



# ST GILES' LECTURES.

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FIRST SERIES—THE SCOTTISH CHURCH.

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## LECTURE XI.

THE CHURCH FROM 1843 TO 1881 A.D.

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THE story which I have to tell, if less interesting, is not so painful as that of the troubles which culminated in the Secession of 1843. Though differing widely as to the principles which by that event were vindicated or condemned, most people now look back upon the contendings that led to it with surprise and regret. In so fierce a display of the *perfervidum ingenium Scotorum*, candid critics find it very difficult to agree with any party. We are repelled alike by the violence of those who, by persisting in fighting their battle with weapons declared to be illegal, exposed the Church to insult as occupying a false position, and by the doggedness of others who, to maintain a constitutional position, resisted claims which might have been allowed, and more than once evinced a disposition to minimise its rightful independence. We are amazed that the storm should have invaded the calm domain of law, and that judges, allowing themselves to become partisans, could not

refrain from accompanying decisions, which in themselves were impugnable, with dicta which were sometimes as indefensible as they were intentionally offensive. And it is especially to be lamented that both Parliament and Government should have proved so unfit to deal with a really national crisis. Misunderstanding, or haply misinformed of its actual gravity, responsible statesmen made almost no endeavour to adjust a movement which manifestly they could not repress, and which issued in a catastrophe which has embittered the national religious life ever since, and threatens still further to rend the unity of the Scottish Church.

The number and quality of the men who composed the Secession, their personal influence, their distribution over the country, made their withdrawal a serious calamity to the Church. All over the land the people in multitudes, many of them unable to comprehend or not troubling themselves to inquire into the question at issue, followed the ministers whom they loved or were taught to revere. The cause may not have been understood, but the war-cry was catching, and the sacrifices which had been made for it could not but raise it in public esteem. It is simply foolish for any one to attempt to underrate the Secession. The applause which greeted its inauguration; the popular support which it received from the first; the streams of wealth which poured into its treasury; the admiration which it excited in the best parts of Christendom, are facts which only a most prejudiced mind can ignore, and which prove the Secession of '43 to be a most memorable event, productive of consequences which not the wisest seer of to-day can venture to predict. It would be worse than foolish so to deal with the Secession; for the fact that, notwithstanding it, the Church continued almost without a pause the course which had been entered upon before those troubles befell it, and that with increasing activity and greatly augmented results, is the most powerful of all proofs that, even tried by Gamaliel's test, not 'of men have been its counsel and work.'

Seceding historians have represented the Secession as virtually the extinction of the Church. So Dr Hetherington declares that 'every man of genius and talent and learning, every man of piety and faithfulness and energy and zeal, followed Dr Welsh from the Assembly.'<sup>1</sup> Dr Buchanan, again, avows that 'the life departed from the Establishment, and those who remained gazed upon the empty space as if they had been looking into an empty grave.'<sup>2</sup> But whence, if such descriptions be true, came the Church of to-day? Time is a slow but sure and impartial dispenser of justice; and now when we look back, after the lapse of nearly forty years, the most prominent feature that arrests us is the manifest continuity of the Church in everything that can express her life. Not a scheme was abandoned, not an enterprise either at home or abroad was demitted. There had swarmed off a new and vigorous colony, but the life and the work of the parent hive went on. A new Church, equipped with Presbyteries and schools and halls of theology, had sprung Minerva-like into being, but the body from which it emerged gave no symptoms of disease or senescence. The river rolled on, for a time in diminished volume, and ever since with less noise than that which had parted from it; but its silence was the token of its depth and power, and its course of beneficence throughout this generation sufficiently attests its origin as one of those streams which make glad the city of God.

The minutes of that memorable Assembly and the pictures that have been preserved of it by eye-witnesses, reveal a very different state of matters, and a very different set of men from what are described by the partisan historians. We can discern in their chivalrous and indomitable determination to maintain the Church the germs of her present prosperity. There was much sorrow in that Assembly, but there was no cowardice; much concern, but no despair. Calmly amid the hissings of

<sup>1</sup> *History*, vol. ii., p. 524.

<sup>2</sup> *Ten Years' Conflict*, vol. ii., p. 442.

the mob, as those 'who felt they were suffering for future generations,' they set about undoing one by one the blunders which had caused their troubles. They had maintained the constitutional rights of the people against the encroachment of an ecclesiastical supremacy which would eventually have strangled them, and they now asked the State, with which the Church was in alliance, but to which in spiritual matters it would never be subject, to take such constitutional measures as would conserve the rights of the people and remove difficulties in the way of the Church's progress. So without excommunicating those who had caused this mischief, but deploring their loss; acknowledging the weight of their calamity and taking their own share of the national sin that caused it, evincing neither sign of wavering nor doubt as to the rightness of the course they had pursued, they set themselves at once to grapple with their circumstances and to repair the breaches made in the bulwarks of the National Zion.

Certainly they had need of all their fortitude, for their work had now to be prosecuted in the presence of active and able and vigilant foes. Those who seceded never seemed to feel that they were called to concede to those who remained the same conscientiousness which they claimed for themselves. They went out not as martyrs, but as if they were the hereditary enemies of a Church whose bread they had eaten, representing its ministers as a degraded and hireling order of men, no longer worthy to preach the Gospel. The people were told by responsible leaders of the movement, that the 'idea of the residuary Establishment doing anything valuable for the salvation of souls was simply ridiculous,' and therefore they 'should proceed substantially on the theory that provision for ordinances by it was not to be taken into account at all.'<sup>1</sup> And so while the new Churches were placed as near as possible to the parish church, the parishioners were instructed by

<sup>1</sup> Story's *Life*, p. 302; also Dr Candlish's *Life*, p. 306.

