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Stewart J. Brown

'After the Disruption: The Recovery of the National Church of Scotland, 1843–1874'

Abstract:

In 1843, the established Church of Scotland was broken up by the Disruption, as nearly a third of the ministers and perhaps half the lay adherents left to form the new Free Church. Many predicted the 'remnant' established church would not long survive. This article explores the remarkable recovery of the Church of Scotland during the three decades after the Disruption, with emphasis on the church extension campaign and parish community ideal of James Robertson, the movement initiated by Robert Lee for the enrichment of public worship and ecclesiology, and the efforts, associated with Norman Macleod, John Tulloch, John Caird and Robert Flint, to provide greater theological freedom and openness to social and cultural progress, including a willingness to question the Reformed doctrinal standards of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Keywords: Church of Scotland, Disruption, church extension, liturgical reform, Westminster Confession of Faith, disestablishment campaign

In May 1843, the established Church of Scotland was broken up by the great Disruption, as about a third of the clergy and perhaps half the lay adherents left the church in protest over patronage in the appointment of parish ministers and what they viewed as unwarranted state interference in the internal affairs of the church. For the protesters, patronage allowed the crown or members of the landed class to appoint ministers to parish churches, without regard

for the views of congregations. Even worse, the manner in which the civil state enforced patronage was seen as an assault upon the spiritual independence of the church. Led by the celebrated preacher and social theologian, Thomas Chalmers, the seceders included the most prominent, able and zealous members of the established church. The outgoing ministers and laity formed the Free Church, which they insisted was now the true national Church of Scotland, and over the next five years, amidst the worst economic recession of the nineteenth century, they raised money and created the structures for a new Scottish national church, with over 750 churches, 500 primary schools, theological colleges and an active overseas mission. It was an astounding achievement, and their sacrifices and commitment rightly captured the admiration of the world.

And what of those left behind? The atmosphere was febrile, and the outgoing ministers and lay people felt much bitterness towards those who remained in the 'corrupt' established church. They portrayed the remnant establishment as a moral blight on the land. Remaining clergy were dismissed as Erastians, immoral, self-interested men, lacking principles and prepared to prostrate themselves before the civil authorities and the large landowners who owned most of the church patronage. The Free Church journalist, Hugh Miller, famously described those remaining in the General Assembly on Disruption day as 'obscure, mediocre, blighted-looking men' who 'reminded one of the thin and blasted corn-ears of Pharaoh's vision'.[1] For the young Free Church minister, James McCosh, later President of Princeton University, those remaining were the 'chaff', with the suggestion that they would soon be blown away.[2] In a sermon in Edinburgh shortly after the Disruption, the celebrated Highland evangelical, Dr John MacDonald of Ferintosh, the 'Apostle of the North', denounced the remnant establishment as 'a Christ-denying, God-dishonouring, soul-destroying Church'.[3] The remnant was now a minority establishment in Scotland, and in much of the Highlands its parish churches had almost no adherents. Several years after the

Disruption, the census of religious worship of 1851 indicated that only 32 per cent of worshippers in Scotland attended the established Church of Scotland, which raised the serious question of why it should remain Scotland's established church.[4]

Thirty years later, in 1874, the Free Church joined with Scotland's other major non-established Presbyterian denomination, the United Presbyterian Church, in a concerted political campaign to disestablish and dis-endow the Church of Scotland. The time seemed right. The minority established Protestant Church of Ireland had recently been disestablished, and there was a significant movement in England and Wales to disestablish the Church of England.[5] The parliamentary reform acts of 1867 in England and Wales and of 1868 in Scotland and Ireland had expanded the franchise, making parliament more responsive to public opinion. Surely it would be very easy now to rouse Scottish public opinion and convince Parliament to sweep away the chaff of Scotland's minority established church, and then use its properties and endowments for other, more worthy national needs, in education or poor relief. But those campaigning for disestablishment soon found that they confronted a very different Church of Scotland from that of the immediate post-Disruption years. The number of its adherents had grown significantly; indeed, it was no longer clear that it was a minority church in Scotland. More important, it had recovered a sense of its mission as a national church and was striving, with increasing effectiveness, to provide religious instruction and pastoral care to the people of Scotland. Many of its ministers were highly respected public intellectuals, engaging creatively with the cultural forces that were changing mid-Victorian Scotland and ensuring that religion remained central to public life. How can we account for this remarkable recovery of the Church of Scotland as a national church?

The recovery of the national Church of Scotland has received attention in A. L. Drummond and James Bulloch, *The Church in Victorian Scotland 1843–1874* (1978), and in a number of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century biographies of leading Church of

