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IN COMMEMORATION OF

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ASSEMBLY, AND OF THE FORMATION
OF THE WESTMINSTER STANDARDS.

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II.

THE RELIGIOUS SITUATION OF BRITAIN AT THE TIME OF THE MEETING OF THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THOSE ASPECTS OF THE TIMES THAT (*a*), PREPARED THE WAY FOR THE CALLING OF THE ASSEMBLY; AND (*b*), EXERTED AN INFLUENCE ON IT WHEN CALLED.

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ANALYSIS.

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II.

THE RELIGIOUS SITUATION OF BRITAIN AT THE TIME OF THE MEETING OF THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY.

THE religious state of Britain which rendered the calling of the Westminster Assembly necessary and possible, and which determined its character when called, was the result of two distinct lines of influence, the one English and the other Scotch. These moved separately, in the main, until James the Sixth of Scotland ascended the English throne, as James the First, in 1603, when they became united in the production of a common result. To obtain a clear conception of the religious state of Britain at the time of the Westminster Assembly, it will be necessary rapidly to trace the course of these two lines of influence from their origin until the period upon which our interest is concentrated in these exercises.

All the churches of the Protestant Reformation, with the exception of the Church of England, were Augustinian in their theology, and antiprelatical in their polity. Luther's views in regard to the doctrine of the divine decrees, and the relation of sovereign grace to the free will of man, were the same as those of Calvin. This was true also of Melancthon at the beginning of his career as a reformer, though he afterwards modified his views somewhat. And, when the English Reformation had so far advanced that its evangelical leaders were at

liberty to express their real sentiments, they incorporated the Calvinistic doctrines in their Thirty-nine Articles, where they are still to be found. No other doctrinal sentiments were entertained in the Church of England until the rise of Arminian views in the time of Archbishop Laud. When the Synod of Dort met in Holland in 1618 and condemned the views of Arminius, representatives from the Church of England, appointed by James I., sat and voted with it.

One of the essential features of the Reformation was an uprising against the Romish hierarchy. Consequently, the office of the diocesan bishop was abolished, and the parity of the clergy recognized, in both the Calvinistic and Lutheran Churches, on the continent of Europe. The fundamental principles of Presbyterianism, such as the parity of the ministry, the coöperation of the laity in church government, and the authoritative action of synods, are held by the Lutheran body to this day. The Lutheran Church of Sweden retains the title of bishop, but like the Episcopate of the Methodist Church, the office is not that which claims to be derived from the apostolical succession. In some of the German states, in Holland, in France, and in Scotland, the Presbyterian system in its entirety was adopted. But the Church of England derived its existence from a source in which evangelical truth and order could not be expected to originate. The establishment of the Church of England, in its separation from the papacy, was a purely political movement, or rather a movement prompted by the selfish purpose of a cruel and unprincipled tyrant. After living in wedlock with Catherine of Arragon for twenty years Henry VIII. wearied of her; possibly, as he claimed, his conscience may have troubled him about the legitimacy of his union with his brother's widow. For these

reasons, and the hope of securing a male heir to his throne, together with his passion for Anne Bullen, he determined to put Catherine away. His efforts to obtain a divorce were foiled by the obstinacy or the weakness of the pope, and he resolved to accomplish his purpose by renouncing the authority of the pope and usurping the headship of the Church of England himself.

There were secret sympathizers with the Protestant doctrines in England at that time, such as Cranmer, Latimer and Thomas Cromwell, but there is not the slightest evidence that they had any part in prompting the movement, or seriously affecting its character while Henry lived. The only change made in the church was in its relation to the papacy by substituting the king's authority for that of the Pope. The old system of ecclesiastical polity, with its elaborate hierarchy of archbishops, bishops and cathedral clergy, was retained. Its doctrinal system was fixed by the publication of the Six Articles, in which the distinguishing tenets of Romanism were re-enacted, as transubstantiation, communion in one kind, the celibacy of the clergy, the binding obligation of monastic vows, private masses, and auricular confession. The reception of these doctrines was enforced by the severest penalties, and those who denied them were liable to be burned at the stake. As an illustration of the impartiality of Henry's despotism, on the 28th of July, 1540, Thomas Cromwell, one of the great pillars of the Reformation, was beheaded on a trumped-up charge of treason, and two days afterwards three Protestant clergymen were burned for heresy, and at the same time and place four Roman Catholics were beheaded for denying the king's ecclesiastical supremacy and adhering to the bishop of Rome. It may well be supposed that a church originating in such circumstances,