the official newspaper of the party, to 'regard the parish minister as the one excommunicated man of the district, the man with whom no one is to join in prayer, whose church is to be avoided as an impure and unholy place.' Evidently the martyrdoms of '43 were not all on the side of the Seceders. Their sacrifices were ostensible, and were compensated for by great public applause; but the men who remained to maintain what all had solemnly sworn to defend, had to undergo the daily martyrdom of having their best motives misrepresented and systematically outraged. The persecuting spirit of the people was very strongly roused; and wherever the Seceders were numerous, it made fidelity to the Church a painfully trying thing. In the North, the scenes which had occurred after 1690 and in the first twenty years of the eighteenth century, when the Presbyterian polity was being put in force, were almost literally re-enacted after '43, when the Church sought simply to perform its duties. In September of that year, the members of Presbytery who had met to supply the parishes of Rosskeen and Logie, were assailed with stones and sticks. In Resolis, on a similar occasion, a serious riot occurred, in which one man was disabled for life, and another was so wounded that he soon after died. In several other places, men were assaulted and nearly killed for no other reason than that they adhered to the Establishment. It was no uncommon occurrence for parish ministers to find their church-doors battered, and their pulpits defiled. Girls were driven violently away from the wells by elders who would not allow 'false Moderates to pollute the water.' Shopkeepers who would not join the Secession, were treated in many parts of the country as the Irishman is now dealt with who refuses to join the Land League. The very children were banned by their playmates at schools, and even recently might be heard speaking of the Church in which their fathers had worshipped for ages, in terms too opprobrious to quote.

To recall such things is painful; to dwell upon them would

be uncharitable ; but they must be taken into account in order to do justice to the men who in those evil times maintained the cause and prosecuted the work of the Church. The very turbulence and intolerance that raged around them was destined to have a good effect both on their councils and action. It not only chastened them, but seemed to crush out that combative zeal which, prior to '43, aimed at domination and conquest of all dissent. If here and there an individual was stung into retaliation, he was speedily rebuked by the better spirit that prevailed among his brethren. It was not by returning railing for railing that the cause of the Church could be advanced, but by a resolute endeavour to remedy all its defects, and to adapt it to the wants of the country and of the times. Consequently, after '43, the Church entered upon a course of steady and continuous reformation in almost every domain of its service. The whole period is one of healthy revival, in which, unvexed by any desire to molest outsiders, it has tried to develop its own resources and improve its own efficiency, and the happy results may now be seen in the vigorous and still reforming Church of to-day.

Certainly there was need for reformation. Arrears of undischarged responsibilities had been accumulating for generations. During the century prior to 1834 the Church had produced some sixty-three chapels, in face of nearly six hundred raised by Dissent, to meet the wants of a rapidly growing population—a fact which at Disestablishment meetings and in Voluntary Town Councils was urged powerfully against the Church. In the city of Edinburgh alone, eleven thousand unlet sittings in the Established Churches—and these generally the cheapest<sup>1</sup>—indicated the indifference that prevailed among the lower orders, and revealed within the Church a state of matters more alarming than any hostility that could be raised against it from without. You have been told of the noble singleness

<sup>1</sup> Cockburn's *Journal*, vol. i., p. 93.

of aim and pure enthusiasm with which Dr Chalmers sought to grapple with these evils, and how his efforts, generously supported, had resulted in the erection of nearly two hundred chapels in large and necessitous parishes. It had even a grander result—that of awakening the conviction that the Gospel is the only power to raise man or masses of men, and that of all the instruments for securing this, none can compare with that of an endowed territorial ministry. Had Chalmers done nothing more than lodge that truth deep in the heart of the Church, he would have made good his title to rank with its Reformers and founders, for out of that seed was to rise a harvest of blessing larger than ever he had dared to dream of.

The difficulties of the Church, confronted with empty pulpits to supply, and empty churches to fill, were for several years increased by the necessity of having to make good its claim to those very chapels. It was not denied that they had been erected by contributions received in its name, and had been inalienably secured in title-deeds to its trust; but the curious demand was made, that the Church should be compelled to cede a property of which as a sacred trust it was not at liberty to divest itself. The reasons alleged were that the chapels were erected by the party composing the Free Church, and that the Church had now no need of them. A comparison of the lists of those who seceded with those who remained will effectually shew that Church Extension was a movement to which the whole Church was committed, and which all parties in the Church supported. The church-door collections for it in the years preceding the Secession, varied from £2445 to £3775; in those immediately succeeding it, they ranged from £2400 to £4000. In the extraordinary emergency of the Secession, it was to be expected that several chapels should be left for a time unprovided for; but it was scarcely fair of the Seceders to plead an embarrassment of which they were the authors as a reason for despoiling the Church of its trust, and it was almost ludicrous

to cite individual instances of churches alleged to be locked up and useless, when the parties who made the allegation refused to give up the key. The whole contention seems to have been only designed to damage and discredit the Church. The now disclosed secret history of the Convocation reveals the grim humour with which, even before it was advanced, those who made the claim regarded it. Confessing themselves unable to secure the chapels as the spoils of the contest, it was proposed that 'they should be loaded with debt, which would render them useless, according to the custom of a distressed army to spike the guns which they could not carry off.'<sup>1</sup> As matter of fact, when the protracted litigation ended, and the chapels were declared the property of the Church, they were found burdened with a debt of more than £30,000.

The spirit of the Church Extension movement, far from departing with Chalmers or languishing within the Church, manifested itself in vigorous activity even in the dark days following the Secession. Its operations were of course the more pressing ones of relieving and fostering chapels that had been enfeebled or emptied. Yet year by year witnessed a steady increase over the preceding, both in the number of chapels that were aided and in the number of worshippers attending them. Even before the decision of the House of Lords had been given, a most important step had been taken with regard to the Chapels of Ease. You have been told how these chapels were built in the hope that government would furnish the endowment, and how all endeavours to secure this had failed. The public purse was too empty, and Dissent was too fierce. And if opposition from that quarter was too strong for the Church, when supported by Chalmers, it was hopeless to confront it now, when so much of its strength had gone to animate that hostile power. Yet even then there was one who had faith and courage to assert that the task from which

<sup>1</sup> Candlish's *Life*, p. 253.



Chalmers shrank as too gigantic might be accomplished by voluntary effort. Naturally sanguine, the fact that the Church had emerged from the storms of the preceding decade, stimulated in him the hope of great things to come. In the newly formed Lay Association he saw an 'earnest of the new and better spirit with which the whole land would soon be imbued,' and so undaunted by difficulties which were truly enormous, he dared to summon a Church, alleged to be prostrate 'and dying of its own weight of corruption,' to a task of national magnitude.

