DUTCH INFLUENCES IN SCOTTISH THEOLOGY

A Scot who goes abroad, either to the Continent of Europe or to America or other English-speaking lands, is astonished and not a little embarrassed by the reverent feelings everywhere disclosed with regard to his country by those who profess themselves Calvinists. Scottish Calvinism is, however, not so Scottish as is sometimes imagined. Apart from the initial impulses from Geneva and Strassburg, there were extensive influences from France, particularly in the matter of Presbyterian Church Government. In the seventeenth century Church worship and religious practice were affected by Puritan and independent movements in England—affected to an extent not yet sufficiently examined and emphasized. Later, as was very natural, English influences strengthened, while in the second half of the nineteenth century much the most powerful theological and philosophical currents came from Germany. The religious situation in Scotland has been much affected by conditions elsewhere.

But perhaps the most interesting of all the influences, and certainly one of the most enduring, has been that of Dutch thought. The Scots and the Dutch have always had much in common; and Scotland's debt to Holland in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was very great indeed, so that not a little that is characteristic of Scottish Theology is Dutch in origin.

One should warn oneself before proceeding with the evidence that movements, ideas and practices have a curious habit of appearing in different places at the same time; and that it is not always certain which was cause and which effect or whether both were not perhaps alike products of some third activity. Obviously, also, all Scots did not prove receptive to the same Dutch influences. Dutch works again were subjected to intelligent criticism by writers who used them. Nevertheless, what Scotland owes to Dutch influences in Theology is an important element in its religious history.

In the seventeenth century, when these influences of which we speak were strongest, merchants and soldiers were more

interested in religion and theology than they seem to be to-day; and Scottish merchants at Veere and Scottish soldiers in the Dutch forces brought home information and tendencies. Scottish students at the Dutch Universities were also numerous, and these were in many cases the leading lawyers, doctors and ministers of the succeeding period and would exert important influence.

John Forbes of Corse was living in Middelburg during the later months of the Synod of Dort. His uncle with whom he stayed was much interested in the problems which were being discussed, and had indeed earlier strayed into controversy with Grevinchovius. It is almost inconceivable that the nephew should not have visited Dort in those exciting days; and certainly he knew everything that had been said, and came home to Scotland strongly anti-Arminian. His was no unique case of Dutch influence. Robert Baillie was in regular correspondence with friends in Holland, and aware of all theological trends. In the Restoration period which followed, a large number of Covenanting ministers lived in exile in Holland. John Brown of Wamphray was among these, and we discover that he was in close contact with the leaders of Dutch thought at the time, Voetius, Spanheim, Essenius and others. He wrote against Wolzogen and Velthuysen, promoters of Cartesianism, and his *Life of Justification Opened* was published with a preface by Professor Leydecker of Utrecht.

Influences of another sort are to be traced in the case of Gilbert Burnet, afterwards the distinguished Bishop of Salisbury. He went to Holland in the course of his early wanderings abroad, and was greatly struck by the tolerance he found in the Arminians. This made him more sympathetic to their views than his knowledge of theology would itself have made him.

There were Scots Kirks at Veere, Middelburg, Flushing, Dort, Rotterdam, Delft, The Hague, Leyden, Utrecht and Amsterdam. These had at times distinguished ministers, and they undoubtedly assisted in keeping the Dutch and Scottish Churches in intimate contact, the Scots ministers being in most cases members of the Dutch classes and at the same time in touch with friends in Scotland. No one was more important in this respect than William Carstares who spent many years in Holland, and to whom Scotland owes a very great deal in connection with the Presbyterian Revolution settlement. At this same period it

is interesting to see King's College, Aberdeen, turning in succession to no fewer than three Scottish ministers in Holland when in search of a Professor of Theology. Even at the close of the eighteenth century we have the case of Gilbert Gerard who, after a ministry in Amsterdam, came to be Professor of Greek and then Professor of Theology at King's College, while William Laurence Brown left a ministry and professorship at Utrecht before becoming Principal and Professor of Divinity at Marischal College. Such careers show intimate contacts persisting till Napoleonic times between the Dutch and Scottish Churches, contacts which one hopes are beginning to be restored by the creation of the Northern Europe Presbytery of the Church of Scotland.