Scotland ministers, most notably A. H. Charteris's biography of James Robertson (1863), Donald Macleod's two-volume *Memoir* of his brother Norman Macleod of the Barony (1876), R. H. Story's two-volume biography of Robert Lee (1870), Margaret Oliphant's biography of John Tulloch (1888), and Charles Warr's biography of John Caird (1926).[6] More recently, Andrew Jones has, in a valuable University of Edinburgh PhD thesis, explored the role of three prominent evangelical clergymen, William Muir, Norman Macleod, and Archibald Charteris, in the recovery of the national influence of the Church of Scotland, giving particular attention to their successful use of Christian journalism at a time of increasing mass literacy.[7] This article will explore the recovery of the Church of Scotland during the three decades after the Disruption, with emphasis on the church extension campaign of James Robertson, the movement initiated by Robert Lee for the enrichment of public worship and ecclesiology, and the efforts, associated with Norman Macleod, John Tulloch, John Caird and Robert Flint, to provide greater theological freedom and theological openness to social and cultural progress, including a willingness to question the Reformed doctrinal standards of the Westminster Confession. The recovery, I will argue, was led by more progressive, liberal elements which came to predominance from the later 1840s within the Church of Scotland, as the old Moderatism of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries declined in influence. These progressive elements included liberal evangelicals, among them Norman MacLeod and A. H. Charteris, whose contributions have been rightly highlighted in Andrew Jones' thesis. But conservative evangelicalism or the revivalist tradition were not significant in the recovery of the Church of Scotland. As the distinguished church historian, A. C. Cheyne observed, 'conservative evangelicalism of the kind so strongly represented in the Free Church had never carried comparable weight in the post-Disruption Establishment' and was 'overshadowed' by liturgical reformers and liberal theologians, neither of whom favoured 'the older brand of pietistic individualism'.[8]

THE REVIVAL OF THE PARISH IDEAL

In the first years after the Disruption, while passions roused by the conflict ran high, the Church of Scotland, or at least its leadership, was, on the whole, reactionary, defensive and sectarian in its attitudes. A faction of old Moderates, led by Professor George Cook of St Andrews University and Professor Duncan Macfarlane, Principal of Glasgow University, now gained dominance over the General Assembly. At its meeting in May 1843, the assembly either set aside or repealed reforms of the previous decade that had been intended to increase the popular voice in the selection of ministers or to promote church building and home mission.[9] The General Assembly also revived an act of 1799, shutting its pulpits to any but its own ordained clergy. Parish school teachers who joined the Free Church were dismissed. The reactionary policies continued over the next few years. Virtually all Scottish landowners were hostile to the Free Church, and many refused to sell the Free Church sites for its churches and manses – creating considerable hardships in districts where a single landowner owned virtually all the land. Some landlords dismissed tenants and labourers who joined the Free Church.[10] The Church of Scotland pursued successful – some thought vindictive – legal action to reclaim nearly all the chapels that had been built in the church extension campaign of the 1830s, even though most of those who had paid for the chapels had joined the Free Church. The Moderate leadership was openly unfriendly to the Lord Aberdeen's Benefices bill, which sought to alleviate abuses in patronage by giving congregations a limited voice in the selection of ministers, and which Parliament passed in the summer of 1843.[11] For the Moderates, any concession to popular rights in the church was suspect.

And yet there were also signs that the dominance of the old Moderates would not last long. Not all the reform-minded ministers who had supported enhancing popular rights

during the 1830s had seceded in 1843. Some who were unhappy with unrestricted church patronage had none the less been unwilling to leave the established Church of Scotland, with all its historic associations. They included former supporters of Chalmers's Popular or Evangelical Party such as William Muir, A. L. Simpson, Matthew Leishman, James Robertson, and Norman Macleod. These ministers had in the 1830s supported Chalmers's programmes for church extension and home mission, warmly embracing Chalmers's position that only an endowed established church could effectively evangelise among the poor. Despite the acrimony of the Disruption, they continued to look upon the established Church of Scotland as a force for good. 'I do not lose hope for our recovering the Church's efficiency', William Muir wrote to a friend on 23 May 1843, 'yet, still the blow is great'.[12] Macleod wrote to his sister a few days after the Disruption event that he was determined 'to live and die fighting for this bulwark of Protestantism, this ark of righteousness, the conservator of social order and religious liberty, the dear old Kirk'.[13] Macleod also hoped that the younger, more idealistic Church of Scotland ministers would soon move the church in more inclusive directions. 'We want', he observed in his private journal in January 1845, 'a talented, pious young Scotland party [which will] have as our motto the Church of the future'.[14]

Even more important for the future of the established Church was an extraordinarily gifted group of younger ministers, who studied for the ministry amid the Disruption controversy and were ordained in the later 1840s and 1850s. These younger ministers were open to the biblical and theological scholarship on the Continent, especially Germany, and several of them had studied on the Continent. While earnest in their beliefs, they disliked the resurgence of conservative, dogmatic and intolerant Calvinism in the Free Church and the extravagant claims of many Free Church members that they alone were Christ's church. But neither were they happy with the reactionary, anti-popular attitudes of the older Moderate

leadership. They had, as one historian observed, witnessed the Disruption and experienced the 'indescribably bitter atmosphere of the subsequent years, and had sickened of it'.[15] Surely there was a better way for Scottish church life to be conducted. The group included John Caird, an impassioned, intellectually brilliant young preacher who first captured public attention in the later 1840s as a minister in Edinburgh, Robert Flint, a highly gifted historical theologian and parish minister, John Tulloch, another remarkable historical theologian, who the crown appointed Principal of St Mary's and Professor of Divinity at St Andrews University in 1854, at the age of only 31. The group also included A. H. Charteris, A. K. H. Boyd, R. H. Story, William Milligan, John Marshall Lang, Donald Macleod, Robert Wallace, James Cameron Lees, Archibald Scott, and James MacGregor.