There can be only one estimate formed of Dr Robertson's character and work. He was of the stuff out of which all true Reformers are made—a man firm and unbending as the granite of his native county, yet burning with unquenchable zeal. It was not as an ecclesiastic but as a patriot that he gave himself to his work; fighting not for the advance of the Church, but for the success of the Gospel. As one of the commission of inquiry into the condition of the poor, he had discovered what social unrest and spiritual indigence stirred beneath the vaunted stability of our national prosperity. His studies in the writings of the Fathers of the Church had furnished him with clear perceptions of its fundamental principles, and experience had grounded him in firm faith in their soundness. He had learned enough of philosophy and history to convince him 'that the welfare of society tends by an irresistible impulse, over which legislation can have little control, to suspend itself in the significance attached to man as man, and that the strength of the empire depends upon the God-fearing and therefore manly and trustworthy self-government of its subjects.' His keen good sense shewed him the value of the instrument which had been placed by Act 7 and 8 Vict. c. 44 in his hand. So we need not wonder that his natural hopefulness, brightened by firm trust in God and faith in the capabilities of a National Church, should have made him even then prophesy of the glory of the latter times for Scotland, 'when those who

were a burden to society would be converted into blessings to it.'

The opening of his crusade was encouraging. Even in the sad year of the potato famine, he could report out of a total subscription, £5000 subscribed by the clergy alone, and 'an offering of first-fruits from the enlightened zeal of the nobility.' But he was soon to require all his enthusiasm. We know that it is a fact in nature that 'we cannot raise the temperature of a thawing mass of ice till we have thawed the whole, and that not until the ice has passed into water can we hope to change it into steam.' As in all great Christian movements, a great amount of Robertson's energy was absorbed in this same thawing process. He had to complain, not of the frank opposition of enemies, but of the indifference and dead inertia of friends. But even from the first there went with him 'a band of men whose hearts God had touched.' It would be invidious to mention the living, and though no one can grudge to the dead the tribute of being associated with his name, I prefer rather by silent reference to suggest than recall them. Indeed, no one could come in contact with his strong and noble disinterestedness without feeling that honest resistance could not be prolonged. His speech might be heavy, his manner unattractive, but there was no resisting the man. So one by one at first, but latterly in numbers, there rallied round him the foremost men in the Church, the most influential of the nobility and gentry. Through an unwearied course of fifteen years he lived and toiled for his scheme, and he may be said even to have died for it. His last official action was the penning of an unfinished appeal for it; almost his last words breathed of its burden: 'Not the Convener, not the Committee, but the Spirit of the living God.'

He died in 1860, but as a leader dies in a victorious charge. The very momentum that had been gained made the line sweep on without him. His death, deplored as a grievous loss, turned out to be a real gain to the cause which he served. Its great-

ness only dawned upon many through the grandeur of the life surrendered for it. Much of the coldness which baffled him in life melted away in his death. The sixty parishes which he had left behind him were, under his successor, in another sixteen years, augmented to two hundred and fifty. At this date, three hundred have been added to the Church, at a cost of nearly two millions of money. But those who have wrought most nobly to produce this result have always alluded to their efforts as the fruit of Robertson's work. The last Convener, a man in every way worthy to succeed him, was on this point the most entitled of our generation to speak; and yet with simplicity, as truthful as it was beautiful, Dr Smith ever spoke of his work as if Robertson himself were directing it—as if, 'having died, he was yet speaking.'

The reforming *afflatus* which in Robertson produced the Endowment Scheme, proved in the life and work of Dr Norman Macleod productive of as beneficent results. Though he was too young to take any prominent part in the contentions preceding the Secession, he was acknowledged to be a power even in the Assembly of '43. In the years immediately succeeding, when the policy of Dissent was to exclude and ignore the Church in every great public movement, his services were simply inestimable. Too energetic to be repressed, he soon proved himself too able and too eloquent to be dispensed with. One whose presence and power were eagerly sought, both in the great May Meetings in Exeter Hall, and afterwards in the Councils of the Evangelical Alliance, could not fail to be recognised as essential to the successful advocacy of any charitable or religious movement in Scotland. And wherever he appeared, he served to raise the credit of the Church that owned him. Translated to the Barony in 1851, he found in Glasgow a sphere worthy of his genius. While multitudes of the most influential classes of society gathered around him, large congregations, composed entirely of working men and of the poor, hung Sabbath after Sabbath on his lips. Those

who heard the Word were instructed in the blessedness of doing it. His enormous parish was organised so as to secure a complete visitation of its most destitute districts. Schools were provided, mission stations were projected and equipped, and by-and-by parish after parish was disjoined from it. Things deemed impossibilities to others became under him easily accomplished facts. Success in one of the most trying of spheres helped immensely to inspire courage in others, and ministers all over the Church felt their difficulties become simplicities just in proportion as they allowed themselves to come under the spell of his enthusiasm. When to his already too heavy responsibilities was added the Convenership of the Foreign Mission Committee, he threw himself into its work with all the fervour of an apostle. With a voice like the sound of a trumpet, he summoned the Church 'to the help of the Lord against the mighty.' His labours in this connection cannot be reckoned. I question if even yet we can form anything like an adequate conception of the gigantic tasks which he set himself, and the work which he attempted to do. Equally ready to plead his cause in the obscurest parish in Scotland, and in the stately halls of the Viceroy in India, he may be said to have been consumed by his own ardour. At an age when we were depending on the fulness of his strength and wisdom, he fell the victim of his own enthusiasm—a man mourned alike by his Sovereign and by the poorest of her subjects, whom he felt it his privilege to serve.

No true Churchman—and many have done virtuously during this period—will ever grudge my humble tribute to Macleod and Robertson. They are among the greatest gifts that have been bestowed on the Church of our day. The work which they prosecuted was in every sense of the word a Revival, whose effects may be traced in the immense development of the Church around us. If during this period the revenue and operations of the Home Mission have quadrupled; if the Foreign Mission, deprived by the Secession of all its agents

save one, is now strong enough to send its contingent—confessedly still too small—of preachers and teachers, Zenana and medical missionaries, to join at eight centres in India, one in China, one in Africa, that noble army which from all points of the compass aims at the conquest of heathendom for Christ; if the same progress and extension mark the operations of the Jewish Mission; if the Colonial Scheme, now consolidated, exerts its beneficent influence in almost every quarter of the globe in which our army and navy serve, or our countrymen settle; if an ever-deepening sense of responsibility prevails among the congregations and Presbyteries of the Church—this result is due in no small measure to the influence of these two men, who, differing in many things, yet twins in spirit, and united as friends, recalled the Church to the true significance of its position as National, and to its burden and glory of service as a branch of the Church of Christ.