organized under such a head, and imposed upon the people by such tyranny, would necessarily possess some features which would arouse the opposition of the purest and most intelligent of the English people. And, indeed, this was the cause that led to the long and bitter controversies by which the church was agitated, to the cruel persecutions which the established church waged for more than one hundred years against dissenters, and to that religious revolution of which the Westminster Assembly was the culmination and its creed the symbol. And yet, while the iron hand of Henry VIII. moulded the external form of the Church of England according to his will, there was an element of Presbyterianism in the creed of the real reformers which they dared not utter. It came to light afterwards, when it became safe to speak their minds, that the great leaders, such as Cranmer, Hooper, and others, did not regard Episcopacy as a *jure divino*, but rather as a *jure humano* institution, best suited to the circumstances under which the Reformation began, and, indeed, the only form which could be had while Henry reigned. It was equally impossible to set aside the episcopal system during the reign of his son, Edward VI. For a while genuine Protestantism, released from Henry's bigotry and intolerance, made rapid progress, yet the people had no voice in ecclesiastical affairs; in fact, the great majority of the people and of the parochial clergy were in sympathy with the Catholic Church, the whole matter was in the hands of the civil rulers, Cranmer and his associates were timidly conservative, and the case of Hooper, who was imprisoned for refusing to be consecrated with the insignia brought over from Romanism, clearly showed that no radical changes in the ecclesiastical system would be tolerated. The outward progress and open avowal of

the reformed doctrines was checked by the accession of Mary. The ease with which she reversed the ecclesiastical policy of the government, and took the church back to Rome, shows how little hold Protestant doctrines had taken on the people. As Henry had found but little difficulty in bringing the Parliament to vote for withdrawal from the Pope, so Mary found as little difficulty in inducing it to vote for a return. The only demand which it firmly refused was to surrender the property of the monasteries which Henry had confiscated and conferred on members of the House of Lords. A great many Protestants were burned at the stake; but the effect of this was to spread and intensify the popular aversion to a church so cruel. The celebrated saying of Tertullian that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church," was found to be true, and Protestantism was strengthened and purified by the efforts to exterminate it. Many fled to the continent, and there came in contact with the Presbyterian form of church government, and on the death of Mary returned to England filled with the spirit of freedom and scriptural truth which they had there imbibed.

Elizabeth's policy was similar to that of her father, Henry VIII. There was some reason to believe that she was a Catholic at heart, and would have been willing to return to the Roman allegiance if the thing had been practicable. But, as the Pope excommunicated her and denied her legitimacy, her occupancy of the throne depended upon the support of her Protestant subjects. She was, therefore, compelled to be a Protestant in self-defence. As it was, she devoted herself to the maintenance of the national church as then constituted, and to the repression of anything like dissent, or any form of religious liberty. Puritanism as a party, and active

power, made its appearance during her reign, and was greatly strengthened by the return from the continent of the Marian exiles. The Puritans took exception to the vestments worn by the clergy, especially bishops, as being relics of the papacy and significant of erroneous doctrines, as well as to what they regarded superstitious forms and ceremonies. They were generally, though not all, in favor of the Presbyterian form of church government. It is not an uncommon opinion that the early Puritans were, most of them, Independents or Congregationalists. This was not true; the larger number were Presbyterians in sentiment. They did not propose, however, to secede from the national church. Many of them held pastoral charges, some were bishops. They hoped, rather, by fair and open discussion to propagate their views, and to prepare the way for a modification of the government of the church, by the introduction of the office of ruling elder and the establishment of presbyteries and synods. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth, Thomas Cartwright, Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge, than whom no man of his day bore a higher reputation for profound scholarship, pulpit eloquence, acuteness, judgment, and piety, introduced into his lectures at the university the discussion of questions relating to the subject of ecclesiastical polity. He maintained the following positions:

1. That there were but two divinely-constituted offices in the church, namely, those of bishops or elders, and deacons, and that all others, archbishops, diocesan bishops, archdeacons, *et cetera*, ought to be abolished.