Despite the loss of membership, the post-Disruption Church of Scotland retained many of the advantages of being an established Church. It retained its historic properties, including the teinds (the notional ten per cent of the production of all agricultural and fisheries) and the glebes (parcels of land for the support of rural ministers), while the heritors, or principal landowners, in rural parishes, and the magistrates and town councils in town parishes, were responsible for the upkeep of parish churches and manses. The established church retained venerable church buildings, including surviving medieval cathedrals and collegiate churches. Significantly, the post-Disruption Church of Scotland resolutely maintained the 'Five Schemes', which had been set up between 1824 and 1840 to define the mission of the pre-Disruption Church – that is, it continued to support foreign missions (especially in India), home missions, education, colonial churches, and the mission to the Jews.[16] By 1853, monetary contributions to these programmes were surpassing the pre-Disruption levels.[17] Parliament passed a new Scottish poor law act in 1845. Modelled on the English poor law act of 1843, the Scottish act removed the authority over poor relief from parish churches and vested it in elected parish boards, with powers to raise rates on property.

This diminished the social influence and authority of the Church of Scotland as a religious establishment, but it strengthened its role as a national Church by enabling it to direct more of its human resources to religious instruction and pastoral care.

The most important expression of recovery in the post-Disruption Church of Scotland was the Endowment Campaign, by which the established Church revived its commitment to providing religious instruction and pastoral care to the whole of Scotland's rapidly growing population, and especially to the urban poor. In 1846, James Robertson, recently appointed as Professor of Church History at the University of Edinburgh, was appointed convener of a General Assembly Endowment Committee, and launched a campaign to raise funds to endow the approximately 200 chapels that had been built during a church extension movement under Chalmers's leadership between 1834 and 1841 (and then had been successfully claimed by the established church after the Disruption). Chalmers had intended these chapels to be missionary churches, carrying on an aggressive home mission among the poor in the expanding Scottish towns and cities. He had hoped that they would in time become parish churches, with their ministers assisted by teams of elders and deacons, carrying out pastoral visiting, establishing schools, providing social services (such as reading rooms and youth clubs), and forming close-knit Christian communities. Chalmers also believed it was vital that the new churches have endowments to cover their basic costs, so that their ministers would not be dependent on donations from their congregations. Instead of attracting well-off congregations who could contribute to their costs, the new churches were to focus on evangelical work among the poor. Between 1835 and 1838, Chalmers had pressed Parliament to provide state endowments for the chapels, but the Whig Government declined to support an endowment grant and the chapels remained un-endowed.[18]

Robertson had been a strong supporter of Chalmers's church extension campaign during the 1830s. Now, in the aftermath of the Disruption, he undertook to revive

Chalmers's ideal, not by asking the state for endowment grants, but by raising voluntary donations from the Scottish people to endow the chapels, so that they could become, as Chalmers had hoped, parish churches with a special mission to the poor. Robertson's endowment campaign found encouragement when in 1846 Parliament passed an act which ensured that if a chapel was given an endowment of £3,000, it could be made into a parish church, with full representation in the Presbyterian courts of the established church.[19] From 1846 onwards, Robertson drove himself in the work of raising donations for the endowments – travelling around the country, addressing presbyteries, holding public meetings and meeting individual donors. He became perhaps the most successful Scottish fundraiser of the nineteenth century, initiating a campaign would eventually raise some £400,000 and provide endowments for approximately 150 new parish churches, many of them in economically deprived districts.[20] But more important, he revived the ideal of the Church of Scotland as an endowed national territorial church, with a responsibility to provide religious instruction and pastoral care to the whole of Scotland's growing population. For him, the watchword was the 'efficiency of the Church of Scotland'.[21] He revived the notion, which had been so important to Chalmers, that the established Church of Scotland had a special mission to the poor, those who could not afford to contribute much to the financial support of the church. The church's highest duty, Robertson wrote in 1856, 'was to respond to 'the spiritual destitution, especially of the poorer classes of society'. And it was by embracing this responsibility that the church would recover from the Disruption. 'It is by the attention which she has thus bestowed on the interests of the poor that the Church has been enabled to rally her broken forces'.[22]

Robertson did not live to see all 150 chapels endowed, dying in December 1860, aged only 57, of heart disease. Many believed he had worked himself to death in the cause of church extension; some viewed him as a martyr. Others now continued his work and the Endowment Campaign formally became the sixth of the Church of Scotland's 'schemes'.

Robertson had inspired personal respect, even veneration, especially among the younger ministers. But more importantly, he had revived the idea of the Church of Scotland as a national church, with a duty to elevate the whole Scottish people through a parish ministry aimed at building communities. According to John Tulloch, 'his influence was elevating, both as a teacher and worker'.[23] 'How vividly do those who rallied around him in the inauguration of that [endowment] movement', wrote John Marshall Lang, 'recollect the glowing, if often the lengthy utterances of the noble-hearted churchman!' His message, Lang added, 'was the call to identify the Church with the needs and aspirations of the nation'.[24] Robertson's life was celebrated in a biography published A. H. Charteris in 1863, a work widely recognised as 'the best justification of the party which "stayed in"' at the Disruption.[25]