So far the reformation of the Church is indirectly traceable to the legislation of 1844. For though legislation cannot create life, it can remove many obstructions in the way of its growth. The fact that, without taxing any outsider, or burdening a single conscience, a fourth of the whole number has been added to the parochial charges of Scotland; and the additional facts that, in 1878, 129,700 communicants were returned from these *quoad sacra* parishes alone, and that £118,050 was reported in the same year as their contribution to the Christian Liberty Committee, indicate the extent to which the population has availed itself of, and appreciates the benefits secured through, the operation of Sir James Graham's Act. The difficulties which troubled the Church prior to '43 in the way of meeting the religious wants of the people, have so far been removed. Let us now attend to the working of another Act of Parliament, which in August 1843 was passed to meet a difficulty quite as great—namely, the adjustment of popular claims in the settlement of ministers.

By many in the Church, the Scotch Benefices Act was hailed as a highly satisfactory and extremely popular measure. Indeed, both in the Church and in Parliament it was strongly opposed as too liberal. It was said to invest the Church with too ample discretionary powers, and to reduce the right of a patron to all but a shadow. Experience of its working, however, soon revealed that what it gave with the one hand, it took away with the other. Capricious decisions, involving all parties in heavy expense, and producing increasing irritation and secession from the Church, were its inevitable results. So, in spite of all attempts made by the General Assembly to secure by regulation its better working, the conviction only deepened, that, though well intentioned, it could only operate to the disadvantage of the Church and to the damage even of religion.

As early as 1854, Dr Gillan vainly besought the Presbytery of Glasgow to declare that the chief evils under which the Church suffered were inseparable from the system of Patronage which the Act sought to administer. In 1857 he was foiled in a similar attempt in the General Assembly. In 1859, Dr Lee ineffectually argued for a modified veto. But thenceforth overtures brought the unsatisfactory working of the Act before every Assembly, discussion became more frequent and earnest, public feeling was roused, till in 1866 it was plain that a movement was stirring which only required some outward impetus to give it both direction and success. That impetus was speedily supplied by the political events of the time. A vast increase of political power had been conferred by the new Reform Act upon the lower middle and working classes of the country; and even men averse to change had to confess that if the Church was to be in harmony with a greatly enfranchised people, the dead-weight of Patronage must at once be got rid of in some constitutional way.

In the Assembly of 1868, the ranks of the Patronage and Anti-Patronage supporters met in their first earnest grapple;

and after a keen and honourable struggle, it was decided by a very narrow majority to appoint the Committee of Inquiry, which had hitherto been evaded or refused. Its report to next General Assembly was decisive in favour of a modification of the law. A prolonged and severe debate ensued; and when the vote was called, the large majority of 193 to 88 sealed the Church's condemnation of the most fruitful source of all her evils, and committed the Assembly to all lawful attempts to secure its speedy abolition. Petitions brought the decision of the Church before both Houses of Parliament; and a deputation, which had been cordially received by influential men of all parties, on the day on which the second reading of the Irish Church Disestablishment Bill had passed the House of Lords, laid the case before the Premier. His reception was courteous, but his reply, though afterwards interpreted to convey a meaning which perhaps it did not bear, seemed to justify the motion in next General Assembly that the movement should be delayed till the government indicated the course which they meant to follow. The Rubicon had, however, been crossed; the rights of the people could no longer be tampered with. By a larger majority than ever, the decision of the former Assembly was ratified, and from that point onwards substantial unanimity prevailed in the further prosecution of the movement.

The Anti-Patronage movement involved its supporters in no small share of misrepresentation and reproach, as if it originated in, and was governed solely by, hostility to Dissenting communions. Never was reproach more unmerited. If any policy dictated this movement, it was that of conciliating Dissenters. Indeed, there were times when it was felt that conciliation of outsiders was carried on at the risk of alienating many who were within. Its promoters could not hope that union of sundered Presbyterians would immediately follow the abolition of Patronage, but it was plain that until it was taken away, all possible approach to union was barred. As an indication of

their hope and intention, at this very stage, upon the call of the late Lord Gordon, a resolution was passed, and a committee was appointed to promote the union of churches that had seceded from the Establishment on account of Patronage, and that still adhered to its Confession and system of worship.

At this period there were probably not fifty men in the whole ranks of the Church who did not most earnestly desire that Dissenting Presbyterians should be embraced in this movement. Never at any time since 1843 had the Church assumed an attitude unfriendly to Dissent. It was remarked, even at that time, that no feeling save that of affectionate regret found expression in regard to those who seceded. In self-defence, it had to rescind and remit to a committee the Act anent 'Ministerial Communion,' repealed only a year before; but no accusation could be more unfair or undeserved than that of Dr Candlish, that by so doing, 'they have virtually cut off all Christendom from their communion.'<sup>1</sup> His party, though dominant for years, made no effort to abolish the obnoxious Act, till in 1842, when affairs were drawing to a crisis, policy suggested its repeal as likely to appease their former enemies. The Church was too leavened by the very spirit against which the foolish Act of 1799 was directed to regard it with favour. Even then, friendly co-operation with other bodies, when practicable, was not only sanctioned but enjoined. Every subsequent enactment has been in the direction of facilitating and promoting co-operation, and at this date the pulpits of the Establishment are practically more open to ministers of other communions, than those of Dissenting denominations can be said to be to ourselves.