It is interesting to note to what an extent the works of Dutch theological writers found their way into Scottish libraries. I have looked into this as far as the University Libraries of Edinburgh and Aberdeen are concerned, and can say that these took the works of practically every theological professor of any consequence in Holland in the seventeenth century. The list of names is very much too long to quote. In the eighteenth century things were rather different, especially as the century advanced; and while one finds Schultens, Gurtler, Vitringa, Venema and, later, Mauger, Elsner, Bonnet and one or two others, still most are wanting. If one examines early private collections one is again struck by the proportion of works that emanated from Holland. This applies even to such libraries as those of Bishop Leighton and the Scougalls whose main interests were not in Theology but in the Mystics and Platonists. When one studies the references in authors such as Rutherford and the Gillespies one realizes how dependent Scotsmen were upon Holland; and a hundred years later, when we read the list of books which Professor Lumsden recommended to his class, one sees that no divinity student could hope for licence without Dutch aid.

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The Arminian Controversy echoed loudly through Scotland. The Scottish Church in no uncertain way took the part of the majority at Dort. The celebrated Synod which met there is mentioned with marked respect by John Row, David Calderwood, Robert Baron, Robert Baillie, John Brown of Whitburn, John Strang and others. The Church of Scotland was held to be

committed to its decisions; and these were actually used to test orthodoxy in the case of Professor Strang. The *Westminster Confession* was not based upon Dort, but had it clearly in mind; and after Dort no minister in Scotland might with safety be anything but a good Calvinist.

Arminian views, it is true, crept into Scotland. This was mostly due to English influence, for Laud was a most ardent Arminian, and those who supported his efforts in Scotland tended to be Arminian or at least to be suspected of this. Indeed, after the signing of the National Covenant, Arminianism became the recognized crime with which to charge anyone who made himself objectionable. William Forbes of Edinburgh was the most outstanding of those who professed Arminianism, and his works show that he had a remarkably wide acquaintance with the literature of the controversy. Others such as Leighton and Burnet who were sometimes called Arminians were, strictly speaking, scarcely theologians at all. They were mystics, who attached little importance to dogma, and were extremely tolerant of opinions and careless and eclectic in their own theological utterances. Samuel Rutherford was the leader of the strict Calvinists, and evinced such command of the situation in Holland that he had two offers of chairs in Dutch Universities. David Dickson and Robert Baillie were both at pains to make careful study of the subject, and John Strang was also profoundly interested in it. The Arminian controversy shared with Popery the attentions of Divinity professors and students, and also of the ministers in their Presbytery exercises and their examinations for licence and ordination; and it is clear that in Scotland the question was widely familiar and regarded as of the highest importance. Even the common people must have been accustomed to hear the word Arminianism, and to take for granted its evil significance, though we know they sometimes failed to distinguish between the Five Points of the Arminians and the Five Articles of Perth! An outsider would have received the impression that the Scots presbyterian was more concerned with Dutch theology than with anything else. The ultimate enemy was Rome, and Episcopacy was its agent, and the Episcopalians were Arminian. The orthodoxy of Dort was thus the one safeguard of the Reformation, and the extirpation of Remonstrant heresy meant the destruction of the scarlet woman.

In the eighteenth century this controversy did not indeed

loom quite so largely in the theological situation ; but it remained a matter of great importance in the eyes of the Church. Assembly Acts of 1704, 1711 and later dates call attention to the danger ; and a correspondent of Robert Wodrow could in 1726 still regard Arminian errors as the greatest hazard of the religious life of Scotland. It was for Arminianism that John Simson was first called in question. The intention of the Auchterarder creed was to guard against Arminianism. Ministers—especially those who remained Episcopalian—were charged with Arminian teaching. Professors in all the Universities made a special point of dealing thoroughly with this along with the Socinian and Deistic controversies. With Willison of Dundee the question was as living as it had been a hundred years earlier, and he prays for delivery from Arminian arguments and trembles to think they may ever prove victorious in Scotland. The Secession Churches were emphatic in their repudiation of Arminianism, witness the important Act of 1754 which led to the deposition of Mair of Orwell. Notice also John Macmillan's complaint that Arminians and other heretics were not punished by the State. We may further note the comparative failure of John Wesley to secure a hold in Scotland in spite of all his caution, John Erskine, " a zealous Calvinist," sounding the alarum.