Robertson's endowment campaign also contributed to renewed belief in the endowed parish ministry as the best means to form and elevate communities, especially in socially deprived urban districts. In 1851, Norman Macleod, one of Robertson's warmest supporters, was appointed to the ministry of the crowded Barony parish church in Glasgow, with a parish population of 87,000. There he began an aggressive parish ministry, based on Chalmers's teachings, which included regular house-to-house visiting of parishioners, district Sunday schools for imparting basic literacy as well as religious instruction, the formation of new parish day schools, evening classes for adults, a savings bank, a tea and refreshment room, reading room, Young Men's Association, clothing society, and from 1857 special evening church services for working people in their working clothes.[26] In 1867, Macleod argued in an influential pamphlet that church extension and an endowed parish ministry, as promoted by Chalmers and Robertson, was the only effective means of alleviating Scotland's urban poverty.[27] Others in the Church of Scotland took up the call for an endowed parish ministry as a means of forming communities in Scotland's industrialising societies, including the Edinburgh minister, Archibald Scott, in *Endowed Territorial Work* of 1873 and Robertson's

successor as convener of the Church's Endowment Committee, William Smith, in his *Endowed Territorial Work* of 1875.[28] 'The name of James Robertson, like the name of Thomas Chalmers', enthused Smith, 'is inseparably and for ever associated with the cause of endowed territorial work'. Inspired by their vision, the Church of Scotland between 1849 and 1874 increased the number of endowed parish churches by one fifth, as well as increasing 'in a much larger proportion, subordinate agencies of various kinds, with which she is now successfully carrying on the work of Home Missions'.[29]

THE RENEWAL OF WORSHIP AND THE CHURCH IDEAL

A different, but no less influential, reform movement emerged in the established church in the later 1850s, associated with the renewal of worship, liturgy and church architecture. The leading figure in this movement was Robert Lee, minister of Greyfriars church, Edinburgh, and professor of Biblical Criticism at the University of Edinburgh. A warm defender of the established Church of Scotland, Lee was committed to restoring its social influence in the aftermath of the Disruption and he believed that the support of the educated urban upper and middle classes would be vital in achieving this. But he also feared that the urban educated classes were being increasingly drawn away from the Church of Scotland to the Scottish Episcopal Church. For him, the major reason for this was what he portrayed as the greater decorum, solemnity and beauty in Episcopalian worship. He contrasted this with what he viewed as wearisome Presbyterian services, with their long, often tedious sermons, their droning of Psalms, and their extempore prayers that could ramble on for twenty to forty minutes, and were often ill-digested repetitions of tired phrases, biblical quotations, theological jargon and pious instructions, which had little meaning as addresses to God and were largely ignored by the dozing congregations.[30]

In 1845, Edinburgh's historic Greyfriars church was gutted by a devastating fire, and had to be rebuilt. When the church was eventually reopened for worship in June 1857, Lee used this as an opportunity to introduce sweeping innovations in worship. The rebuilt church included intricate stained-glass windows, the first significant ecclesiastical stained glass installed in a Church of Scotland church since the Reformation. For worship, Lee composed and printed a liturgy, *Prayers for Public Worship*, including set prayers, with congregational responses, to be read at services. He opened each service with a solemn call to worship and closed each service with a benediction. Although traditional Scottish Presbyterian practice was for congregations to stand while praying and to sit while singing the Psalms, Lee had his congregation kneel for prayer and stand while singing. He also introduced changes in music, making a greater use of hymns. Later, in 1864, he had an organ installed in the church. This was the first organ in an established church since 1807, when a short-lived attempt to introduce an organ in St Andrew's church, Glasgow, has been declared illegal by Glasgow Presbytery. Lee insisted there was divine sanction in Scripture for instrumental worship and that the organ would enrich the beauty and emotive power of congregational singing. In all this, he had the support of his Greyfriars congregation.

Conservatives in the Church of Scotland were outraged by the innovations, and in 1859, the Presbytery of Edinburgh condemned Lee's order of service, instructing him to cease using it. Lee responded by appealing to the General Assembly and for the next several years, the higher court debated the issue. Lee's opponents maintained that the innovations were un-Presbyterian, moving away from a traditional Reformed service focused on the reading and preaching God's Word, and aimed at Anglicising, even Romanising, the Church of Scotland. Lee, in response to his conservative critics, observed that Knox and the early Reformers in Scotland had used a set liturgy, that his innovations contravened no Church law, and that the changes were intended to restore a proper decorum, reverence and beauty to

worship. Lee received strong support from younger, reform-minded ministers, but eventually the conservatives carried the Assembly. On the motion of the conservative W. R. Pirie, Professor of Church History at the University of Aberdeen, the General Assembly in 1865 passed the so-called Pirie Act, empowering presbyteries to investigate and suppress innovations in worship.[31] But Lee continued his innovations at Greyfriars, including having a *Te Deum* sung to a Gregorian chant in December 1865.[32] New charges were brought against him and he might well have been deposed from the ministry by the General Assembly of 1866, had he not suffered a debilitating stroke shortly before the Assembly met, forcing his retirement and leading to his early death.

Lee's innovations, meanwhile, were gaining growing support, including backing from such reformers as Tulloch, Norman Macleod, Caird, Boyd, Story, and Cameron Lees. In January 1865, while Lee's innovations were being fought over in the Church courts, several liturgical reformers founded the Church Service Society. Its purpose was to promote 'the study of liturgies – ancient and modern – of the whole Christian Church, with a view to the preparation and publication of forms of Prayer for Public Worship'.[33] The Church Service Society maintained that the Church of Scotland should, in its worship, seek to draw upon the traditions of the universal Church, including the pre-Reformation Latin Church and the Greek Orthodox Church, as well as the early Reformed liturgies used by Calvin and Knox. In 1867, the Society published a volume entitled *Euchologion*, a compendium of various forms of worship intended for baptisms, holy communion, marriages and funerals. The intention was to offer various forms of public worship, from which Church of Scotland congregations might select. The *Euchologion* went through seven editions in the next thirty years, with subsequent editions adding further types of service; by 1900, some 10,000 copies had been published. The Society steadily gained support. Within five years of its formation, the