It was with no unfriendly eye that the Church regarded the first gathering together of the scattered streams of Scottish Presbyterianism, in the union of the churches of Erskine and Gillespie in 1847. Again, when in 1863, the first proposal for

<sup>1</sup> Candlish's *Life*, p. 306.



union between the United denominations and the Free Church was launched, there were very many within the Church who, wearied with the divisions of a family that ought to be united, really hoped that a better day was dawning for all. It seemed to them that if honestly entered upon and honourably carried out, the movement must develop into negotiations for union immensely more comprehensive. The United Presbyterian on one important point was as far removed from the Free, as was that Church from the Establishment on another. It was but reasonable to expect that the Free Church would be as ready to consider with their old friends the principle of Christ's Headship over the Church, as they were prepared to consider with their recent foes the twin principle of Christ's Headship over the State. But alas, the opportunity cannot even be said to have been lost; it was deliberately, by both negotiating parties, thrown away. They could not inaugurate their diplomacy without emitting declarations which, while excluding the Church, were purposely offensive. Her professors were heretics, her ministers were ritualists in disguise. And so by the time that the Anti-Patronage movement had assumed definite form, it was evident that co-operation was simply impossible. Lord Gordon's 'olive branch' was met by resolutions breathing a spirit of determined hostility to the Church. It was the humiliation of the Church, and not union with it, that was desired; and so it was plain that if the Church were to succeed in obtaining the abolition of Patronage, it would be against the combined opposition of those whose fathers found it a yoke too grievous to be borne.

A Conservative government has the credit of undoing the mischievous legislation which an old Tory government had imposed. On 19th May 1874, a Bill to abolish Patronage and repeal the Act of Queen Anne was introduced by the Duke of Richmond into the House of Lords, and through all its subsequent stages it was ably supported by the Duke of Argyll. It was discussed by Peers on both sides of the House with

a general desire to produce a measure that would be consonant to the principles of the Church, and the genius of the people of Scotland. The result was that, really amended in some important points, the Bill left the Lords vesting the patronage in the congregation, leaving the Church to define and settle who are its members and who are entitled to be called adherents. Direct opposition to a measure so consistent with the traditions and principles of all Presbyterians in Scotland was impossible in the Commons, so the mode of assault was a plausible motion for delay and inquiry. It became evident, however, that the real objection lay in the new and monstrous doctrine that to do anything favourable to the Church as a national institution is against the interests of those who live by opposing it. It was strange to find this doctrine advocated by men who had just settled, in the interest of the public good and economy, the question of national education in a manner which pressed hard upon many schools and teachers hitherto voluntarily supported. Unprejudiced people could not see that Dissenters had any just vested interest in the abuses of the Church, but they could see that the Bill most highly complimented Dissenters in embodying the very principles for which they had so nobly contended, and in securing, not to the actual ministers and members of the Church, but to the whole Presbyterian polity of the people, a statute which shewed that the old Church of the nation rests still, where, after persecution and martyrdom, their fathers and ours re-established it, on the settlement of 1690. It is too soon to judge of an Act which has so recently come into operation. It has failed, as was foreseen from the first, to conciliate ecclesiastical opponents, but an immense majority of the people of Scotland rejoice in its passing; and yet there is hope that opponents may come to acknowledge that the removal of an ancient grievance was not a sectional triumph, but a truly national gain.

With the Secession of '43, the troubles of the Church as to civil jurisdiction completely ended. In the declamations of

that time, and even yet, it is asserted that her peace was only purchased by sinful submission; but now that in the course of a generation, passion has had time to cool, and prejudice to clear away, men are coming to see that from a contest which, undoubtedly originating in a demand for a popular right, ended in a 'demand for a clerical, which would eventually have scattered popular liberty to the winds,' the Church has emerged with its constitutional liberties intact. Its history since the Secession is a triumphant vindication of its independence. In every case of discipline in which the civil court has been asked to interfere with its decisions, it has declined, on the ground that the proceedings complained of were within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Church. Three times during that period have the Seceders of '43 been before the civil courts in reference to a spiritual sentence complained of as illegally pronounced; and against their defence that the court could not interfere in sentences pronounced as a matter of Church discipline by an association of Christians tolerated by law, it was held that a voluntary association of Christians has no jurisdiction, in the proper legal sense of the term, and that sentences of suspension and deposition pronounced by them were not such spiritual acts as could not be taken cognisance of by the civil courts.

With such decisions staring us in the face, we might surely expect that spiritual independence should be left by the Free Church as 'open' a question in relation to the Establishment as the great majority of its members are willing to leave the question of Christ's Headship over the State in their relation to the Voluntaries. It is plain that secession can never secure such spiritual independence as is claimed, and that the alliance of Church with State in Scotland is not inimical to it. The Act of 1874, which repealed the Act of Queen Anne restoring Patronage, may be said to have revived all the ancient declarations of Parliament on the subject of the Church's Rights. It can henceforth only serve the purpose of a partisan to describe that Act as Erastian. Mr Gladstone, a most com-

petent judge, in his speech of July 6, 1874, objected to the Bill 'as intended to commit to the Church powers not possessed by any voluntary religious communion in the country.' The Duke of Argyll, again, in a paper reprinted from the *Contemporary Review* in 1878, testifies that the effect of the Act is to 'enable advocates of spiritual independence,' which he thinks 'too wide, too absolute to be theoretically true,' to affirm their view within the Establishment without any practical contradiction from the law.' Surely blindness in part has happened to those who do not see what an enormous advantage is thus secured, not only to the members of the Established Church, but to that Presbyterian polity and creed, which nine-tenths even of Scottish Dissenters profess alike to revere and to believe.

During this last period, the Church has favoured no political party, and if wisely guided, it will not attach itself to any. Its ministers and congregations represent all shades of political opinion in very much the same proportions as they exist in the country. Consequently, in regard to party influence, the Church is virtually powerless; and if political influence be an advantage to a professedly spiritual society, Dissenting communions in this respect excel it. As a national institution, however, the Church has been affected by the political changes of the last generation, and no sketch of this period would be complete which did not notice some of those which have modified and even altered its relation to the country at large.