Latitudinarian influences from England, encouraged by the disciples of Francis Hutcheson, the outstanding intellectual leader of his day, tended to do away with much of the concern for such theological intricacies, and we do not find that the " Moderates " had much interest in them. The charge made by one of their opponents that they did not even know what the Five Points were is probably well founded. The atmosphere of the whole controversy choked them.

Hutcheson's influence would be to show that Nature, including human nature, is good, and only requires encouragement. The same type of teaching was spread through such writers as Rousseau and the Scottish Henry Mackenzie (the Man of Feeling), and Tobias Smollett, the novelist, and others, who believed in the " noble savage," and pictured villains as repenting through the good in them at last prevailing. Again Thomas Reid's philosophy and psychology was not consistent with Calvinism, although his teaching appealed to many in Scotland and elsewhere as the only defence against Hume and Atheism. It is therefore not surprising that Moderates were sometimes

called Arminians ; but in fact they were not interested in taking sides in this controversy.

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Another great Dutch theological dispute of the seventeenth century which profoundly affected Scotland was that between the Voetians and the Cocceijans. It is quite true that the Covenant idea had always been familiar in Reformed Scotland, and was deeply imbedded in the *Westminster Confession* and common to all parties. Samuel Rutherford's *Treatise of the Covenant of Grace* (1655) is interesting evidence on this point. But the Federal Theology of a later day was largely the work of Amesius, Cocceïjus and especially Witsius and Marckius. George Gillespie's *Treatise of the Covenant of Grace* (1661) refers repeatedly to Cocceïjus, although it owes much to Ball and other English writers. Patrick Gillespie's *Treatise of the Covenant of Redemption* (1677) likewise depends largely upon Cocceïjus and definitely recommends his book on the Covenant.

Rutherford and Baillie were friends of Voetius, and Cocceïjus was under much suspicion in Scotland, partly for his Biblical critical development theory (to which, at the entrance of the Higher Criticism into the country, Robertson Smith gave a word of praise), for his methods of Scripture interpretation, for his notion of the Sabbath as belonging to the Old Testament dispensation, and for the association of Heidanus, Burmannus and others of his school with the teaching of Descartes who was thought to be merely materialistic and called by Baillie " a very ignorant atheist." The later Covenanters were singularly afraid of Cocceïjus. They were driven to have their students trained in Holland rather than in Scotland, and several went to Franeker and Groningen ; but they found Cocceïjan influences strong and troublesome. The difficulties are fully detailed in Michael Shields's *Faithful Contendings Displayed.*

In Holland fierce party strife continued for a long period, and we find Robert Wodrow making inquiries about the relative strength of the factions in his day. Fortunately the division did not create any split in Scotland, partly because the Cocceïjans developed special interest in exegetical and linguistic work, while Voetians concerned themselves more definitely with dogmatics, so that in a sense Scots had need of both, and took what they could from both ; but chiefly because of the mediating systems of Witsius and Marckius. The hold which these two obtained

in Scotland is remarkable. Witsius would be called a follower of Cocceïjus while Marckius was reckoned a Voetian; but, as far as Scotland was concerned, they stood for the same thing, and the acceptance of their Federal Theology marks an epoch in Scottish religious thinking and a great change from the positions of an earlier date.

The Marrow Men were strongly under Marckian influence. The book from which they derive their name is English Puritan, and Lutheran, in the general body of its references. Indeed, of those quoted in it only Amesius (really English), Bastingius (really French), and Grotius may be called Dutch. But it was the teaching of Marckius that made this particular set of Scots eagerly receptive of the Federal Theology of the Marrow. Kid, Hog and Alexander Moncrieff had all studied at Leyden under Marckius. The result was a new emphasis in Scotland upon the free offer of the Gospel, a doctrine which became one of the outstanding characteristics of the United Presbyterian Church, as is shown, for example, by the first articles of the Act of 1879.