2. That every church ought to be governed by its own ministers and elders.

3. That every minister should have the charge of a particular congregation.

4. That ministers should be openly and fairly chosen by the people.

In addition to these doctrines he held others which were in opposition to the practices and institutions of the Established Church, but which were in harmony with the Presbyterian system. Cartwright was deprived of his professorship, and expelled from the university by the ecclesiastical authorities. So great was the persecution waged against him, that he was forced to leave England and take refuge on the continent. Cartwright has not received the honor, in the history of Presbyterianism, which is his due. His fame has been eclipsed by that of Calvin and Knox, but his system was as pure, and his sacrifices for the truth as great, as theirs, though, unlike them, he suffered defeat. Green, in his *History of the English People*, now so widely read, and so deservedly admired, though he is in hearty sympathy with the political principles of the Puritans, denounces Cartwright with partisan bitterness, because in the first place, he held that the Presbyterian form of government was taught in the Scriptures; secondly, that all spiritual power and jurisdiction, the decreeing of doctrine and the ordering of ceremonies, lay wholly in the hands of the church, which Green calls placing the state beneath the feet of the church; and thirdly, because Cartwright did not rise to the full conception of religious toleration, as if that was peculiar to him. It is a melancholy fact that the true principles of toleration were not understood in that age even by the best and wisest of men. At this very time, the Established Church, in league with the state, was hounding this godly and learned man to imprisonment and exile. The same author praises Hooker, the leading writer against Presbyterianism, because he abandoned the "narrow ground" of scriptural argument

to base his conclusions on the general principles of "moral and political science," on the "eternal obligations of natural law."

In 1572 many of the Puritan clergy, with a number of laymen of prominence, formed themselves into a presbytery at Wandsworth, a place not far removed from the city of London. This was the first presbytery ever organized in England. A large portion of the London clergy soon attached themselves to it, and other presbyteries were established in neighboring counties. Thus nearly a hundred years before the meeting of the Westminster Assembly Presbyterianism was planted in England in an organized form. And yet, this movement was not an attempt to set up a Presbyterian church separate from the national establishment. It was rather a private association of clergymen and laymen for carrying into effect the Presbyterian discipline for the benefit of themselves and their congregations, without seceding from the church. And though, a few years later, an effort was made to organize the several presbyteries into synods, it was not proposed to throw off the authority of the bishops. The idea of leaving the national church would have been regarded by these reformers as schismatic, and would have been abhorrent to their principles. The first separatists were the Brownists or Independents, who had no affiliation with the Presbyterians. It is said that this scheme of Presbyterian church government was signed by as many as five hundred ministers, amongst the ablest and best in the realm; so early and so rapidly had these principles taken root and spread. It is not improbable, to say the least, that if the truth had been allowed a fair field the subsequent history of the Church of England would have been very different from what it was. But this and all such movements were put down

by Elizabeth's government with cruel violence, and came to naught, except as they strengthened and perpetuated the great principles involved, until an opportunity arose for reasserting and establishing them, as was done finally in the Westminster Assembly.

The most celebrated work written on the Episcopal side during the controversy waged in Elizabeth's reign as to the claims of the two rival systems of church government was that of Richard Hooker, entitled "Ecclesiastical Polity." Mr. Cartwright and those who held with him took the ground that the form of church government adopted by the apostles at the founding of the Christian Church was the Presbyterian, in which the only two orders of church officers were presbyters and deacons, and that this form, being of divine origin, should be retained by the church in all ages and all countries. Hooker replied, in substance, that even if it were true that the polity of the Apostolic Church was Presbyterian, it did not follow that that form should necessarily prevail universally and permanently. "The Holy Scriptures," he said, "are a perfect standard of doctrine, but not a rule of discipline and government; nor is the practice of the apostles an invariable rule or law to the church in succeeding ages, because they acted according to the circumstances of the church in its infant and persecuted state." Making the admitted distinction between natural and positive law, he claimed that the laws relating to the government of the church, being of the nature of positive laws, are not immutable, but may be changed with changing circumstances. One fundamental error in this reasoning is the assumption that all positive laws, even those enacted by divine command, can be altered by human authority, whereas they can be altered only by the lawgiver himself, as was done in

the case of the positive laws of the Mosaic dispensation. It will be observed, however, that the ground upon which Episcopacy is now defended is very different from that on which Hooker defended it. Its advocates now claim that it is of divine authority, and therefore cannot be changed, a claim not made by Hooker. On the whole, it is evident that the principles afterwards embodied in the Westminster system were widely disseminated, and took deep root in the English mind during the reign of Elizabeth, notwithstanding the bitter persecution waged against their adherents.