A Commission of Inquiry into the working of the Poor-law system, appointed long before the Secession, reported in 1844; and in 1845, an Act, based upon the report, was passed, superseding the old system of relief of the poor by voluntary assessment of heritors and offerings of congregations. It is a fashion with some people to decry this statute as one of the most revolutionary of the century, as communistic in its principles, and demoralising in its effects. But such people evidently forget that no human agency for the amelioration of the con-

dition of the poor is perfect, and that the best will contain in themselves, or develop in their working, tendencies of a more or less deteriorating kind, against which we must guard as best we can. They also labour under the common fallacy that the Act created the evils which it only brought to light. It was rendered necessary by the utter break-down of a system, which, though excellent in theory, and successful in certain given circumstances, had proved palpably inadequate to the wants of the age. The chief lesson to be gained from it is the illustration which it affords of the utter failure of the voluntary principle to provide for a want of national magnitude. If ever there was a sphere in which that principle was likely to succeed, it was furnished by the care of the poor. And yet, just as Chalmers predicted, its own keenest advocates were the loudest in demanding that the poor should be rescued from dependence upon its caprice.

The abolition of University Tests was another measure affecting the Church. To secure Presbyterianism against Episcopalian conspiracies, it was enacted in 1690, and again in 1707, that no professor should be admitted to a Scottish chair without first subscribing the Confession of Faith, and promising to adhere to the worship and discipline of the Church. Legislation demanded solely by the exigencies of the time very properly fell into abeyance as the danger ceased. In Edinburgh, during the most of the last century, tests were not applied, and since the Leslie controversy, had only been applied in the case of the theological chairs. At the time when the agitation was culminating, it was discovered that more than a fourth of the professors of Scotland were serving without having signed, and that many of the most distinguished among them were members of the very Episcopalian Church which the tests were meant to exclude. It was not to be wondered at, therefore, that after the failure of several Bills in Parliament, the election of a Free Church Professor to the Chair of Moral Philosophy by the Edinburgh Town Council should have brought matters to a

crisis. In the litigation which ensued, it was decided that it was the duty of the Senatus to comply with the terms of the statute ; but it was not clear how that should be a duty which had been religiously disregarded for more than a hundred years. Moreover, none but the most extreme men could defend a test which admitted those whom it was meant to exclude, and which could be used to exclude those whom its framers would have admitted. It was now an agitation not without, but within the Church. Prominent Churchmen had been in the movement for years. In the interests both of the Church and of education, it was imperative that reasonable concessions should be made ; and even ardent defenders of the Church were glad when the Act of 1853 swept away a 'crumbling bulwark, which had become more a danger than a defence.'

By far the most important change in the Church's relation to the institutions of the country was effected in the matter of education. During the stormy years of 1842-43, negotiations with the Privy Council issued in the promise of aid for Normal schools, and in the establishment of that co-operation of the government and the Church, which has so materially influenced the common school instruction of the people. The Secession, which followed shortly after, proved in regard to education a gain to the country. For once at least division was stronger than union. The efforts made by the Free Church to establish an educational system, produced in a very few years close upon six hundred schools, and stimulated the Church to a rivalry which was eventually to lose much of its bitterness in a field which was large enough for all.

The policy of the government followed closely that of the Church previous to this period. It was to ascertain and make known throughout the country the state of education, in the hope that voluntary effort for its improvement would follow. The ecclesiastical divisions of Scotland presented conditions very favourable to the prosecution of such a policy, and, accord-

ingly, the system of government grants in aid of denominational schools was inaugurated in 1847. It was a bold, and manifest, and eminently successful attempt at concurrent religious endowment. It was eagerly accepted by the Roman Catholics and Episcopalians, and though a considerable number of ministers and others demurred for a time, both Established and Free Churches, by large majorities, accepted a system which, recognising the necessity for religious instruction, dispensed its grants indiscriminately to schools, whatever might be the religion taught in them.

By-and-by this mode of assistance gave way to capitation grants, grounded in and measured by the ascertained progress of the pupils. The minute promulgating the change earnestly engaged the attention of all the churches. Our own General Assembly, led by Dr Cook, while approving of its object, was opposed to nearly all its details. Some two years after, however, he was able to report that most of the defects in the Code originally proposed had been removed. The results of its first trial in 1863 amply proved the necessity for some more stringent test of educational work than had hitherto been applied, and whatever dispute may continue as to the merits or demerits of the system, its leading principle has been thoroughly vindicated by the logic of events.

The interest evoked in education by the working of the Privy Council system tended to further an agitation for proper legislation on the subject. The Act of 1861, making better provision for teachers of parochial schools, and freeing them from the test of connection with the Church, helped greatly to foster this movement. During the ten years that followed, several measures were tried; a Royal Commission had been instituted and had reported, but even a Bill framed according to its suggestions proved abortive. Some of these measures, condemned at the time as revolutionary, may be found to be much more moderate in their provisions than what is now universally accepted; but though they failed to become law, they

served in maturing public opinion and preparing the way for the Act of 1872. The agitation connected with the passing of this measure is too recent to permit of detailed account. The action of the Church, however, in reference to it, is easily stated. Recognising many excellent provisions in it, it objected to the entire absence of recognition of the importance and necessity of religious instruction. The author of the Bill maintained that it would neither prescribe nor proscribe religious instruction, but leave the people free to have religious instruction if they desired it. As originally drawn, however, this freedom was very materially proscribed. Nevertheless, it was welcomed by the Voluntaries, and by a majority of the Free Church. The latter were prepared to surrender the obligation of the State to provide religious instruction; the former, by strange inconsistency, were willing to allow Local Boards to infringe their principle of religious equality. The minority of the Free Church, however, were not prepared to abandon their principles, just to make matters smooth with the promoters of the measure. Cordially joining the Church in an endeavour to remedy so grave a defect, they succeeded in carrying amendments recognising the value of religious instruction, and giving liberty to the people of Scotland to provide in all their schools the invariable custom of ages.

The effect of the Act has severed the direct connection of the Church with national education. In 1872, 2400 schools were reported to be connected with the Church. Of these, 1150 were parochial and parliamentary schools, and 1250 owed their connection to the voluntary exertions of its Committee, its kirk-sessions, its members. So, though here again the voluntary principle failed completely to supply a national want—the exertions of all other denominations put together having originated fewer than 900 schools—the Church has no reason to be ashamed of its contribution to the cause of national education. The Normal schools still flourish, but of common schools very few remain, and what remain will eventually be



absorbed. But, as there is 'that scattereth and yet increaseth,' so if the Church be wise and tolerant, and keep clear of outside sectarian complications, it will find that its influence in the education of the people, because recognised to be unselfish, is more powerful and beneficent than ever.