The study of Marckius was widespread. Of the Antiburgher Professors Wilson (1737-42), Alex Moncrieff (1742-62), William Moncrieff (1762-86), Bruce (1786-1806) and Paxton (1807-20) all used as their text-book his *Medulla*, so that every Antiburgher minister was brought up on a Dutch manual. Among the Burghers, Swanston also used Marckius, while Ebenezer Erskine used Turretin which amounted to very much the same thing. The Rev. Patrick Hutchison in his *Compendious View of the Religious System*, maintained and taught by the Synod of Relief, is a thorough Federalist. Even Professor John Simson of Glasgow University, who had studied under Marckius, used his *Medulla* as a text-book though he frequently disagreed with it and definitely preferred English Theology to Dutch. Professor Hamilton of Edinburgh University also used Marckius. Flint, who wrote violently against Simson, was a strong opponent of Cocceïjan tendencies, but a devoted disciple of Marckius.

Witsius was as thoroughly known and appreciated. His *Economy* was recommended to all students. It was published in English at Edinburgh in 1771, and there were other editions in 1803 and 1837 at least. His *Treatise on Christian Faith* was translated in 1761, his *Conciliatory Animadversions* in 1807, the *Dissertations on the Apostles' Creed* in 1823, while in 1832 Pringle translated the *Dissertations on the Lord's Prayer* which saw more

than one edition. His *Essay on the Efficacy of Baptism* (1852), *On the Character of a True Theologian* (1856), *Was Moses the Author of the Pentateuch?* (1877) were translations which showed the continuity of his influence and the desire to enlist his name in the contests of that comparatively recent period. Rabbi Duncan called Witsius " perhaps the most tender, spiritually minded and richly evangelical as well as one of the most learned of Dutch divines of the old (Dordrechtian) school." He names Witsius as one of those who had special influence upon him, and his biographer declares that the attraction proved so strong that " for some time he could hardly theologize or preach out of that man's groove." Thomas Boston had also been a great admirer of Witsius, and his *Four-Fold State* has remained the most popular statement of the Federal Theology.

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Those who opposed such tendencies in Scotland were no less under Dutch influence, but were held, to use Dr. David Brown's words, in the " trammels of Dutch system." Principal Haddow, for example, had studied in Holland and in him the stricter Calvinism of the previous century was carried over. Gowdie of Edinburgh was still following those same lines when " Jupiter " Carlyle studied under him. He " copied the Dutch divines," says Carlyle, calling him " dull, Dutch and prolix " and mocking his " Dutch Latin." Long before this, *Scottish Presbyterian Eloquence Displayed* had declared that Presbyterian learning " lies only in the study of some anti-Arminian metaphysics," and the Episcopalians after the Revolution had made fun of their opponents as confining their attention to Dutch Divinity and considering themselves profound when they could follow a Dutch system. Later the same influences continued. Everybody was somehow under Dutch guidance. A list of works recommended by Boston, Hog and Erskine to the Assembly of 1721 includes Altingius, the Leyden Professors, Maestricht, Maresius, Witsius and Essenius. Of these we may note that Maestricht of Utrecht has been specially commended by Rabbi Duncan as " about the best system for an ordinary country pastor that I know." Boston studied Essenius and Ruyssenius under Professor Campbell at Edinburgh, and later was in touch with Holland through the attempts to publish his book on Hebrew accents. He possessed a Dutch Bible (with the Heidelberg Catechism attached) which Brown in his *Gospel Truth* tells us he could read: he certainly

quotes Dutch in his *Tractatus Stigmologicus*. In his edition of the *Marrow* Amesius, Essenius and Hoornbeek are mentioned. The same acquaintance with Dutch teaching of different schools is evident in Professor James Wodrow of Glasgow who used especially the works of Walaeus, Maresius, Essenius, Altingius, Maccovius, and the Leyden Professors, and had his students also referring to Voetius, to van Limborch, to Arminius and to other Dutch writers. The works of Jameson, the blind Glasgow Professor of History, and of Thomas Forrester and indeed of all the early eighteenth century theologians, bear witness to the importance attached to Dutch thought.