Elizabeth's successor, James I., had been brought up in the communion of the Scottish kirk, and those who were not acquainted with his character and past history might have hoped that on coming to the English throne he would throw his influence in favor of Presbyterianism, at least so far as to procure toleration for those who held to its principles; but if they did indulge those hopes they were destined to be grievously disappointed. •

The history of the Reformation in Scotland was in striking contrast with the history of the Reformation in England. In the latter it originated in the caprice of an unprincipled despot; in the former the movement began with the people as the result of personal conviction. The doctrines of the Protestant reformers probably found their way into Scotland through the secret circulation of the writings of Luther and others. The first, so far as is known, who openly and systematically preached them was Patrick Hamilton, a young man of royal lineage, great talents and burning zeal. In 1526 he went to the continent and studied under Luther and Melancthon. On his return he devoted himself to the preaching of the truth. He was arrested and burned at the stake. The martyrdom of one so young, so high-born, and so accom-

plished, helped to attract attention to the doctrines for which he suffered. They spread with considerable rapidity in the next ten years, notwithstanding the bitter persecution which was waged, in which many perished at the stake. In 1546 the party had become so strong that the Protestant nobles rose in armed resistance to their persecutors. In 1560, by the aid of Queen Elizabeth of England, the government forces were defeated, and the right to hold a free parliament was extorted. This body met on the first day of August, 1560. One of its first acts was to abolish the Roman Catholic Church as the Church of Scotland, to prohibit the mass under severe penalties, and to require the Protestant ministers, of whom John Knox was the chief, to draw up a confession of faith, which was there and then adopted as the standard of the national church. On the twentieth of December of the same year, the ministers and many of the leading Protestant laymen met together for the purpose of organizing the new church, and devising means for carrying on the work. This is called the first meeting of the Scottish General Assembly. There were present only six ministers and thirty-four laymen. Their first step was to draw up a book of church order, defining the system of ecclesiastical government which they proposed to adopt, and their principles of church discipline. This is known as the First Book of Discipline, to distinguish it from another standard afterwards adopted, embodying substantially the same principles, but in their application to the system more thoroughly developed in practice. The system thus established has prevailed in the Church of Scotland from that day to this, and has come down to us through the Westminster Assembly. Through all the intervening years the Scotch church has battled and suffered for those principles, and the blood of its martyrs,

poured out like water, has rendered the soil of Scotland sacred ground in the eyes of all Presbyterians the world over. It is somewhat remarkable that, in an age and country in which for so long a time they had been accustomed to the rule of a powerful hierarchy, the Scottish reformers should have reached, at the very outset, the true and scriptural theory of the church. It is equally strange that, in an age and country accustomed to monarchy and aristocracy in the state, they should have conceived the idea of a republican form of government for the church. This may be accounted for in part by their acquaintance with the Genevan church and the writings of Calvin, though theirs was a more thorough development of Presbyterianism than prevailed in Geneva. The real cause, however, lies in the fact that they took the Scriptures as their sole and infallible guide of faith and practice, and modeled their church organization after that which was established by the apostles.

But although Protestantism in Scotland originated in individual conviction, and grew by the propagation of the truth, yet, in accordance with the ideas universally prevalent in those days, it was, as a church, established by an ordinance of the civil government. Thus an alliance of church and state was formed, which, while it furnished a support and defence to the church in its exposed and feeble infancy, was followed in later years by deplorable results, from which it has not yet recovered. It is true the reformers did not hold that this alliance was of such a character as to give the state any power over the church, but only, as at Geneva, to sustain the church and enforce its decrees. But the politicians held a different theory, and acted upon it when it could be made to serve their selfish purposes. Accordingly they devised a scheme by which the titles of arch-