The watchword which has most influenced its action during this period has been not the rights, but the efficiency of the Church. The schemes recently developed for augmenting the smaller livings, and for providing for aged and infirm ministers, are notable indications of this. The first, though pressed upon its attention by the great reduction in the stipends caused by the repeal of the Corn Laws, and by the general advance in social expenditure, is pleaded for solely on the ground that congregations must suffer if served by a pauperised clergy. The other, again, proceeds on the idea that congregations must be vigorously served. Presbyterian supervision of ministers is not indeed what it should be, yet public opinion is so maturing, that indolence or inefficiency in the ministry will soon be as little tolerated as open immorality. Even already it has put an end to the times when it could be said that 'ministers only find their office tolerable when they acquire facility in ignoring its responsibilities,' or that Presbyteries are simply trades-unions for protecting the interests of their members. The increasing popularity of the Committee on Life and Work, ostensibly instituted to stimulate activity, betokens a deepening regard to the great interests intrusted to us, and speaks volumes for the hold which the conviction has now gained, that the only right worth fighting for is simply freedom to discharge all our duty.

Prominent among our modern activities is the care of the young. Up till 1843, very little progress was made within the Church in the development of Sabbath-schools. It was only in 1841 that a return in regard to them was asked for. In 1850, the General Assembly formally assumed their oversight, and since then annual reports record, that while in 1850, there were

only 76,232 children on our rolls, in 1880, 230,353 of the youth of the country availed themselves of the religious instruction provided in the Sabbath-schools of the Church. The proper accommodation and organisation of those schools, now yearly engaging greater attention, shew plainly that the system is rapidly passing into another and higher phase, which will ere long shew marked results.

The Prayer and Fellowship Meetings, the Mutual Improvement, Temperance, and Total Abstinence Societies, the Associations for providing popular lectures and suitable recreation for the people, which are now considered essential to the economy of a well-served parish, manifest that the pastors of 1880 bear a much heavier burden than was borne by their predecessors of former generations. Indeed there is a danger that the many and severe demands upon the 'modern minister' may operate injuriously against his mental culture. The 'learned leisure' of former times would be difficult now to find. Leisure certainly there is not; and though in the parishes of Scotland there is abundance of men of scholarly sympathies, there is a danger of learning diminishing. Yet learning is simply essential, now that literature is immensely more diffused. It is to be feared the modern Church is not sufficiently alive to the danger. The institution of the Croall and the Baird lectures, and the lectures delivered annually in the four universities by men appointed by the General Assembly, are no doubt steps in the right direction. Even a course of lectures like the present may serve to stimulate study, but a far more extensive and systematic and sustained effort is necessary in order to secure that the clergy of the present and future may be worthy successors of those who in earlier times adorned the venerable brows of the Church with laurels won in every department of literature and science and art.

A fiercer light is beating upon the Church of to-day, and stronger forces than influenced preceding generations have to be dealt with and adjusted. The age of Queen Victoria is very

unlike that of the Georges. Railways and telegraphs drawing together the very ends of the earth, facilitating rapid exchange of thought, have produced a silent but most mighty revolution. It is an age marked by intense movement in every domain of human activity; by exploration and colonisation of whole continents; by startling discoveries in science; by great inventions in the arts. If the effect produced by the revival of letters and the rise of industry in Europe centuries ago was to close the middle ages, and bring about the Reformation, then unquestionably this fusion of east and west, and north and south in the great seething present, must result in even a grander renaissance, which must powerfully influence the Church. There have been ages in which the clergy were the sole teachers of the world. In the present age, the gifts of the Church, whether of science, or prophecy, or healing, appear more in the membership than in the ministry. The reputed teachers of the people have in many things to assume the attitude of learners toward those who look to them for spiritual counsel. The modern pulpit is not so much marked by originality as by appreciation. If not radiating forth new light, it is quick to catch and reflect it. The religious thought and feeling of the people are not ahead of the pulpit; yea, it is through its ministration that the people in most instances receive what is good in the spirit of the age. The sermon of to-day undoubtedly lacks the polished diction and classic grace of the best specimens of Moderatism, just as the average preacher will not compare in scholarship and culture with the best of those stately and courtly fathers, who, lingering far into our period, have now all fallen asleep. But the pulpit of to-day, with all its defects, is more in accordance with the wants of the people. Were they offered again the clearly reasoned theological or moral essays of a former age, they would unquestionably turn from them, to the living and often rudely expressed *sermo* which stammers under the weight of its responsibilities,

as it grapples with the sins, and sorrows, and trials of a most complex daily life.

An age, characterised by a science and literature and art which are all its own, will, as a consequence, be marked by a theology peculiar to it. When the forces are more analytic than synthetic, candid minds will never dogmatise. The ablest judges hesitate to decide how far the progress of scientific research, the revival of grammatical learning, the vast discoveries of the scriptures of long-buried religions, have modified, or are likely to modify, our thinking in the grandest of all themes. Most of us, however, will gladly own that while theology is no less divine than it was, it is now immensely more human. It is no longer prosecuted in order to find defences for an existing system, but scientifically, out of reverence to God and devotion to truth alone. A research which is reverent may well be inexorable, for whatever havoc it may make of opinion, it can never damage, but only confirm, the Faith. It is to the credit of the Church that in such an age it has maintained an attitude wisely tolerant toward those religious difficulties which must exercise all living minds. It has never owned the necessity of producing from its armoury the terrible instrument of libel for heresy, and it has been rewarded, on the whole, by a very general loyalty to its standards. Here and there, indeed, its tolerance has been strained and even abused. Yet, as no one would think of bringing down the whole weight and majesty of law on some foolish boy who, bewitched by the false glory of Jack Sheppard, aspires to play the *rôle* of highwayman, so no one thinks of libelling for heresy persons who plainly are ignorant of the real meaning of the word. Their offences are often only the excrescences of unformed intellects, which we may expect of themselves to yield to fuller knowledge and maturer thought. In any case, the attempt to regulate rather than repress movements whose origin is beyond our control, will prove the truest wisdom in the end.

