questions Godly, Plainly and Briefly Handled*, but he went further and linked perseverance to the doctrines relating to the extent of the atonement. The Articles had carefully avoided any reference to Christ's atonement but here was an able high predestinarian theologian linking them to that most controversial aspect of predestinarian theology. The author specifically chose to end his thesis on a note that he knew would divide Calvinists, namely that Christ had not died to save "every several man."<sup>19</sup> Robert Some, remember, had been one of the Heads that initiated the Articles. Adding to them at this stage was seemingly unwise, but Some was more interested in emphasising his high predestinarian credentials than in maintaining any consensus. This may be why Peter White refers to Some as one of the "intemperate Calvinists."<sup>20</sup>

Another solid high Calvinist who clearly would have welcomed the Lambeth Articles was the preacher and author, William Perkins. He knew most of the authors and shared their outlook. It is surely no coincidence that by 1598 Perkins himself had drafted his major work on predestination (originally in Latin), later entitled in English, *A Christian and Plaine Treatise of the manner and order of predestination and the Largeness of God's Grace*.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, Perkins was bold enough in the epistle to the reader to refer to predestination as a "Calvinist's doctrine" and at the outset of the treatise Perkins actually alludes to the controversial Article III saying that the number of the elect "can neither be increased nor diminished." Again, in another place, William Perkins echoes the sentiments of the Lambeth Articles by arguing that God did not wish to save all people head for head but merely "all types" of people.<sup>22</sup>

There were other political reasons why the Lambeth Articles were not adopted officially by the church. The chief author of the document,

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<sup>19</sup>The full title of Robert Some's treatise is *Three Questions Godly, Plainly and Briefly Handled. I: They which are endued of God with a justifying faith, cannot utterly lose the same. II: The true believer, by faith, is assured of forgiveness of sins. III: Christ died effectually for the elect alone: therefore not for every several man* (London, 1596).

<sup>20</sup>N. Tyacke and P. White, "Arminianism Reconsidered," p. 221.

<sup>21</sup>See Perkins, *Works* (London, 1631), vol. 2, pp. 606-641.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 611, 623.

William Whitaker died in 1595 and that did not help, but hindered, the process of acceptance. Whitaker was an influential figure who knew Lord Burghley and the Earls of Leicester and Warwick. However, it was Queen Elizabeth's reluctance that ultimately triumphed. She found the Articles too rigid for her taste.<sup>23</sup> In the late 1590s fears over the succession also may have caused many in the church to avoid any controversial changes to the *Thirty-Nine Articles* (1563) or the Settlement of 1559.<sup>24</sup> These political considerations and the shelving of the Articles indefinitely are further evidence of divisions over predestination in 1595.

## Conclusion

The significance of the Lambeth Articles, in the final analysis, does not lie in their rejection or official status, though they came close to being added to the church creeds in England. This was a theological document not a political compromise. These Articles betray the consensus theory and reveal that the heirs of Calvin in England were fundamentally split over soteriological issues. Although there was no serious battle or ecclesiastical rift in 1595-1596, tense battle lines were being drawn. The Articles show a distinct nervousness on the part of the Cambridge Heads. In many ways the Lambeth Articles were a reaction to a nascent and fledgling anti-predestinarian movement that was soon to take flight in the next century. The Articles were, as S. B. Babbage once argued, "the profession of a rigid Calvinism" or, as George Bernard put it, they "defined and amplified the doctrine of predestination."<sup>25</sup>

Some historians like Durston and Eales still maintain that the Lambeth Articles were endorsed by a spectrum of theologians, but they are also forced to admit that "within this predestinarian consensus" there were "many subtle shades of emphasis and interpretation."<sup>26</sup> John New's comment that "Agreement really increased the likelihood of friction" seems all too appropriate to this period in religious history.<sup>27</sup> The Lambeth Articles were

<sup>23</sup>See E. Gilliam, "To 'Run with the Time,'" pp. 328-333.

<sup>24</sup>See P. Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Berkeley, 1967), p. 447.

<sup>25</sup>S. B. Babbage, *Puritanism and Richard Bancroft* (London, 1962), p. 237; G. Bernard, "The Church of England c.1529-c.1642," *History* 75 (1990), p. 193.

<sup>26</sup>C. Durston and J. Eales, "Introduction: The Puritan Ethos," pp. 7-8. See also S. Adams, "A Godly Peer? Leicester and the Puritans," *History Today* 40 (1990), pp. 16, 19.

<sup>27</sup>J. New, "The Whitgift-Cartwright controversy," *Archiv. Fur Reformationsgeschichte* 59 (1968), p. 207. See also P. Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, p. 280, for the same basic point.

nine phrases, honestly based on the Cambridge view of the Bible and the clearest understanding of Calvinism in the 1590s. The Articles were a response to a “challenge” and possibly a clarion call for some form of credal “consensus.” They were too adversarial in nature to act as, or achieve, a compromise. Contemporary reactions to the Articles did not create or maintain a “consensus” but merely amplified predestinarian divisions—divisions that were to play a chief role in the advance of Arminianism in England in the next generation. In 1595, in England at least, there was no Calvinist consensus regarding the doctrine of predestination and the laying aside of the Lambeth Articles was a missed opportunity. The church in England had a chance to clarify what Calvinists believed about predestination by accepting these Articles. Their failure made the debates of 1618-1619 at Dordt and the 1640s debates at Westminster absolutely necessary. Calvinism’s last chance of true unity passed. Moderate Calvinists ever since have tried to forget the debates of 1595 and the clarity of those nine statements, undermining the hope of biblical unity. Any return to the clearest form of Calvinism or biblical predestination will certainly demand a re-examination of, and return to, the truths of the 1595 Lambeth Articles.