Church Service Society had over 150 members, and by 1900, membership had grown to include about a third of all Church of Scotland ministers.[34]

More and more Church of Scotland congregations adopted innovations in worship. They were actually helped by the Pirie Act, by which presbyteries had been expected to suppress innovations.[35] But presbyteries proved unwilling to interfere in the worship arrangements of local churches, if their congregations agreed to the liturgical changes and there was decorum in worship. The 1870s and 1880s also witnessed an extraordinary spread of organs, assisted after 1883 by grants for organ purchases from the Scottish-American steel magnate, Andrew Carnegie.[36] In 1870, the General Assembly authorised the use of a *Scottish Hymnal*, with some 200 hymns.[37] Many congregations introduced trained choirs. A prominent founding member of the Church Service Society was Cameron Lees, a Highlander who was minister of Paisley Abbey from 1859 to 1877, and then of St Giles in Edinburgh from 1877. At Paisley Abbey, he introduced shorter, twenty-minute sermons, and, in 1874, an organ. Shortly after arriving at St Giles, he prepared a prayer book, with liturgical materials from the Latin, Greek, Anglican and Reformed traditions, and in 1884 he introduced daily services in St Giles for the first time since 1650. He supported restoration work aimed at recovering the late medieval grandeur in both these historic churches, including the renewal of medieval images.[38] Some Church of Scotland ministers adopted very high forms of worship, among them John Macleod, a nephew of Norman Macleod of the Barony, who in 1862 became minister of Duns, in the Scottish borders, and who was a founding member of the Church Service Society. In his parish church in Duns, Macleod broke from tradition, placing an altar cloth over the communion table, holding monthly communions, and celebrating the festival days of the Christian year, including Christmas and Easter. In 1875, Macleod was translated to Govan parish in Glasgow, where as ‘the High Priest of Govan’ he combined a high liturgy and church restoration with a socially committed

pastorate.[39] Through the liturgical reform movement, as one scholar observed, 'churches were beginning to resemble places of worship, rather than mere auditoria. Chancels, stained glass, Holy Tables, robed choirs, even prayer desks appeared.'[40]

Alongside the liturgical innovations and church restorations there was also a growing interest in ecclesiology. For the liturgical reformers, the Church of Scotland was far more than an established church. It was not a creation of the state nor had it been formed at the Reformation. Rather, the Church of Scotland was a true branch of the ancient catholic and apostolic Church, rooted in Christ's commission to the apostles, reformed in the sixteenth century but retaining its centuries-old identity and witness. Congregations could feel this in the enriched worship services and the beauty of restored historic churches. The liturgical reformers sometimes described themselves as Scoto-Catholics; for them the Church of Scotland was part of the universal Church. 'The higher and more Catholic spirit – which feels its oneness with other Churches', proclaimed John Tulloch in a speech defending Robert Lee in the General Assembly of 1865, 'is a spirit which commends itself entirely to my Christian feeling, and I should wish to see it growing. The Church of Scotland may do a great work in guiding, educating, and controlling this spirit'.[41] In 1870, a student for the Church of Scotland ministry, James Cooper, while visiting St Peter's in Rome, had a vision of catholic reunion, 'when a united and a reformed Church shall stand before the world as the Body of Jesus Christ'.[42] Cooper was ordained in 1873, and became a leading Scoto-Catholic. 'We must learn to feel more deeply than we do', insisted William Milligan in his closing address as moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1882, 'that *we* are an integral part of Christ's body, and in vital connection with the whole body….We are a portion of what is called in the creed the "holy Catholic Church", planted in Scotland by the Divine Head of the Church Himself'.[43]

GREATER OPENNESS IN DOCTRINE

In 1865, there was a loud public outcry over a railway company's decision to run Sunday trains between Edinburgh and Glasgow, with many leading Presbyterians proclaiming that any loosening of strict Sabbath observance, be it the Sunday running of trains, or the Sunday openings of parks or museums, was an affront to God's eternal law and an act of national apostacy.[44] In this heated atmosphere, with ministers vying with one another in condemning Sabbath-breaking, Norman Macleod of the Barony took the bold step of denouncing the rigid Sabbatarianism then prevailing in Scotland in a speech of over three hours before the Presbytery of Glasgow – a speech which received wide coverage in the press and which he subsequently published. There was, Macleod insisted, no New Testament warrant for refusing all leisure activities and moderate outdoor recreation on a Sunday. Strict Sabbatarianism was part of an Old Testament order, that was not binding on a Christian country; 'the Sabbath on which Christ lay in the tomb ended the Mosaic economy'.[45] At issue for Macleod were not only Sunday trains, but whether people should be permitted to take Sunday walks and whether public parks should be opened on Sunday afternoons, the only time that most working-class families could enjoy them.[46] Perhaps more important, his rejection of Sabbatarianism involved the question of whether theological understanding was progressive. Were Church teachings fixed and unalterable, or could they be adapted to the changing needs of society? Conservatives violently attacked Macleod for his speech, with some demanding he be censured, even deposed from the ministry, for rejecting God's unalterable Sabbath law. But he received strong support from Lee, Tulloch, and Milligan, and after a debate, the General Assembly of 1866 declined to censure him. This decision, Macleod observed, indicated that the church would cease trying to stand still in its theology; it would no longer 'lie at anchor as if the voyage in history was reached'. 'The politics of the Church … are, sail on, not back, to hold by the past, but to grow out of it.'[47] The more

progressive mood of the church found expression three years later, in 1869, when Macleod was elected Moderator of the General Assembly.

