

these nineteen petitions it was stated, "that there can be no church without bishops; that without bishops there can be no presbyters, and consequently no consecration of the Lord's Supper; that a bishop has a character that cannot be communicated but by a bishop; and that the church had been governed by bishops for fifteen hundred years." The tacking of one hundred thousand names of freeholders to such petitions only prove that the honest countrymen acted too much with an implicit faith in their clergy.

Loud complaints were made to parliament of unfair means of obtaining names to petitions. The Puritans are said to have drafted a petition for remedying some palpable grievances, which obtained thousands of names to it, and afterwards cut off the names and prefixed another petition to them praying for a destruction of the hierarchy. This is affirmed by Lord Clarendon, vol. 1. p. 204. But be this as it may, when the House of Commons appointed a committee to examine into these matters, so many faults of this kind appeared on both sides, that the affair was dropped.

The parliament resolved "that whosoever would not swear to support their liberties and the Protestant religion, was unfit to bear office in the church or commonwealth."

That the Puritans, afterwards called the Presbyterians, did not at first think of contending for presbyteries, or indeed for presbyterial church government, is evident from the plan of church government which they proposed to this parliament for their ratification, at an early period of its session. This plan was pretty similar to Archbishop Usher's. The outlines of this plan were as follows:—

1st. "That every shire (or county) should be a distinct diocese or church."

2nd. "That in every shire or church twelve or more able divines should be appointed in the nature of an old primitive constant presbytery."

3rd. "That over every presbytery there should be a president, let him be called bishop, or overseer, or moderator, or superintendent, or by any other name, provided there be one in every county for the government and direction of the presbytery, in the nature of the speaker of the House of Commons, or Chairman of a committee."

Accordingly it was resolved, July 10th, 1640, "that ecclesiastical power for the government of the church be exercised by commissioners." July 31. "Resolved; that the members of every county bring in the names of nine persons to be ecclesiastical commissioners, on whom the power of church government shall be devolved. but that no clergyman be of the commission." This shews that the Puritans of those times did not intend the presbyterian government, but only a reduction of episcopacy to a more moderate standard.

The parliament willing to reform faster and farther than the king, and to limit and circumscribe the prerogative beyond the desires of the king and bishops, became obnoxious to the king's displeasure, and finally the king left his palace and retired to York; and his queen, a bold and resolute Catholic, having absolute dominion over him, together with some of the English bishops and members of the court, drove the king into a war against his own parliament; so that the