In the second half of the century there was not so much of this interest. When Alexander Carlyle went to Leyden he attended theological lectures very irregularly, expecting no benefit and devoting himself to learning from the Dutch in other matters. By this time the number of Scottish Divinity students going to Holland was materially decreasing, and the magistrates in 1761 passed a certain measure on the ground " that British students now no longer frequented the University of Leyden." In the first half-century no fewer than seventy Scottish theologians had studied at Leyden, while a few went to Groningen, Franeker and Utrecht. We must also remember that in this period hundreds of Scottish students studied Law and Medicine in Holland and these were often interested in the discussion of the prevailing theologies. Recall in this connection the influence of Boerhaave. After this time the use of Dutch in Academic Holland and the decline of Latin in Academic Scotland practically killed the custom of studying at Dutch Universities, and that insularity which is one of our modern characteristics rapidly developed. It is, however, worth mentioning the strenuous efforts of the Evangelical Dr. John Erskine. He himself felt the influence of Dutch writers, particularly Venema, and he learned Dutch in order to bring extracts of important Dutch works within reach of his friends, translating for example from Bonnet and van Alphen.

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One Dutch name which was specially well known amongst Scottish Churchmen was that of Hugo Grotius. It could not be forgotten that he was an Arminian, and his opinions were in consequence not always approved. Robert Baillie, for instance, speaks unsympathetically of " all the Tridentine poperie of

Grotius," while John Brown of Wamphray thought him practically a Socinian and so worse than an Arminian. Patrick Gillespie, on the other hand, quotes him frequently with approval, and most writers were aware of his avowed hostility to Socinianism and the sharp distinction between his views and those of typical Arminians such as Episcopius. All who have occasion to speak of him acknowledge his eminence.

A high place in Scottish regard was given to his *de Jure Belli ac Pacis*, which is quoted favourably by Bishop William Forbes, and repeatedly and always with respect as the work of a " great adversary " by Rutherford in his *Lex Rex* (1644), with a further reference in his *Due Right of Church Government* (1646). Baillie consulted it and learned from it when he was worrying out the political problems of the Rebellion. George Gillespie has many references to it in his *Treatise of the Covenant of Grace*, and quotes it in the preface to a sermon he preached to the House of Commons (1644). John Brown of Wamphray includes a number of passages in his *Apologetical Relation* (1665). In the lectures which Henry Scougall delivered when Regent at King's College, Aberdeen, the chapter which discusses the lawfulness of warfare contains little that is not extracted from Grotius.

The *De Veritate Religionis Christianae* was also popular in Scotland. In 1676 Aberdeen University records show the book recommended to all students and in 1690 we hear that it was in regular use. The University Library to-day includes editions issued in 1662, 1669, 1675, 1719, 1734, 1745, 1782, 1818, 1855, etc.—not an exhaustive list but one which is a remarkable tribute. The work appears amongst the books in Apologetics specially recommended by Professor John Lumsden of King's College in 1751. Alex Gerard, the Moderate, author of the famous Essays on *Taste* and on *Genius*, also used it when Professor there. At Glasgow University Francis Hutcheson was in the habit of conducting a special class on the *de Veritate*, which he threw open to students of all Faculties free of charge and which created wide interest. In the nineteenth century Professor Hill of St. Andrews particularly commended it. Probably none of the works of Grotius was so universally approved.

His *de Satisfactione Christi* was quoted with approval by the Arminian, William Forbes, and also by the Calvinist, Patrick Gillespie. The earliest edition (1617) appears in the library of Andrew Strachan, who died as Professor of Divinity at King's

College, Aberdeen, in 1635. John Brown of Wamphray who thought it Socinian seems only to have known it through Richard Baxter, and indeed perhaps this particular work of Grotius had more influence indirectly than directly. Baxter was widely read, and his word was in favour of Grotius. To some extent this might be counteracted by Owen, but when the ideas of the Jonathan Edwardses, father and son, began to reach Scotland they were even more influential, and created much Calvinistic interest in the governmental theory of the Atonement. Stillingfleet against Crellius, the writings of Henry More and, later, Tomkins's *Christ the Mediator between God and Man* (1761) were English works which found their way into Scotland and supported the Grotian attitude. Further, Samuel Clarke's works circulated widely amongst certain classes of the Scottish clergy and educated laity, and encouraged sympathy with important features of the Grotian theory. Principal Hill, whose *Lectures in Divinity* (1821) was perhaps the best Calvinistic exposition of Theology in the first half of the nineteenth century, was definitely a Grotian, and regarded the *de Satisfactione* as " both a fair exposition and a complete vindication." In more recent times a similar view has been advocated by another Scottish teacher, Dr. Ralph Wardlaw. Others have given it more guarded approval. Professor Smeaton, for example, is generally critical, but he can write (1868): " the infinite value of the Atonement viewed in connection with the incarnation of the Son of God is exhibited forcibly by . . . Grotius, *de Satisfactione*. The latter is particularly fresh and clear upon this point." Principal John Cairns had a particular liking for Grotius, and visited with enthusiasm the castle of the Lowestein. A friend reports (1887) that he found " on his desk a small edition of Grotius *de Satisfactione* which had been published at Oxford soon after its first appearance in Holland. This led him into a spontaneous but most interesting conversational dissertation on Grotius—on his theory of the Atonement, and on the sympathy of Oxford with him." Cunningham on the other hand is thoroughly unsympathetic in his attitude, and refers to " Grotius whose inadequate sense of the importance of sound doctrine, and unscriptural and spurious love of peace, made him ever ready to sacrifice or compromise truth, whether it was to please Papists or Socinians." In a century which was particularly interested in the Doctrine of the Atonement everyone found he had to reckon with Grotius.