During the Sabbath controversy of 1865, Macleod's close friend, John Tulloch, Professor of Divinity at St Andrews University – described by A. C. Cheyne as one of four 'uncontestably great' figures in the nineteenth-century Scottish Church – came to Macleod's defence.[48] Tulloch had been promoting similar ideas of doctrinal development through his work in historical theology, including two influential books, *Leaders of the Reformation: Luther, Calvin, Latimer, Knox*, published in 1860, and *English Puritanism and its Leaders: Cromwell, Milton, Baxter, Bunyan*, published in 1861 – both based on series of public lectures, and providing critical analysis of the Reformers and Puritans.[49] Late in 1865, Tulloch gave an address to the Theological Society of the University of Edinburgh, published under the title *Theological Controversy or the Function of Debate in Theology*, which he described in the preface as in part a defence of Norman Macleod.[50] The address was, according to Tulloch's biographer, 'like the unfurling of the standard of the party of progress'.[51] It surveyed what Tulloch portrayed as the 'very sad and painful' history of religious controversy in Scotland since the Reformation. This, he insisted, was the result of passions, ignorance and insensitivity to human diversity. 'The national religious life, instead of expanding with a ripening culture, has been torn by furious dissensions, and oscillated between hard extremes.'[52] Perhaps most significant was the appendix, in which Tulloch denied that the Calvinist Westminster Confession of Faith, the Church of Scotland's standard of faith – with its doctrines of double predestination, limited atonement, and eternal punishment for the reprobate – was the timeless, definitive expression of divine truth. On the contrary, he portrayed the Confession as a human product of a violent period in history. The Confession, he insisted, 'in its origin and in its principles, was the manifesto of a great religious party, which, after a fierce conflict, gained a temporary ascendancy both in England

and Scotland'. It reflected, to be sure, a sincere striving after truth and it contained much to be venerated, but 'the same thing could be said of every Protestant Confession of Faith, and even of those briefer symbols of the earlier Catholic Church'. 'They are one and all historical monuments' and they were all 'stamped with the infirmities not less than the nobleness of the men who made them'.[53] 'My own profound conviction', he added, 'is that religious thought in Scotland … has already entered upon a movement which is destined to remould dogmatic belief more largely than any previous movement in the history of the Church'.[54] It was a provocative address, but Tulloch received considerable support and no charges were brought against him in the church courts.[55]

In 1865, the Church of Scotland minister Robert Flint, a former assistant to Norman Macleod in the Barony parish and recently appointed professor of moral philosophy at the University of St Andrews, published an influential collection of sermons entitled *Christ's Kingdom upon Earth.*[56] In arguably the most important sermon, 'The Nature of the Kingdom of God on Earth', Flint argued that God was directing the progress of the world towards the achievement of His Kingdom on earth, the righteous order that was His purpose for humankind. But in this progress, the churches, which should be the foremost agencies for God's purpose, were often compromised by their theological vehemence and arrogance, not least in seeking to impose their confessional statements on society. 'The creeds and confessions of most churches', he observed, 'however doctrinally correct, are of an extent and minuteness of decision objectionable, not only on the ground of perpetuating disunion between equally sincere Christians, but as capable of being made, in the hands of unscrupulous or excited majorities, formidable instruments of terrorism and oppression'.[57] John Caird, who was appointed Professor of Divinity at the University of Glasgow in 1862, also had no enthusiasm for the Westminster Confession or any confessional statement; his theological lectures, according to his brother Edward, 'were throughout inspired by the idea

of development'.[58] Both John and Edward Caird (the latter becoming Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow in 1863) became leading proponents of Hegelian idealism, emphasising evolution in theology.[59]

This questioning of the Westminster Confession was deeply disturbing for some within the Church of Scotland; they feared it risked leaving the church confession-less and without theological moorings. 'Perhaps you hear of the much talked of [liturgical] "innovations" which go on in the established Kirk', the Episcopalian Principal of St Andrews University, J. C. Shairp, wrote to A. C. Tait, Bishop of London, on 11 December 1865. 'More important changes are mooted in some quarters such as relaxing or abolishing the Confession, etc. What it will all come to who can say. I hope it may not break up the Established Church.' But, he added, 'That seems to me the most likely issue.'[60] Shairp was exaggerating the dangers for the Church of Scotland, though the confessional question was undoubtedly a serious one. What such figures as Macleod, Tulloch, Caird and Flint sought, and to a considerable extent achieved, from the mid-1860s was the freedom for ministers of the Church of Scotland to engage theologically with new developments in science, historical studies, philosophy, and the study of other religions without being restricted by the seventeenth-century Westminster Confession. For them, theology must be allowed to develop, along with intellectual developments in the wider society, and the national church should engage with the progressive elements in a national culture that was becoming more liberal in most matters. 'The decrees of the Church, the definitions of the Standards and Articles', observed Lee's successor as minister of Edinburgh's Greyfriars church, Robert Wallace, in 1870, 'are not where they were' and 'among the most intelligent classes of the community … there is much sympathy with what is called the modern or liberal school of theology'.[61] The more liberal atmosphere in the church found further expression in 1864,

when the General Assembly ended the restriction of its pulpits to its own ministers, opening its pulpits to voices from other churches and theological persuasions.[62]