One of the weak points of the Presbyterian Church is its worship, though the reasons of this have not sufficiently been taken into account. Never at any time very rich in ecclesiastical structures, Scotland, toward the close of the seventeenth century, found her heritage wasted; not so much by the fanaticism of reformers as by the ravages of Southern armies and the evil fortune of several generations of civil war and confusion. The land was too impoverished to repair what the wealth of the old Church reared; and so many a valuable relic was allowed to crumble into decay. For many years after its establishment, the Church was confronted in many parishes by heritors hostile to its polity, and had to be content with such structures as their parsimony permitted them to provide. Then the religious feeling of last century was too weak to be concerned about the matter. Men went about the building of a church as they did about the building of a barn, and did not scruple to use as their quarry the beautiful ecclesiastical relics they possessed. It is a startling fact that the age which produced such structures as still disfigure too many of our towns and parishes, was precisely one that felt no obligation to preach the Gospel to the heathen. The men who could take the stones worn by the devotion of former generations, to build a pen for their oxen or their swine, were just the very men who could condone bribery in a judge, and drunkenness in a minister.

It was not the revival of taste or culture, but the revival of religion, that awoke and fostered that reforming spirit which now strives to undo the ravages of a former time, by replacing the miserable buildings which blot many a landscape with churches worthy of their object, and by restoring in the grand structures that survive, the old sublimity to the arched roof, and the old grace to the traceried window. While we venerate our old cathedrals and parish churches as affecting memorials of our country's past, we do well to prize them even more for their association with our religion; and we are simply doing our

duty in dedicating to their restoration something of our wealth, as a thank-offering for the privileges of which they perpetually remind us that we are still the heirs.

Improvement in the services of the house of God went hand in hand with this attempt to improve its structure. One looks back with amazement to the system which generally prevailed scarcely thirty years ago. Worship there could hardly be in a system which lacked its prominent elements. Liturgical it certainly was, but after the worst of types. In some churches, the opening and closing prayers never varied from year to year; psalms and tunes came round with the same unvarying regularity; the Lord's Prayer was seldom heard. In many others there was no reading of Scripture. So thoroughly had the injunction of 1812 fallen into disuse, that in 1856 the Assembly had to ordain the reading of a portion of the Old and New Testament in every diet of worship.

It has been my endeavour, in sketching this picture, to avoid as far as possible all reference to persons; but it is impossible to avoid alluding to one whose name, though recalling keen and bitter controversy, now awakens only kindly memories in all who knew him. What share he had in furthering this reform in our Scottish worship—how far he helped, how far he hindered it—may be questions between parties yet. But no one can question Dr Lee's enthusiastic prosecution of it for the sake and in the interest of the Church. In a matter like this, I chronicle rather than criticise; but the introduction of instrumental music into the service is undoubtedly due to his contendings. Other changes might have come without his advocacy, but it was certainly through his pleadings that the organ, that 'holy Nazarite that will not go to the dance or to the battle,' has been permitted again to enter the house of the Lord.

That the whole Church sympathised in the reform of public worship, even when opposing Dr Lee's method of prosecuting it, is proved by its united action. As early as 1852, it began to consider what was necessary for the improvement of praise.

Though in 1859 the reading of prayers from a book was condemned, a committee appointed before was continued, to prepare forms of worship for the use of soldiers and sailors and colonists. The Aids to Devotion, the Hymnal, the Psalter, and the Psalmody publications; the forms of address respecting baptismal professions and obligations, transmitted in 1871 to every minister of the Church, are the fruits of this action. Further progress in this reform depends upon the moderation of those most anxiously interested in it. There is nothing in its constitution to prevent the Church—free as it is to use for edification the spiritual treasures of Christendom—from yet formulating for the Scottish people their own Book of Common Order. But I am persuaded that if that does appear, it will be permissive rather than compulsory. In poverty and long tribulation, it has learned the value of free prayer. The danger of having no liturgy may be to sever it from the wisdom and piety of the past; but the having one may involve the greater peril of severance from that living fount of inspiration which alone can make it the Church of the Present and the Future.

The enormous increase in the power of the press, which now penetrates for good or evil into every family in the kingdom, is at last coming to be appreciated by the Church. At no time has it encouraged publications professing authoritatively to defend its interests, wisely judging that all such tend only to foster narrowness and excite hostility, and are really unnecessary in a community whose only policy is industry. In 1860, however, *Good Words* may be said to have revolutionised popular religious literature. At first fiercely opposed on account of its very catholicity, it soon came to be earnestly imitated even by those who denounced it; and now among the many periodicals which seek to educate or amuse the world, *Life and Work*, flying the pennon of the Church, holds bravely its way. Here again, however, the aim is neither propagandist nor defensive, but solely to provide a wholesome

popular literature at the cheapest possible rate, and to stimulate Christian life in all manifold forms of activity.

In concluding this survey, I would touch very lightly upon the spiritual life of the Church, for the truest and best things of a Church are precisely those which no one can tabulate. The system of results applied to education is said to be injurious, as lowering both its quantity and quality. Applied to the Church, it would simply be ruinous. The life of a Church can never be measured by the amount of its revenues or by the extent and variety of its activities. Where there is life there will be activity; but there may be much showy activity without life. The healthiest Church is the most liberal and tolerant and humble: the severest in its strictures on its own, the readiest to put the best construction on the action of others. That our Church has shared in that baptism of benevolence which stamps the present as one of the most missionary and charitable of Christian centuries no one can deny. The largest individual offering ever made in modern times to the cause of religion is recorded of it. Unsolicited, and solely from a sense of indebtedness, Mr James Baird, one of the shrewdest and kindest of Scotchmen, crowned many generous gifts by devoting in his lifetime half a million of money to be spent in furthering its usefulness. The very amount of his gift is significant of his faith in the Church. That the people, are everywhere turning to it in increasing numbers, proves that it accords with their national sentiment, and satisfies their spiritual wants. Whatever may be charged against it, it cannot be said to bear itself oppressively or offensively toward any outsider. Its members have no advantages which they are not prepared to share with others on the same terms on which they enjoy them. So if the people are wise, they will not permit the ark of God to be dragged into the dust of party warfare, but will maintain it as a common national shrine to which, after their keenest conflicts, all parties can alike repair.