bishops and bishops were continued in the church, though the incumbents were not to be allowed to exercise the episcopal powers. The object of this scheme, to which the Assembly was brought reluctantly to submit as an *ad interim* arrangement, was to enable the unscrupulous politicians to get control of the funds of the church, through their tools, the episcopal appointees. This was a clear violation of the rights of the church and the wishes of the Protestants. For if there was any one element of the polity of the old church to which the Scotch were peculiarly hostile it was episcopacy. This arrangement furnished the starting-point of a systematic and persistent effort to force episcopacy on the Church of Scotland, which was stubbornly resisted, and which led to untold sufferings. In 1580, under the leadership of the celebrated Andrew Melville, the General Assembly asserted its authority, and, by a unanimous vote, abolished the arrangement and required the bishops to demit their pretended offices. James VI. viewed these proceedings of the Assembly with the greatest disapprobation, and he undertook to defeat them by the appointment of an archbishop of Glasgow. The church, however, stood firm, though brought into dangerous collision with the king. Melville and his associates were of the stuff of which heroes and martyrs are made. But from this time to the close of his reign James pursued the uniform policy of trying to subject the ecclesiastical courts to his own control, to deprive them of all authority, and to force bishops on the church. He felt that the freedom of the Presbyterian system was incompatible with despotism in the state, while the bishops could be used as the instruments of his tyranny. His motto was, "No bishop, no king." To secure the subjugation of the church he did not hesitate to resort to deceit and

persecution. Some of the most eminent ministers in the kingdom were banished. In 1603 he succeeded to the English throne, under the title of James I. But no change was made by this in his ecclesiastical policy, except to render it, if possible, more uncompromising and severe. By the close of his reign in 1625, the prelatical party had secured the control of the Church of Scotland, the offices of bishop and archbishop were established, and the courts of the church were virtually suspended.

From the course pursued by James towards the Church of Scotland we can easily infer his policy in England. He identified himself with the high church party. He avowed, at the beginning of his reign, his enmity to the Puritans. Some, who petitioned to be relieved from the disabilities to which they were subjected, were thrown into prison. At the conclusion of the Hampton Court Conference he said to the Puritan representatives, "If this be all your party hath to say, I will make them conform themselves, or else I will harrie them out of the kingdom, or else do worse, only hang them all." This declaration furnishes the key to his subsequent policy. Ministers who refused to conform to what they regarded as superstitious ceremonies were silenced, and sometimes shut up in prison, or forced to leave the country. Many distinguished for their learning and piety, together with their devoted followers, preferred exile, with religious liberty, to their beloved country groaning under civil and religious despotism, and sought refuge in Holland, where English churches were erected after the Presbyterian model. Some, driven by episcopal oppression to the opposite extreme of church government, adopted the independent polity, and after a temporary residence among the liberty-loving and hospitable Dutch, emigrated

to New England, and laid the foundations for a new church, and a new commonwealth. The foolish, bigoted, and tyrannical rule of James I. was one of the chief causes which led to such fatal results to his family and his kingdom, and to that great religious revolution which culminated in the Westminster Assembly.

Charles I. fell heir to the principles, as well as the throne, of his father. The latest of the great English historians speaks of "the strange mixture of obstinacy and weakness in his character, the duplicity which lavished promises, because it never purposed to be bound by any, and the petty pride that subordinated every political consideration to personal vanity or personal pique." "There is reason to believe," says Macaulay, "that he was perfidious, not only from constitution and from habit, but also on principle. He seems to have learned from the theologians whom he most esteemed that between him and his subjects there could be nothing of the nature of mutual contract; that he could not, even if he would, divest himself of his despotic authority, and that, in every promise which he made, there was an implied reservation that such promise might be broken in case of necessity, and that of the necessity he was the sole judge." This is the man whose portrait was recently *consecrated* with solemn religious ceremonies, performed by high religious functionaries, in an American church. Such an act is but little less than profanation, and is treason to the cause of civil and religious liberty. Charles I. undertook, with the aid of Wentworth, to establish a despotism in the state, and, with the aid of Archbishop Laud, a despotism in the church. No liberty of belief or practice was to be allowed. All were required to be members of the Established Church, and all were required to conform, in the minutest particulars, to its rites and