Some ministers of the Church of Scotland became prominent public intellectuals; they believed that the national church had a special responsibility for guiding developments in the nation's cultural life. In 1860, Norman Macleod had become editor of a new popular monthly magazine, *Good Words*, published initially in Edinburgh and later in London, and aimed at a wide Christian readership. He invited contributions from such authors as Tulloch, Lee, Caird and Boyd in Scotland, and A. P. Stanley, Samuel Wilberforce, William Ewart Gladstone and Charles Kingsley in England. The magazine was violently attacked by some conservative evangelicals, especially in the Free Church, for its inclusive, 'broad church' editorial policies, but Macleod persevered and the magazine proved immensely successful. By 1870, it had a circulation of 80,000, and served, among other things, to promote Macleod's vision of a progressive, liberal, socially engaged Church of Scotland.[63] Tulloch, Caird, Boyd and others also regularly wrote for the London literary quarterlies and monthlies. In 1873, John Caird, Professor of Divinity since 1862, was appointed Principal of the University of Glasgow; a brilliant preacher and public speaker, he was arguably Scotland's leading public intellectual.[64] As Professor and Principal of St Mary's (Divinity) College, Tulloch helped make St Andrews a centre of broad church Christianity, regularly inviting leading liberal Anglicans to speak, encouraging friendly dialogue between Presbyterians and Anglicans, and promoting the ideal of comprehensive, inclusive national churches.

Among the frequent visitors to St Andrews was the historian of religion and broad-church Dean of Westminster, A. P. Stanley, who in 1863 had married Lady Augusta Bruce, daughter of the seventh Earl of Elgin and lady-in-waiting to Queen Victoria. Stanley's marriage brought him regularly to Scotland, where he developed friendships with Church of Scotland ministers, among them Norman Macleod, Caird and Tulloch. In January 1872,

Stanley came to Edinburgh to give a series of four public lectures on the history of Scottish Christianity, speaking to packed audiences in the Queen Street Music Hall, then the city's largest auditorium.[65] With vivid historical prose and lively illustrations, Stanley portrayed the Church of Scotland as the true national church of the Scottish people, developing its teachings with the advance of the nation, and representing their highest religious ideals and aspirations. 'Whatever Scottish Christianity is prepared to become', he proclaimed, 'that the Church of Scotland is prepared to be', for it was 'intwined with all that is noblest and best in the feelings both of citizens and of Christians'.[66] While Stanley's lectures aroused the ire of the Free Church, they received a warm welcome from adherents of the Church of Scotland, and were widely read in their published form.

Arguably the most prominent supporter of the post-Disruption Church of Scotland was the Queen. From 1842, she and her German Lutheran consort, Prince Albert, began visiting Scotland, nurturing a love for the country, and from 1848 developing the Balmoral estate as a royal residence. Under Albert's influence, Victoria embraced broad church views, growing attached to the Church of Scotland and regularly worshipping at Crathie parish church. She was especially drawn to Norman Macleod – 'our Norman' – whose pastoral guidance helped her through the crisis of Albert's death in 1861. She looked to Macleod for religious counsel, and he encouraged her to look upon the Church of Scotland as Scotland's true national church.[67] She was also deeply influenced by Tulloch, Caird and Cameron Lees, regularly inviting them to preach in Crathie. In 1873, against the strenuous advice of the Archbishop of Canterbury, she began taking communion in the Church of Scotland, the first British monarch to do so since the seventeenth century.[68] It was a significant decision. The Queen no longer simply attended worship in the Church of Scotland, but was now a full communicant member. Her commitment to the church was not a cause of the steady growth

in its membership, but it did reflect the larger movement back to a church that was increasingly seen as national and progressive.

The Church of Scotland was recovering its influence outside Scotland. It became more active in overseas missions, especially following the appointment of Norman Macleod to the convenorship of the foreign missions committee in 1864. In 1867–68, Macleod travelled to India to inspect the Church of Scotland missions there, and returned inspired by what he had seen, calling for a greatly increased missionary effort, especially in the educational mission for women.[69] 'Now that the position of the Church [at home] has been so vastly strengthened and improved', he informed the General Assembly of May 1868, 'we may fondly hope to see within it such a deepening of the missionary spirit among the clergy and people as will extend our missions far beyond their present or former boundaries.'[70] Through Macleod's efforts, including speaking tours throughout Scotland, there was a significant increase in missionary ardour within the established church.[71] He died, aged 60, in 1872, but his initiatives in home and overseas mission continued.

The Church of Scotland was gaining support among the upper and middle classes, with its social commitments, liturgical reforms and doctrinal openness, and also among the working classes, with pastoral work and parish welfare programmes pursued by an endowed clergy. By 1870, it had 1,254 churches, many of them actively involved in home mission. According to statistics on Scottish marriages, Scottish education, and Scottish communicants, about 44% of the Scottish population now adhered to the Church of Scotland, up significantly from the estimated 32% of church-goers in 1851.[72] It remained weak in the Highlands and Islands, but elsewhere in Scotland it had a strong presence. Free Church adherence in 1870 had apparently declined to about 25% and United Presbyterian adherence to about 12% of the Scottish population, so it seemed the Church of Scotland was significantly larger than the combined numbers of both Scotland's main non-established denominations.[73] In 1872, the