Commentaries of Grotius on various books of the Bible are frequently referred to, as for example by George Gillespie in his *Treatise of Miscellany Questions* (1649) and in a sermon to the House of Lords in 1645, and in his *Treatise of the Covenant of Grace.* Later we find references in Thomas Forrester's *Hierarchical Bishop's Claim* (1699). Baillie (1644) was interested in his *Annotations on Cassander*, while a copy of the *Apologeticus* (1622) once owned by Bishop William Forbes and afterwards in the possession of Professor Andrew Strachan was bequeathed by him to King's College, Aberdeen. This last work is quoted by George Gillespie in his *Brotherly Examination* (1642). The library of Bishop Scougall and his son contained many of Grotius's writings, even to his Latin poetical tragedies. Bishop Leighton had a complete set of his works.

These scraps of evidence show how extensive was Scottish knowledge of the writings and interest in the ideas of Grotius.

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The nineteenth century saw certain earlier Dutch influences surviving in strength. We have already noted that of the Federal Theology which still has influence, and the name of Grotius which has never lost importance. It cannot, however, be said that nineteenth century Holland in any profound way attracted Scottish attention. Students did not go to Dutch Universities. Scottish theologians could not read or speak Dutch. There were, indeed, exceptions, for Professor Smeaton very clearly had a thorough knowledge of what was being thought and written in Holland, and through his works some information was spread. But the drift of those who were inclined to look abroad was rather to Germany, and there were, of course, by this time plenty of English books. New studies, Biblical Criticism, Comparative Religion, Natural Science, modern developments of philosophy were all written up voluminously in German and English. Some Dutch names were familiar—especially perhaps that of Kuenen. But even Abraham Kuyper was not really known in Scotland. Indeed, at one stage there were stronger influences exerted by Scotland upon Holland than by Holland upon Scotland. The work of the Haldanes in Europe affected the Dutch, and books by Boston and the Erskines, not to mention older classics such as Rutherford's *Letters*, became very popular and are still treasured in many Dutch families.

Orthodox Scotland was not then actively moved by Holland, and where Scottish theology was anti-Calvinistic it did not follow liberal Dutch leadership. Modern Remonstrant and Mennonite influences were not noticeable. The attractions were rather English writers such as Coleridge and Maurice, and Germans such as Schleiermacher and Ritschl. When one comes to the *Scottish Sermons* of 1880 one sees to what an extent one considerable section at least of Scottish religious people had come to regard what to them seemed typical Dutch theology as merely something to be escaped. One of the sermons is very explicit. " The whole of that latest development of theological scholasticism," it says, " the Dutch covenant Theology, with its solemn bargainings between God and Adam, between God the Father and God the Son, they regard as a fashion as quaint and artificial as the Dutch landscape gardening which along with it came into vogue in the British islands." One can see that the Churches of these two lands had lost touch.

It is unfortunate that the contacts between Dutch and Scottish thinking should be now so indirect, and one would like to give every encouragement to all efforts that are being made to make the relations closer and more helpful. But whatever the future may hold, the account here set forth surely provides a reminder that in that Scottish theological past which has made us what we are as a people, we were powerfully influenced from Holland.

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