



Rejected authority of bishops in the church

Calvinists rejected the authority of the bishops (installed by Roman Catholics and Anglicans), and insisted on covenants between the people and the leaders of their churches. Through these covenants, they bound themselves to be governed by church elders, or presbyters (this is why some Calvinist churches are called Presbyterian). They found precedence for this in the Bible, in such examples as the Israelites assembling and affirming that they would adhere to the Ten Commandments; or asking the prophet Samuel to give them a king; or in affirming a new king's rule.

Rejected royal authority, in favor of constitutions

Built on this foundation, they rejected the power of absolutist kings, as well as the theory of Divine Right of Kings, in favor of a covenant between the rulers and the ruled. **The idea of a covenant (contract) was that the people would obey the ruler, as long as the ruler protected the rights of the people. But if the ruler would violate their rights, the people no longer had an obligation to obey the contract, because it would have been nullified by the ruler's own behavior.** Early Calvinist societies in the colonies would fashion agreements or constitutions, such as the Mayflower Compact (1620); the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut (1639), and the Massachusetts Body of Liberties (1641). Later on, influenced by this Calvinist trend, the US and Great Britain created two documents, both of which are foundation to their country's history: the US Constitution (1787) and the English Bill of Rights (1689).

Insisted on right to rebel

Calvinists also insisted that kings could be disobeyed, and even rebelled from, if their rule became tyrannical (because by doing so, the kings would have violated the terms of the covenant, therefore making it null and void). Examples of early Calvinist writings in this vein would be Samuel Rutherford's *Lex Rex* ("Law is King," 1644), and the Huguenot document *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos* ("Defense against Tyrants," 1579). An example of this in action would be the rebellion by the British Parliament against their King Charles I, which was accompanied by the Calvinist document, the Westminster Confession of Faith, first published in 1646 by the Westminster Assembly, convened by Parliament (Charles was executed in 1649).