Church of Scotland lost its control over Scotland's approximately 1,000 parish schools with the Scottish Education Act, which established a new national system of elected school boards, with power to levy local rates and oversee the parish schools; most Free Church schools also opted to join the new rate-supported national education system. But local schools were permitted under the Educational Act to continue their customary religious instruction – and follow their 'use and wont' – which meant teaching the Reformed faith.[74] In 1873, the work of the Church of Scotland received a major boost when the industrialist James Baird of Cambusdoon donated a half million pounds to the church, the largest single gift from a private individual that it had ever received. The sum was invested and used for church extension and home mission, while the Baird lectures, also supported from the endowment, promoted Christian scholarship of the highest order, including such works as Robert Flint's classic *Theism* of 1876.[75]

From 1869, the Church of Scotland General Assembly petitioned Parliament for the abolition of patronage in the appointment of ministers, and its replacement by a form of popular election. The Scottish landed classes were now prepared to give up their patronage rights, in return for a reasonable compensation. Many in the Church of Scotland hoped that the abolition of patronage would draw the Presbyterian seceders back into the revived national Church. But in this they were disappointed. The Free Church and United Presbyterians deeply resented the church's initiative, insisting it was not right that the Church of Scotland should be relieved of the yoke of patronage, when the seceders had in the past sacrificed so much in opposing patronage. Gladstone's Liberal Government, viewing the Free Church and United Presbyterians as vital to its electoral majority in Scotland, refused to support the end of patronage. But at the general election of 1874, the Tories were returned to power and one of the Disraeli Government's first acts was to sponsor legislation to abolish

patronage in the Church of Scotland, with new ministers now to be elected by congregations, including women members.

In 1874, the Free Church and United Presbyterians responded to Parliament's abolition of patronage with a combined campaign to disestablish and dis-endow the Church of Scotland. They would pursue this campaign for over thirty years, but they would fail to gain sufficient popular support in Scotland. This was in part because the Church of Scotland, under John Tulloch's leadership, mounted an effective movement of church defence.[76] But more important, the Church of Scotland had by the later decades of the nineteenth century become a socially committed, progressive national Church, effectively providing religious instruction and observances to the whole people of Scotland through its endowed parish system, and committed to mission at home and abroad. In light of the growing effectiveness of the Church of Scotland, the Liberal *Scotsman* observed in May 1885, the disestablishment campaign seemed 'a shabby ecclesiastical expedient', pursued by churches 'whose business is failing' with the aim of pulling down another church 'whose business is prospering exceedingly'.[77]

CONCLUSION

The Church of Scotland had experienced a remarkable recovery in the three decades after the Disruption of 1843. It had revived its parochial ministry and its sense of responsibility to provide religious instruction, observances and pastoral care for the whole of Scotland's population, while not imposing its ministry on any. It had embraced a series of innovations to enrich the experience of worship, including the use of set liturgies, the introduction of organs and trained choirs, and the refurbishments of church interiors, including more stained glass. The liturgical reformers reminded Scotland that Knox and the early Reformers had used set liturgies and valued music in praise. They also helped revive the idea that Scotland's

national church was a true branch of the ancient catholic and apostolic Church, and should draw from the spiritual treasures of the universal Church. The church became open to the view that theology should develop in creative engagement with the surrounding culture, and that theological advance must not be unduly restricted by historical confessions, especially the Westminster Confession. While tolerant of other Protestant denominations (though not, alas, Roman Catholics), the Church of Scotland felt it had a particular responsibility for representing a higher moral and religious aspect of the nation state. From the 1880s, the church would become increasingly involved in social reform, becoming especially active in the provision of improved housing for the working classes.[78] Behind the recovery of the church was an extraordinary group of Presbyterian leaders – James Robertson, Norman Macleod, Robert Lee, William Milligan, John Tulloch, John and Edward Caird, A. H. Charteris, Robert Flint, and James Cameron Lees, among others. These men were progressives in theology and social views – broad church Presbyterians and liberal evangelicals. Women, to be sure, did not have a role of leadership in this renewal, though they did form the majority of the congregations and from 1874 female communicants could vote for new ministers. Their influence would grow within the church, not least through the efforts of Tulloch, Milligan, Charteris, and especially John Caird (the first president of the Association for the Higher Education of Women, formed in 1877) to open higher education to women.[79]

Something else occurred between 1843 and 1874. The Church of Scotland in 1874 ceased to be an established church in the same way it had been in 1843. The Scottish Poor Law Act of 1845 had removed responsibility for legal poor relief from the established church, the Education Act of 1872 had largely ended the established church's role in national education, and the Patronage Act of 1874 weakened the close connection of the Church of Scotland and landed classes. As Callum Brown has argued, there was a gradual process of

disestablishment in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Scotland.[80] These changes were undoubtedly necessary; even without the Disruption, the Church of Scotland could not have retained its authority over social welfare and education in Scotland's more diverse and democratic urban-industrial society. The Church of Scotland of 1874 did remain in a close connection with the state and it retained its historic national endowments, including teinds and glebes. But it was now more an endowed national church rather than a religious establishment in the old sense. Perhaps the greatest achievement in the post-Disruption recovery of the Church of Scotland between 1843 and 1874 was that the church managed to adapt to these changes in an orderly manner, and embrace a new role as an endowed national church in a more diverse and democratic society. It continued, with a growing effectiveness as the nineteenth century drew to a close, to express the ideal of a Scotland elevated by moral and spiritual principles and maintaining a continuity with its Christian past.

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