ceremonies. Laud was an Arminian in his theology and semipapal in his ecclesiastical polity. His purpose was to bring the Church of England into an agreement with the Church of Rome as nearly as could be done without abandoning its separate existence. He was not content, therefore, with punishing infractions of well-established laws and customs, but added others of his own invention, which were enforced with equal severity. The High Commission Court and the Star Chamber Court were the instruments of his oppressions. Burton, Prynne, Bastwick, and Leighton, gentlemen of respectable rank, learning, and piety, for advocating in print views of church government and Christian morality displeasing to Laud, were set in the pillory, scourged, their ears cut off, their noses split, their faces branded with a hot iron, and themselves condemned to perpetual imprisonment. Any attempts of the Parliament to check these outrages were regarded as an infringement on the king's prerogative as the head of the church. Episcopacy had already been forced upon the Scotch, but Laud was not content without their more thorough conformity to the Church of England, and now proceeded to impose upon them a Book of Canons and the English Liturgy, or rather, as Macaulay says, "A liturgy which, wherever it differed from that of England, differed, in the judgment of all rigid Protestants, for the worse. The attempt to enforce these foreign ceremonies produced a riot, and the riot rapidly became a revolution." The Scotch entered into a solemn covenant with one another and with God to defend their religious rights, and flew to arms. In 1640 the English Long Parliament met and proceeded to correct the evils of the administration, both civil and religious. The bishops were excluded from the House of Lords; Laud was arrested, impeached, and afterwards

executed, and finally the episcopal system was entirely abolished.

The abolition of episcopacy left England without any national church. This was a state of things which, according to the ideas then prevalent, was not to be allowed. Consequently, on the 12th of June, 1643, an ordinance was passed by Parliament calling an assembly of divines to meet at Westminster, on the first day of July following, for the purpose of reorganizing the church; or, in the language of the title of the ordinance itself, "to be consulted with by the Parliament, for the settlement of the government and liturgy of the Church of England, and for vindicating and clearing of the doctrine of the said church from false aspersions and interpretations." The Scottish kirk was invited to send commissioners to aid and advise in the deliberations of this Assembly, and about the same time the two nations entered into a Solemn League and Covenant, binding themselves, amongst other things, to preserve the Reformed religion in the Church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government; the reformation of religion in the kingdoms of England and Ireland in doctrine, discipline, and government, according to the word of God, and the example of the best Reformed churches; and to endeavor to bring the churches of God in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, confession of faith, form of church government, directory for worship, and catechising.

The religious situation of Britain at the time of the meeting of the Westminster Assembly was the result of the series of events which I have thus endeavored to outline. It can be understood and appreciated only by a careful consideration of the causes by which it was produced.

1. The English Puritans and the Scotch Puritans had risen against their oppressors and had united to right their wrongs. In England the national church had ceased to exist. The calling of the Westminster Assembly was necessary to the formulating of their common doctrines, and the settlement of their church polity. The great majority of the English Puritans, and the entire body of the Scotch Puritans, were Calvinistic in their theology, and Presbyterian in their views of church government. It was natural, therefore, that this system should be adopted.

2. There was a small but growing body of Independents in England, and they had their representatives in the Westminster Assembly, men of piety, learning, and ability. They rejected the idea of a national church altogether; indeed, they rejected the idea of any visible organic union between separate congregations, and held to the self-governing power of the individual churches, without responsibility to any superior court of appeal, civil or religious. They professed also a larger religious toleration than either the Episcopalians or Presbyterians. How much this tolerant spirit was due to the fact that they were the weaker party, we cannot determine. One thing is true, that in their settlements in New England, where they were supreme, they were not tolerant. This party exerted an influence in the Assembly out of proportion to their numbers, or the strength of their principles, through the support of Cromwell and the army, and they were able to obstruct and somewhat modify the Assembly's action.

3. The members of Parliament were mostly Presbyterians, but unfortunately many of them held to Erastian principles, and were unwilling to relinquish the control of the church by the state. This party was also repre-

sented in the Assembly by some of the greatest scholars of the day, such as Selden and Lightfoot. Their learning and eloquence in the Assembly had no effect except to prolong the discussion, but their influence in Parliament hindered the thorough application of the system adopted by the Assembly to the church at large.

It is not given to me to speak of the results of the Westminster Assembly, but I may be permitted to remark, that it is to the peculiar experiences of the people of God in England and Scotland, their long contentions for the truth, and their bitter persecutions, during the period over which we have travelled in this discourse, that we are indebted for that incomparable statement and definition of Christian doctrine, which forms the standards of the Presbyterian churches in England, Scotland, Ireland, and America.